Sounds Sanctified

Essays on Music and the Sacred

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Introduction

What do a Finnish oldster singing a Lutheran hymn, a shaman drumming in the cold of Siberia, and English football fans who cheer their favourite team by singing, have in common? At first, one might think that there is nothing in common. However, they all have something to do with both music and the sacred; their sounds are somehow sanctified.

The sacred evades defining. Probably most people have experiences of what they consider sacred, but putting those qualities into words is often troublesome. Throughout decades, if not centuries, it has also been difficult for scholars, such as philosophers of religion and cultural anthropologists, to define the sacred. Therefore, there are numerous definitions, the most influential of which date back to the early twentieth century.

In 1912, Émile Durkheim published *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* which has since become a classic, not only in the sociology of religion but in sociology more generally. While the title alone attests to the centrality of theorizing religion, or religiosity, at issue for him was how religion functions in human societies as exhibiting traces of the sacred, understood as something set *radically* apart from the rest of things and actions. Thus, to unearth the sacred qualities in a society involves paying attention to what is collectively and often officially not only revered and protected but also prohibited, to the extent that members of the society internalize completely and uncritically such conduct and mode of thinking as a moral responsibility (Durkheim 1965). The extent to which Durkheim avoids discussing music may be taken as an indication of protective and prohibitive measures that operate in the musical field, particularly in its diverse institutionalized settings. Indeed, as ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl (2005: 190–191) surmises, if he had colleagues on Mars, they would

most likely approach the Western music education system as a religious one.

Durkheimian approaches have been adopted when examining fandom, whether musical or in other contexts (e.g., Hills 2002; Duffett 2012; Löbert 2012), while Rudolf Otto's theorization of 'the numinous' in *The Idea of the Holy*, originally published in 1917, have yielded more conceptual discussion based on the analogy he built between music and religion as spheres involving 'wholly other' experiences (Lehrich 2014; cf. Otto 1990). Another key theoretician of the sacred is Mircea Eliade. Despite his somewhat controversial reputation, he is occasionally referenced in popular music studies because of *The Sacred and the Profane*, released originally in 1957, where he develops the phenomenological idea of hierophany; that is, an experience of the sacred through its material manifestations (Eliade 1961; also, Rossil in this volume). Eliade's work surfaces in music research arguably more often when discussing 'shamanic musicality', by drawing on *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* from 1951 (e.g., Tucker 1996; cf. Eliade 1964). Moreover, the foundational sociological work of Max Weber on both music and religion has resurfaced in recent times, especially in debates about disenchantment and re-enchantment in the Western world and its musics (e.g., Chua 1999; Partridge 2004–2005).

The Finnish word *pyhä* (sacred, holy, sanctified) has the same root as *piha* (yard). Just as the yard is a delimited and controlled area, the sacred is always somehow delimited and controlled (see also Anttonen 2000). Many people build a fence around their yard or grow a hedge, making it difficult to see in from the outside. The yard can then become extremely fascinating and frightening at the same time. This is also one of the oldest Christian definitions of the sacred; it is something that lures, yet may raise concerns about undesirable consequences. The same definition applies to other religions as well, and other everyday sacred phenomena, such as fan culture. Moreover, a similar logic can be found in the etymology of the word 'holy', as it is understood to derive from the Old Norse *heill*, meaning

health, and its adoption in Old English as *hál*, 'free from injury, whole, hale' (OED 2021; see also Dillmar in this volume).

As editors, we verge upon the notion of the sacred from slightly different stances, given our disciplinary backgrounds. While we both have studied theology and have a keen interest in historiographical issues, Samuli, as a Lutheran pastor and church musician, is in holy orders, while preparing his doctoral thesis about congregational singing and liturgical melodies in the Lutheran Church in nineteenth-century Finland and Ingria. Antti-Ville, in his latest works, has scrutinized the intersections of the popular and the sacred in music, as well as the national framework of music historiography concerning twenty-first-century cultural diversity. We nevertheless consider such differences as a propitious and munificent substrate for critical enquiry into the conundrums of music and the sacred.

Music and the Sacred

Perhaps the fact that the sacred is so difficult to put into words is precisely the reason for the intertwining of music and the sacred, regardless of culture or religion. Music can be used to express something that words cannot reach; to paraphrase dancer Isadora Duncan, 'if we could tell you what music means, there would be no point in listening to it.' Music and the sacred intersect one another in various ways, which entails acknowledging the multidimensionality of both music and the sacred. This was also the point of departure for the conference 'Music and the Sacred,' organized in Helsinki 12–14 November 2018 collaboratively by the Finnish Society for Ethnomusicology and the Finnish Society for Hymnology and Liturgy. The articles in this anthology are based on papers delivered at that conference.

The impetus for the conference came from several directions and – as often happens – initial plans had to be revised. Significantly, the event was a continuation of the series of symposia organized earlier by the UskoMus

Research Network, founded in 2010 and punningly named by combining the Finnish words *usko* (faith), *musiikki* (music) and *uskomus* (belief). The network itself was established after organizing a two-day seminar on 'Islam and Music' in Turku in 2009, followed by the official UskoMus Symposia on 'Music and Transcendence' (Turku, 2010), 'Music and Nationalism' (Helsinki, 2015), 'Music and Multiculturalism' (Helsinki, 2015) and 'Music and Islam' (Helsinki, 2016). The last three of these seminars were intimately linked to the research project 'Music, Multiculturality and Finland,' lead by Antti-Ville from 2014 to 2018 at Music Archive Finland in Helsinki. As the theoretical aim of the project involved interrogating the conceptual intersections of the popular and the sacred in music, the conference was effectively the closing event of the project (see Kärjä 2021).

Yet the original plans were somewhat different, as in the beginning the idea was to host a colloquium with invited international participants only. However, in 2017, the Finnish Society for Ethnomusicology was faced with unprecedented financial challenges as, due to the renewal of the state policy concerning the support for scholarly societies, its monetary resources were cut by more than half. While the consequences of the policy change – with its accompanying unabashedly neoliberal rhetoric about separating viable organizations from others – were devastating for the society, the resultant decision to host an open conference instead of a closed colloquium was arguably closer to the underlying objective to facilitate and encourage dialogue across disciplines. This also enabled auspicious and fruitful collaboration with the Finnish Society for Hymnology and Liturgy, thus adding crucially to the possibilities of disciplinary colloquy without predetermined divisions of expertise. Our scholarly and practical experiences and expertise of music and religion induce us to posit that the fiercest disagreements are usually to be found within disciplinary confines rather than between them.

The Finnish Society for Hymnology and Liturgy showed a keen interest in collaboration because the conference was a natural continuation for

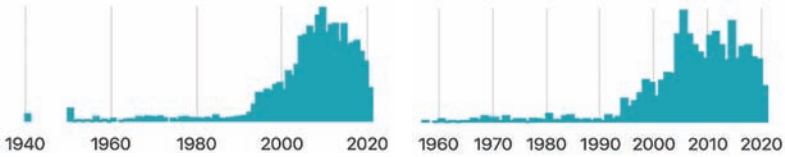
the three ecumenical symposia under the common title 'Sacredness,' organized by the society in co-operation with the Faculty of Theology of the Helsinki University, and the Church Council and the Diocese of Porvoo. The first symposium, 'Space and Movement: Co-operation between Architecture and the Liturgy' took place in Helsinki in 2015; it was followed by 'The Concept of Sacredness and Its Understanding Today' (Helsinki, 2016), and 'Sound and Light: Worship Life and the Senses' (Helsinki, 2017). The events were organized in Finnish and Swedish and the original titles were in these languages.

To assist in constructive intra- and interdisciplinary debates further, the explicit aim of the 'Music and the Sacred' conference was to address all possible intersections between, and amalgamations of, music and sacred phenomena, however defined. This entailed an overt acknowledgement of the multiple dimensions and conceptualizations involved, as well as a recognition of how music may become sacralized and sanctified in diverse ways, and how the sacred may become reconceptualized in various musical contexts. Such an understanding of the sacred and music also underlies the volume at hand. Direct invitations to challenge the boundaries of what constitutes music were not issued; however, at the conference and subsequently in the editing process, it was stressed that alongside its conventional religious associations, the sacred was to be considered a broader conceptual field. In the words of Gordon Lynch (2012: 29), at issue is 'what people collectively experience as absolute, non-contingent realities which present normative claims over the meaning and conduct of social life.' In music, the most evident examples include explicitly religious and devotional songs and melodies, but also national anthems and other national and nationalistic forms of music, not to mention the ubiquitous ideas about the transcendental qualities and effects of music.

Musicologies of the Sacred

Whereas an ethnomusicologist from Mars might deem Western conservatoires religious institutions where certain repertoires and busts of composers are worshipped, it is somewhat curious to note the relative rarity of discussion about issues of Christianity in the works of earthly ethnomusicologists. One may suspect that this results primarily from rigid institutional and disciplinary boundaries, yet pivotal consequences of such compartmentalization include not only the separation between religion and art in the West, but also associating 'the Rest' and especially 'the East' with a pronounced sense of religiosity or spirituality. In addition to the possible and probable risks of neo-Orientalist de-contextualization and exoticization, the axiomatic assumptions about Eastern spirituality may obfuscate how the Western distinction between the sacred and the secular is irrelevant, or at least counterproductive, as well as deny the possibility of heteroreligiosity (e.g., Kalra 2015; Roy 2017). An indication of the disciplinary powers at work is how some scholars have introduced their own 'theomusicological frameworks', where theological and musicological modes of investigation are combined to analyse the formal qualities (or the 'singability') of hymns and other types of congregational music, concerning the 'external forces and secondary influences' that surround their production (Evans 2006: 110–112). Ultimately, what sets this research apart from ethnomusicology or sociology of music is that instead of Christianity, the focus in the latter two fields tends to be on non-European or non-religious musical practices, respectively.

Admittedly, a central observation whilst planning the conference concerned the lack of dialogue between music studies and the study of religions. This dearth of intellectual exchange comes across more peculiar when considered in terms of ethnomusicological music-culture models, as in them the centrality of belief systems or conceptions 'of a close relationship between music and the supernatural' is emphasized, particularly



Figures 1 (left) and 2 (right). The annual amounts of peer-reviewed articles acquired from the University of Helsinki database of 'international e-materials' with the boolean search phrases 'sacred AND musicology' (left) and 'sacred AND ethnomusicology' (right). Note: pillar heights not comparable between figures.

concerning the ontology, origins, effects and ownership of music (Merriam 1964: 77; Titon 2009: 18–19). But, lo and behold, the times they are a' changing, as according to a quick plunge into relevant databases, it is evident that the contacts between related enquiry and the notion of the sacred have increased tremendously since the late 1990s (see Figures 1 and 2). Just how the sacred is, and becomes, conceptualized in these encounters warrants a more careful investigation; however, after an equally superficial dip into the digital archives of key journals it may be suspected that mostly the sacred is readily associated with or discussed concerning various indigenous cosmologies or 'religions.' Such a suspicion gains further momentum as one notes how references to Durkheim, Eliade and Otto, for instance, emerge now and then, whereas reliance on the more recent cultural sociological definitions of the sacred (e.g., Lynch 2012) is conspicuous in its absence.

Again, the disciplinary boundaries play their part as the usual suspects. It is particularly notable in this respect that Lynch's (2012) ideas have been circulated in studies where questions of disenchantment and re-enchantment are dealt with in the context of popular music. For instance, in a landmark collection of essays exploring 'the relationship between religion and popular music […] within the broader interdisciplinary study of religion and popular culture,' the editors urge the readers to consider the sacred beyond religiosity in a 'sociologically nuanced sense' whereby it,

'whether imbricated with religious discourses or not, concerns those ideas which exert a profound moral claim over peoples' lives' (Moberg & Partridge 2017: 1, 7). It is likewise indicative of disciplinary blinkers firmly in place that in the contribution aimed at demonstrating 'the value of ethnographic research in studying the relationship between popular music and religion,' there are no references whatsoever to ethnomusicological research, despite the recognition of (nineteenth-century) anthropology – but mainly as a social-Darwinist antecedent of ethnographic research conducted by 'sociologists interested in examining phenomena occurring in their own societies' since the 1920s (Bennett 2017: 13–14).

Whether or not such academic eye-patches render phrases about interdisciplinarity meretricious, the recent upsurge of studies about religion and popular music is undeniable. In this body of scholarship, there is a general aim of 'rescripting the sacred' (Santana & Erickson 2016) through conjoining evidence drawn from popular culture or everyday life with theorization about post-secularization, re-enchantment and alternative spiritualities. Some are even brave enough to contend that at issue is the analysis of 'the confluence of two of the principal dynamic forces shaping contemporary human life, popular music and the sacred' (Partridge 2014: 3). While the reliance on and definitions of popular culture may indeed be rather purpose-driven or circular occasionally, intriguing observations and interpretations have been made concerning 'pop cults' (Till 2010), music and 'occulture' (Partridge 2014), and musical paganism (Weston & Bennett 2013; see also Dairianathan in this volume), amongst other issues. One may also note the emergence of a number of relevant publishing series devoted – for example – to 'the history of the quest for transcendence within popular music and its subcultures' (Bloomsbury 2020), or to Christian congregational music-making and its 'meaning, influence, and significance' from 'a mixture of complementary approaches' (Routledge 2020).

Change of Emphasis in Hymnological and Liturgical Studies

Both hymnological and (Christian) liturgical research has traditionally focused on lyrics and melodies. Consequently, the concept of the sacred has also been primarily linked to the content of hymn lyrics and liturgical texts. When it has been related to music, it has referred to certain styles and genres, sometimes also to modes, chords and intervals; that is, their aesthetics and symbolism. A great number of historical volumes published on church music within musicology has been concentrating on composers, works and musicians – and almost entirely in the Western context. In addition, it is problematic that the existence of music has been considered mainly as an art form rather than as liturgical or congregational practice.

The lack of the reflections of practitioners – church musicians and musical leaders – and lay people, the experiences and meanings formed by and in (congregational) singing situations, as well as non-Western cultures, has led to the fact that although the relationship between Christian music and the concept of the sacred has been approached with merit, the perspective has been helplessly narrow. Philip V. Bohlman has divided studies of music in American religious experience into three groups; 1) philological studies of denominational liturgy and hymnody, 2) musical studies of music divorced from religious experience, and 3) the 'democratic' voices of the practitioners (Bohlman 2006: 10–11). A similar division could be made concerning European studies as well – also Finnish ones.

During the last decade, a novel and emerging research field called Christian Congregational Music Studies has combined a variety of different approaches. According to Mark Porter (2014: 154), congregational studies, practical theology, ritual studies and liturgical studies, as well inclusions of ethnography in theology and ethics, laid the foundation for increased interdisciplinarity regarding the studies of congregational music and worship practices. Despite this development, music still tends to come 'as something of an outsider, set apart as its own field of study and finding

itself largely absent from the developments of these interdisciplinary fields' (Porter 2014: 155). Porter thus underlines the impact of ethnomusicology on interdisciplinary congregational music studies. Ethnomusicology has broadened research of music beyond the Western art music canon and, at the same time, widened the variety of disciplinary tools necessitated by such studies. Porter emphasizes that ethnomusicology has not been the only discipline to make important contributions, but it has served to underline the potential of Christian congregational music as a field of study in its own right, and has encouraged further conversations across disciplinary boundaries (Porter 2016: 156–158).

Within the international Christian Congregational Music Conferences at the Ripon College Cuddesdon, Oxford, UK, presenters have represented such disciplines as theology, history, ethnomusicology, popular music studies, religious studies, intercultural studies, sociology, liturgical studies and psychology, among others. The perspective has expanded from the West to the whole world; the art music canon has been mostly replaced by questions of musical understanding, power structures, political relationships, identities, and social and cultural values, to name a few. These themes were also reflected in the topics of many papers at the 'Music and the Sacred' conference.

Even though Christian Congregational Music Studies are not widely known in Finland, a similar change of emphasis has taken place in the country as well. The traditional hymnological and liturgical research has been expanded to new areas gradually and it has become interdisciplinary in a whole new way. *Sounds Sanctified* is also *HYMNOS* 2020, the Yearbook of the Finnish Society for Hymnology and Liturgy, albeit slightly anachronistically. Despite this incident, by ploughing through the older volumes the change is strikingly evident. The volumes from 1997 to 2011 focus almost entirely on hymns; that is, lyrics, melodies, hymn-writers and so on, with a strong emphasis on history. Contemporary issues are handled only in articles about liturgical practices and projects of renewing hymnals

in different countries. A slight change can be seen in the topics of some articles in *HYMNOS* 2013, but the new kind of interdisciplinarity breaks through in 2015 with, for instance, questions of modern-day aesthetics and research in various fields of art. *Sounds Sanctified* (as *HYMNOS* 2020) and *HYMNOS* 2021 represent much of the new research interests.

Musical Modes of Myths and Science

The extent to which the anomalous publishing order of *HYMNOS* resulted from the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic remains unclear, yet the situation made it plain that in times of crisis, the most hallowed features of human existence are put to test. While the pandemic is not comparable in any way to military warfare, it is globally a matter of life and death. Alongside the health of individuals, at issue is the sustainability of various industries and professions. One may think music is of minor importance in these predicaments, yet its weight in the cultural industries is notable, especially in the sector of event management.

Solemn songs or tender tunes may not heal medically, yet it has been proven *scientifically* that, for instance, after a cardiac arrest, patients' recovery is soothed if they can listen to their favourite music. A cultural scholar with expertise in music – say, an ethnomusicologist – takes this as a point of departure rather than a result, noting first 'but of course' and then how musical expression is indeed universal amongst human communities. There are some crucial caveats here though, starting from the very term itself; music is, 'in Western culture […] the only art or craft that is actually named after a divinity or divinities: the Greek Muses' (Beck 2006: 10). Indeed, given the Finnish context of production of the volume at hand, one should probably acknowledge that the word has found its way into the national vocabulary, even if there is still some uncertainty over *musiikki* (music) including not just *säveltaide* (tonal art) but also *soitto* (playing) and *laulu* (singing) – not to mention *tanssi* (dancing), a loan-

word of its own that is likewise responsible for elevating *tanhu* (a trodden piece of land) to heights of aesthetic beauty. It is also still debatable if manipulation of all the above, whether labelled as producing or something else, counts as music. In the old days, where there were lyricists and tunesmiths, now there are top-liners and trackers.

Yes, everything was pleasant on the shores of the Baltic Sea some eight hundred years ago, give or take a millennium. Väinö was playing his *kantele* and singing his younger rival Jouko into the trodden dirt, whilst trying to lure Aino heteronormatively into his boat and fighting against Louhi and her monsters from the North. Such epic narratives and their ontological relation to music, as well as their possible shamanistic connections, are discussed in more detail by Philip V. Bohlman in his respective chapter in the present collection, yet this brief encapsulation of the *Kalevala*, the national epic of Finland, points to the relevance and *power* of the practices associated with the Eurocentric notion of music, regardless of the geographical or historical context. In this version, the very first words uttered are sung, not spoken, raising an eyebrow or two when reading *scientific* analyses about physiological evidence in favour of singing as preceeding speech in the human evolution (e.g., Harvey 2017; Honing 2018). Apart from a group of tea-drunk creationists, it is generally accepted that *homo sapiens* is a mammal amongst others, and thus, based on the crudest of evolutionist logic – or just by babbling with infants – it is obvious that the sounds produced by humans are 'musical' to begin with. One does not have to be an ethnomusicologist to come to this conclusion, but it may help. In the classic words of John Blacking (1973), music is 'soundly organized humanity.'

Ethnomusicologists were nevertheless amongst the last to recognize this state of affairs, as the power of music was realized already by Plato, for instance, even if mainly by insinuating that music 'nourishes and strengthens the lowest constituent of the soul, the appetitive part [and] thus prevents citizens from achieving virtue' (Peponi 2013: 3). Here, both

music and (the history of) philosophy are admittedly conceived in an unabashedly Eurocentric manner, yet it may be suspected that both Plato and a myriad of other observers all around planet Earth have struggled quite similarly with verbalizing and conceptualizing what is now known as music. Put differently, at issue is certain awe when faced with such a fundamental and thus highly expressive, yet irrevocably contextual rather than denotative form of symbolic communication. Everybody agrees that music means a lot, but *what* and *how* exactly, is open to debate and confusion.

This is evident in the diversity of religious appreciation of 'humanly organized sound' (Blacking 1973, again), and while there are very few tales about Yeshua Ha-Nozri as a singer, the sonorous qualities of Muhammad's voice are frequently celebrated, as well as is his respect towards skilful musicianship as an indication of the grace of God. Moreover, certain musical scales are known as 'church modes' and have often been appropriated by composers to convey a religious feeling or sentiments of pre-Christian paganism. According to Wilfrid Mellers (1981: 147), one of the pioneers of formal analysis of popular music, it is 'the austere modal harmonisation' in Bob Dylan's 1978 song *Señor (Tales of Yankee Power)* which 'convinces us that some kind of religious affirmation may be the only answer to society's distress.' Similar ideas are present in theorizing the melodic patterns or ragas of Indian music, designed to 'arouse aesthetic and emotional states (rasas) meant to please the gods' (Beck 2014: 360; see also Dairianathan in this volume). Likewise, regarding 'music in the world of Islam,' before the nineteenth century, there was a preoccupation in 'almost all available sources dealing with modal theory […] with specifying the manifold affiliations of the [modes] to ethical, therapeutical and cosmological values' (Shiloah 1995: 120). These are useful reminders of the fact that there are many gods in this world, and hence there are many religions, and often there are people without any gods, yet with no lesser devotion.

'I follow the evidence,' says Antti-Ville, 'and I am perplexed by it every day. I *choose* not to *believe*.'

'I believe,' says Samuli, 'and I am perplexed by it every day. I have not *chosen* to *believe*.'

Materialistic Music, Censored Sacrilege

The divergent forms and ferocity of devotion, whether explicitly religious or otherwise ideological, points to the ubiquity of political regulation in the broadest sense, whether directly or inadvertently related to the practices associated with the notion of music. Implicit in this assertion is the recognition of all religious systems as fundamentally and simultaneously both ideological and material; they concern equally establishing belief systems and value hierarchies, and managing physical and financial resources. Alongside massive cathedrals, mosques and temples, a variety of 'sacred architecture' exists in diverse and often carefully tended environments (see Seppälä in this volume). An indication of the scale is the Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon, Myanmar, covered by gold plates and precious gemstones, with an estimated value of three billion US dollars. The financial assets of the Roman Catholic Church are estimated to amount up to thirty billion dollars. While music-related activities may constitute only a marginal share of the effective balance of religious institutions, they are implicated in the financial concerns in question. Regarding individual items, there may be 'a collection of whistles' known as a pipe organ with a multi-million-dollar price tag on it (Stephens 2006), and occasionally tensions have emerged between copyright legislation and interpretations about 'divinely religious purposes' exempt from royalty payments (see Kelderman 2002).

In the scrutiny of different practices and infrastructures associated with worship music, the notions of 'worship economy' and 'worship capital' for instance have been utilized, the former referring to modes of production and consumption, while the latter points towards material and symbolic investments. In the worship economies of the Western world, it may be

noted further – yet hardly surprisingly – that the capitalist marketplace provides 'structures through which the labor of songwriters, musicians, cultural intermediaries, and others is commodified and exchanged for money (or other forms of compensation)' (Mall 2018: 305).

The idea of the worship economy may very well be more broadly applicable, though certainly the variety of marketplaces and their ideological nuances need to be considered. For example, should one approach the interrelations of religiosity and popular music in China in these terms, conceptual and methodological conundrums emerge not only concerning how to conceive 'religion', but also regarding the peculiarities of the socialist market economy (e.g., Morcom 2008; Ho 2017). Likewise, to examine the musical dimensions of the worship economy within Muslim communities – let alone Islamic societies – would undoubtedly necessitate more detailed deliberation on the definition of music (or *musiqa*) to begin with, on its status in the community or societal system, and particularly on the regulative or even prohibitive measures taken against the most sensuous types of music (e.g., al-Faruqi 1985; Shiloah 1995: 31–44). Then again, local variants of explicitly Muslim metal, punk and rap proliferate in various parts of the globe. Initial observations have been made about the dynamics and incongruities of practising openly anti-Islamic black metal in Muslim societies such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia, as there are evident tensions between online promotion and risking blasphemy charges (Otterbeck et al. 2018: 284; cf. also Dairianathan in this volume).

Official prohibition or censorship of music is of course one of the clearest examples how religious and societal value judgements may have profound and irreversible effects on the lives of musicians. In fact, one does not have to be a musician to become a suspect in the minds of extremists, whether religious or political; in certain areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan, music retailers have been targeted violently and fatally by militant Taliban extremists (e.g., Freemuse 2011). While such atrocities are reprehensible and result from warped interpretations of religious doctrines, it is

likewise unfortunate these stories about music and Islam make the headlines, thus exhibiting the prejudiced and even demonizing tendencies that prevail in the Western media and the 'Islamophobia industry' that feeds into it (see Lean 2017). The diverse forms and consequences of censorship, whether smotheringly prohibitive or violently punitive, may nonetheless be of use in conceptualizing the sacred, because they signal the presence of collective absolute and normative values – regardless of the power asymmetries within the collectives in question. The historical shifts in censorial authority may be juxtaposed with processes of secularization, especially if considered in terms of development from the earlier forms of church censorship to state censorship and further so-called market censorship (see Jansen 1988). The last of these may be debatable and difficult to distinguish from regular capitalist competition and profit-seeking, and even in the most liberal secular societies, some forces strive towards banning certain types of music and other forms of cultural expression on either political or religious grounds, or both.

As the competing forces of harnessing and exploiting freedom of musical expression come to the fore, the moral ambiguity of the sacred becomes evident. In Lynch's (2012: 48) words, 'sacred commitments can be the source of much harm,' linking the discussion further to questions of sanctioned violence, whether enacted in the name of God, nations, democracy or education. A key authority in these debates is René Girard (1977), who approaches violence and sacrifice as the essential manifestations of the sacred. This is reformulated by Lynch (2014: 35) into a methodological proverb: 'If we ask people what is sacred to them, they will tell us what they consciously value in their lives. If we want to see what is really sacred in their lives, we need to understand what they will kill or die for, what they believe can legitimize violence against other human beings, and what moves them with deep moral feelings of belonging or disgust.' Neither Girard nor Lynch relate these ideas to music, and while the act of killing someone *with* music may sound epic in the literal sense, it is

possible to use music in both physical and cultural torture, as noise that is either unbearably loud or a deliberately sacrilegious form of ideological violence (Johnson & Cloonan 2008; see also Bohlman, and Rossil in this volume). In explicitly religious contexts, the former has been utilized in the Islamophobic 'war on terror' on both prisoners of war and arbitrary detainees, while the latter becomes apparent in religiously motivated 'gender coercion' and heteronormativity (cf. Cusick 2006).

To Conclude and Acknowledge

Sounds Sanctified is by no means an exhaustive collection of essays in terms of its topic, and such an aim would be either as amusing as music or as stupefying as the sacred. As editors, we are instead content and confident to note that the primary aims of the whole project, including the 2018 conference, have been fulfilled. Through their variegated approaches and spatio-temporal settings, the contributions evince the usefulness and benefits of not taking either music or the sacred for granted, regardless of one's own convictions and whether they stem from the awe of facing either one or both, or neither. Maybe even more importantly, we are pleased to recognize how the individual contributions both complement and contest each other in ways that are, we daresay, inter- and transdisciplinary in the proper sense, as opposed to the pretentious credos of neoliberal universities. Ultimately, of course, it is the readers' task to consider and actualize their position in between (*inter*) as well as their movement beyond (*trans*) the disciplinary frames explicated or implied by the authors. Options abound.

As editors of the volume and members of the conference organizing committee, we first acknowledge the valuable input of the other committee members: Tuomas Auvinen, Heidi Henriikka Mäkelä, Elina Hytönen-Ng, Nina Öhman, Saijaleena Rantanen and Pekka Toivanen. Second, we owe gratitude to the scholarly societies responsible for making

the event happen and publishing the book; that is, the Finnish Society for Ethnomusicology and the Finnish Society for Hymnology and Liturgy. Third, in terms of financial resources, we are decidedly appreciative of the support from the Emil Aaltonen Foundation and the Finnish Federation of Learned Societies. Finally, our thanks go to all those directly involved in the production of the volume at hand, whether as authors or potential and actual reviewers, particularly for their patience, professionalism and advice in these turbulent times.

We moreover thank all the participants for the opportunity to learn repeatedly. All this is realized in one of Samuli's email as he notes: 'well done me,' after including a critical comment into the manuscript by a more experienced scholar. Indeed, if a senior cannot communicate with a junior, or vice versa, what is the point? To indoctrinate critically the naïve and youthful in the ways of the sedate and hesitant is, surely, one of the main points of scholarship. Everybody errs, thus everybody's sacred is contingent upon circumstances – as surely as everybody will be forgiven.

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PHILIP V. BOHLMAN

Music, the sacred, and the epic moment

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Epics overflow with the stories of everyday life made sacred. Many believers enter everyday life through worship; for example, in Judaism, through recitation of daily passages from the annual Torah cycle. At the centre of the epic is the life of an individual, of those who symbolically realize its journey eponymously – Rama, Moses, and Odysseus. Epic musically sounds the path along which the eponymous life journey unfolds, from songs of beginning and birth to laments of passing and death. In everyday life, the lived journeys of epics are even more imbued with sacred and musical meaning because they spread across history and religion with such ubiquity. In world religions and local ritual practice alike, epics are remarkable because they are among the oldest genres of song, embodying the history of a religion and the generations who inhabit it with their lives. Music and the sacred conjoin in the lives sounded by epics. The search for their confluence is possible only through comparative study, thus necessitating the extensive field of scholarship that has long turned towards epic. The goal of such comparative approaches, which I adopt as my own in epic research, is one of understanding just what form the confluence assumes in the lives of individuals and societies, and in modernity through the lives of the nations claiming epics as their own. My search here, guided by the triangulation made possible in an interdisciplinary field of study, focuses on the theoretical formulation of the three moments – musical, sacred, and epic – that most crucially express that triangulation.

The study of epics, whether those of Antiquity, such as the *Gilgamesh*, or of modernity, such as the *Kalevala*, has long provided common founda-

tions for scholarship in the arts, humanities, and religion, and it has done so globally (cf. Bloom 2005; Innes 2013). The scholarly interpretation of the Homeric epics as performance and literary-musical structure has been critical for understanding the history of Greek Antiquity and its arts (cf. Lord 1960; Lord 1991; Turner 2012). The ancient epics of Hinduism in India, among them the *Bhagavad Gita* (see, e.g., Davis 2014), and the more modern epics of Buddhism in China, such as *Xiyouji*, most often glossed in English as *The Journey to the West* (see, e.g., Yu 2006), have joined the sacred and the musical in song, which in turn undergoes translation into intellectual discourse connecting past to present. The very abundance of these common foundations distinguishes their importance for understanding the confluence of music and the sacred.

As a scholar of music, religious studies, and history, I turn to epic because of its omnipresence and its copious connections to the interdisciplinary worlds I inhabit and research, and from which I teach. It would be impossible for me to work in Jewish Studies without beginning with the epic of the Torah (Bohlman 2002). Writing about the intellectual history of ethnomusicology (Bohlman 2013), I lay historiographical groundwork not only by analysing Johann Gottfried Herder's seminal writings on song, but also by translating his version of the Cid epic (Herder and Bohlman 2017: 221–245). As an ethnomusicologist, I turn to epic comparatively to analyse the underlying narrative structure of human sound (Bohlman 2012). In my historical work, epic leads me to the origins of the histories of nationalism about which I seek to write (Bohlman 2011). As a scholar, I also live a life imbued with epic.

Because of this extensive scholarly engagement with epic, it is hardly surprising that music and the sacred have become such a tenacious theme in my research and writing. It is for the reasons of these connections in my research that I seize the opportunity of my contribution to the present volume to expand my work on epic more globally. Triangulating analytical approaches to music and the sacred with epic further opens the potential

for theoretical rigour, leading towards a model that would allow us to seek real answers to questions about epic journeys, and the related ones posed by the contributors to the present volume. Such questions, for example, arise from implicit notions that the connection of music to practices of religion depended on universals. The question of universals that I investigate, however, is not that of earlier ethnomusicology – comparing interval size and sound, or notions of sacred voice as composition – but rather it grows from concepts of music's efficacy and meaning when cohabiting human experience with the sacred, hence the questions of ontology and epistemology.

As I lay the groundwork for the theoretical dimensions of studying music and the sacred, I explore the distinction between objectivity and subjectivity in epic, using it as a transition to theory-building and model-building. My approach to epic here grows from an understanding of epic as a widespread genre, global to a remarkable degree, in which the musical and the sacred converge (cf., e.g., the essays in Beissinger, Tylus, and Wofford 1999). I deliberately draw upon and compare epics from different religions and linguistic traditions, searching for the ways they connect to larger ideas – some perhaps shared across human cultures and religious experience. A considerable number of epics have been central to my own research in Jewish music and South Asian music for many years; I have dedicated myself to translating other epics, especially those in Herder's writings and southeastern Europe (see, e.g., Herder and Bohlman 2017; Bohlman and Petković 2012); still, others are more contemporary, and I increasingly encounter them in popular culture.

Epic forms around moments in which different ideas about human subjectivity and sound converge. They are there when we need them, already interwoven into everyday musical and social experience, and they enter history when their narratives continue to represent religious experiences that form the moments in which they come into being. Throughout the world and history, epic has common sacred and musical themes.

Forms of performance depend on similar practices, of a solo singer with heterophonic accompaniment. The sacred and the secular, especially the political, converge. Epic marks the borders between myth and history, and it forms at those points in its narratives. Epic contains multiple themes and individual stories about the beginnings of music, especially its origins. Themes of human existence – life, death, violence, and sacrifice – accrue to music in epic.

Since the comparison of global epic leads me to identify points of convergence, multiple qualities form the threshold to the universe that comes into view. These qualities persist over time, barely abating in the present, when they underlie neo-nationalist movements, such as those in India and Germany, or provide the literary templates for contemporary novels, such as Anne Weber's *Annette, ein Heldinnenepos*, the winner of the most prestigious literary award for the German language, the 2020 Deutscher Buchpreis (Weber 2020). Such qualities stretch across folk epics, but they also enter the ways in which composers of art music draw upon epic themes to chart musical nationalism; for example, in the works of Richard Wagner and Jean Sibelius, both indebted extensively to epic themes. The four-opera cycle of Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* consciously translates themes of epic universality into a nationalist work of music drama, retaining the mythical subjectivity of epic at multiple levels. When one takes the Nordic predecessors of these nineteenth-century operas into consideration, one might also think of epic in the Nibelungen and Edda cycles as cases of a telescopic epic *longue durée*, stretching in medieval sources as far as Greenland (Krause 2001). The epic themes in Wagner are about the sacred and music all the way down, and they are concentrated in the operatic cycle as a modern epic moment. When Sibelius draws upon the *Kalevala* and its runes for large symphonic works and small vocal works alike, he too upholds a process of translation that begins at the epic's Karelian borderlands, before entering the language of European nationalism in the nineteenth century, and intensifying the formation

of a Finnish epic moment in the twentieth century.

I propose a series of three models to take us through a way of thinking about how epic moments come into being, embodying music and the sacred, and above all entering the space between them (Figures 1–3). When I use three different models, they are interlocking in order, so that they might triangulate as a single overarching model that illustrates the paths along which music and the sacred pass before converging in the epic moment. The moments realized by the models reflect historical, religious, and narrative differences; however, more critically, they reveal the correspondences between and among the differences. Triangulation made possible by the three models thus expands the field of meanings shared by the sacred, music, and epic in the moments common to them.

Figure 1. The Sacred Moment.

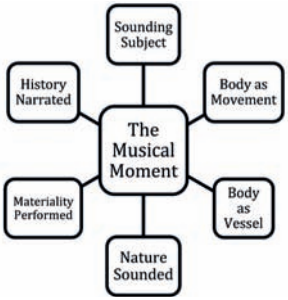

Figure 2. The Musical Moment.

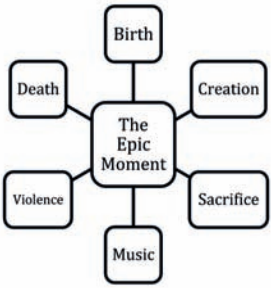

Figure 3. The Epic Moment.

Sacred, musical, and epic moments converge as historical narratives, entering the time and space of the nation. The convergence of the three moments results from a process of triangulation, each moment making others more meaningful as a historical narrative. The epic moments are therefore distinctive because of the different musical and sacred traditions from which they come. Together, however, they weave those traditions into the larger fabric of global history in which music and the sacred find common ground in epic with its journey from birth to death, and then its soteriological return to life.

BeReshit / In the Beginning – The Birth of the Sacred

1 בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ׃

2 וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תֹהוּ וָבֹהוּ וְחֹשֶׁךְ עַל־פְּנֵי תְהוֹם
רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל־פְּנֵי הַמָּיִם׃

3 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אוֹר וַיְהִי אוֹר׃

4 וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאוֹר כִּי טוֹב
וַיַּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאוֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ׃

5 וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לָאוֹר יוֹם וְלַחֹשֶׁךְ קָרָא לָיְלָה
וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד׃

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
2 The earth was without form and void, and the darkness was upon the face of the deep;
and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.
3 And God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light.
4 And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.
5 God called the light Day, and the Darkness he called Night.
And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

Genesis 1: 1–5 (King James Version).

The sacred arises as epic song from the seas that join the land to the heavens, as history breaching the shores striving to contain it. The journeys of the heroes who give their names to the epics about those whose life journeys followed the seas – Moses, Ulysses, the Cid, and Rama – navigate and negotiate the seas that give birth to the sacred. Epic cycles bear witness to the seas, to water as a life-giving force – *Lāčplēsis* in Latvia, *Kalevipoeg* in Estonia, *Pan Tadeusz* in Poland and Lithuania, *Kalevala* in Finland – singing the nation into being, at once ancient and modern, many beginnings re-sounding the sacred voices of the past in the sacred narratives of history. The sea asserts itself, metaphorically and literally, as musical geography suspended between the human struggle against unimaginable odds, and the imagination of salvation beyond, thus the passage from the secular world of the flesh to the sacred world of the spirit.

With an opening epic moment, I seek to understand why epic is one of the most widespread sites for the confluence of music and the sacred. I take as my beginning the quality of epic to narrate the beginning of life, birth itself, extending its meaning to the journey of life made sacred through the struggle and sacrifice that ultimately lead to and sanctify death. The sacred saturates epic, and it does so through song; indeed, reflexively so, for epic is song about song. Through epic, music and the sacred are given a common birth.

It is critical for the confluence of musical, sacred, and epic moments that I chart in this search for common origins that the broad range of musical and religious traditions represented in the present volume is extensively diverse. At first glance, the search for common origins across landscapes and seascapes realized through diversity might seem to be a contradiction. The question I explore, however, does not rest on a claim that the musical practices of different religions are the same, but rather it opens a larger theological recognition of the very possibility of sharing human experiences across time and space. It is these experiences of the sacred that epic song is especially adept at gathering and weaving into the life narratives of the historical *longue durée* of religion.

The epigraph that opens this section, Genesis 1: 1–5, also opens one of the oldest of all epics, the text on the beginnings of the world in the Judeo-Christian Bible. The spirit of faith contained in Genesis is found in each of the Abrahamic faiths – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – religions that are at once joined and separated by epic song. The epic of Moses chronicles a common ancestry – *BeReshit,* 'in the beginning', giving the first book of the Jewish Torah its Hebrew name. Those of other Mediterranean epics, the *Cid* at the onset of the *reconquista* in southwestern Europe, and the battles on the plains of Kosovo in southeastern Europe during the fourteenth century CE, recount tales of irreconcilability. The narrative material of myth, epics tell the stories of humans no less than of gods, with songs born of the flesh of mortals who enter the world of the living and who die, locating life itself in the space opened at the confluence of music and the sacred.

Nordic Europe and the Baltic lands, too, contain rich epic landscapes and seascapes, across which common origins and diverse histories form a counterpoint of human experiences. The sacred in Baltic epics forms at the confluence of myth and history. As Baltic epics begin, humans and nature intersect, acting together to invest the sacred with life, both mortal and immortal. As the stories of Baltic epics unfold, accruing as the runes and cantos that together form larger epic cycles, music and the sacred assume common roles and agency. Song embodies the origins of the sacred, as it does at the opening of the *Kalevala*:

> Mieleni minun tekevi,
> Aivoni ajattelevi
> Lähteäni laulamahon,
> Saa'ani sanelemahan,
> Sukuvirttä suoltamahan
> Lajivirttä laulamahan.
>
> *Kalevala* – 'Ensimmäinen runo' (https://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/kvfin/01.htm).

I have a good mind
take into my head
to start off singing
begin reciting
reeling off a tale of kin
and singing a tale of kind.

Kalevala – Rune 1, 'In the Beginning' (Lönnrot 1999: 1).

Whereas the origins of the sacred in Mediterranean and Baltic epics connect the symbols of music to myth in similar ways, the histories that their eponymous heroes enact follow different paths. Mediterranean epics most often arise from oral tradition centuries and millennia in the past. Baltic epics are frequently more modern, often with origins in oral traditions that are transformed and translated in collections disseminated through written tradition. Such mediated authorship is the case for Elias Lönnrot and the *Kalevala*, published in a first print version in 1849, and for the Latvian epic, *Lāčplēsis* (The Bearslayer), assembled by Andrejs Pumpurs between 1872 and 1887 (for modern editions, see Pumpurs 1957; Pumpurs 2007). In Baltic epics, the distance between past and present – the beginning of the world and the nations that spread across it – is narrower, as is the space cohabited by music and the sacred. Most remarkable as one searches for music and the sacred in the *Kalevala* is not only their remarkable density – as in the opening rune, 'In the Beginning' – but the ways in which they collapse metaphor and meaning at almost every moment across the *Kalevala*'s runes. The opening of rune 1 is a type of prelude, though it also functions as an invocation in the liturgical sense. We know that music and the sacred converge at this epic moment. We witness this sonically in the variants of the *Kalevala*'s opening rune that circulate into and through oral tradition. Sounded music assumes material form to forge Finnish history, as it does famously in rune 41, 'The Pikebone Kantele':

Steady old Väinämöinen
the everlasting singer
    prepares his fingers
    rubs his thumbs ready;
he sits on the rock of joy
on the song-boulder settles
    on the silver hill
    on the golden knoll;
he fingered the instrument
turned the curved thing on his knees
the kantele in his hands.

Rune 41 – The Pikebone Kantele (Lönnrot 1999: 538).

As we enter the space of epic shared by music and the sacred, we begin to think about how the epic moment also becomes a site into which human communities – sovereign states and nations chief among them – are born. Beginnings become borders – linguistic, geographical, and political – and song becomes sovereignty. I approach the epic moment from several perspectives in search of the different paths from epic to sovereignty. As the epic moment opens as a space for music and the sacred, we recognize that epic draws us into nation-states larger than life – places of sovereignty indeed – beyond the lands occupied by mere mortals, in which music leads ineluctably to the sacred.

Epic as a Musical Translation – Sacred Voice Becomes Sovereign Voice

From there they looked
Out upon the sea, the Moors approaching,
They saw them striking their tents
With great speed and care,
With battle cries and drums,
Battle cries and ringing timpani.

Mothers and daughters alike
Were seized by fear, for they
Had never seen such forces
On the battlefield in a single place.
'Don't be afraid, my loved ones all,
spoke the Cid, as long as I live,
Neither worry nor fear will you feel.
When tomorrow comes, you will see all
These Moors conquered'.

El Cid – canto 54, lines 24–38 (in Herder 1990, 660; translated by Philip V. Bohlman in Herder and Bohlman 2017: 242).

Epic narrates history as excess and extravagance. The heroes and wars, the emotion and devotion, in epic are larger than life. The epic hero commands massive forces, survives great odds, and lives and dies under almost inhumane circumstances. The *Cid* story is one of the epics whose history assumes different forms throughout its long and complex history.

El Cid is the great epic of modern Spain, but its narrative and its many variants begin in medieval Iberia and North Africa, in the historical region known as al-Andalus. The conflict forming its origins has multiple dimensions: North Africa and the Middle East vs. Europe, East vs. West, and North vs. South. Fundamentally, however, these dimensions are reli-

gious, for al-Andalus was culturally and musically unified by how its three major religions, the Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, shared theological principles, even as their histories had diverged. The *Cid* epic is an account of the attempt of Christian forces, fighting for Castile, to begin the reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula for Europe and Christianity (for the *Cid*'s origins and transmission see, e.g., Barton and Fletcher 2000; Corneille 1931; Duggan 1989; Gaier 1990; Hämel 1910; Powell 1983; Smith 1983; for a modern translation of crucial cantos into English, see Herder and Bohlman 2017: 221–245).

Epic as a genre, like the heroes who inhabit it, begins life modestly. Its basic structures contain the smallest possible units, even fragments, incomplete and often without formal properties of their own. The line, or stich, provides one of the most basic structural units, which, depending on the epic tradition, is further divided into hemistiches, caesurae, and ultimately, a succession of individual syllables. The musical performance of epic in oral tradition utilizes, in the first order, the equivalents of the micro-units of text. The melodies of epic repertories depend on syllabic and declamatory styles, occupying only a small range. They are monophonic or with multipart polyphony, often also heterophonic, that is accompanied by an instrument playing the same melodic shape, but deliberately not in unison. In the Finnish epic, that instrument is symbolically the *kantele*; in the Judeo-Christian Bible, in the Five Books of Moses, or Torah, it is 'Jubal's Lyre'. The accompaniment style of epic has often been used in music analysis to define heterophony (cf. Bohlman 2011; Jakobson 1966). We witness the materiality of musical instruments in the epic structure Johann Gottfried Herder realizes for his Enlightenment, the re-singing of *El Cid* (English translation from Herder and Bohlman 2017: 224):

Auf nun, auf! / Trompeten, Trommeln,
Pfeifen, Klar / inetten tönet,
Übertönet / Klag' und Seufzen;
Denn der *Cid* / befahl es da.
Ihr gelei / tet auf die Seele
Eines Hel / den, der entschlief.

Arise now! / Trumpets, also drums,
Flutes with clar / inets intoning,
Sounding loudly / the baleful sigh;
For the Cid / orders it thus.
You are led / deeply from the soul
Of a he / ro, who rises up.

Johann Gottfried Herder, *Der Cid,* Canto 68 (Herder 1990: 682–683).

It is for all these reasons that the transmission of epic takes place as a translation, not of the authentic, but rather of the ever-increasing excessiveness that a micro-unit structure encourages. To provide one example of how epic proliferates through translation, I might note that my university academic library, the Regenstein Library of the University of Chicago, produces 243 results when I search the term 'Kalevala'. Some of these editions and related *Kalevala* sources are in Finnish, but the overwhelming majority are in other languages, especially those of Nordic Europe and Russia, many of these first editions from the nineteenth century. These are by no means simple figurative ruminations on the translation that provides the engine for epic transmission. Epics form through specific acts of translation: dialects become single languages; oral tradition becomes written tradition; regional languages become national languages; vernacular become the languages of musical specialists and epic chroniclers such as Homer, Ossian, Johann Gottfried Herder, or Elias Lönnrot (cf. Herder 1990 and 1998; Lord 1960; Lönnrot 1999).

Epic languages are steeped in ideological, political, and sacred meaning, often conjoining these items when epic is mobilized in service to the nation; for example, the Castilian Spanish of *El Cid* in nationalist service to Spain, or the modern Serbian in the *Kosovo Cycle* to Serbia (for studies on national languages in epic, see Bohlman and Petković 2011). Epics become the templates for cultural translation itself. The *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* provide some of the earliest models for what we know as classical Greek. The Torah contains the foundations of classical, biblical Hebrew. Cultural translation of epics thus shapes the historical processes, generating 'the poetics of community', hence of sovereign citizenship (Beissinger, Tylus, and Wofford 1999). Modern, newly composed epics, such as Heiner Müller and Heiner Goebbels's *Wolokolomsker Chaussee* (1989/90), an allegory of the dissolution of a divided Germany, continue to use epic form to translate the sovereignty of nations (Goebbels 1994; see Bohlman 2021). Translation is ongoing and modernising, and it is particularly through its potential to recalibrate the past as modern, that music assumes its critical role for the translation of sacred voice into sovereign voice.

Sacred Journey and Epic Landscapes

It is the sacred journey of the epic hero that animates the politics of agency, transforming musical and sacred landscapes into epic landscapes and seascapes. The journey across epic geography – Exodus in the Bible, the Odyssey for Homer, the Hindu god Rama's voyage to Ravana's fortifications on the island of Lanka in the *Rāmāyaṇa* – unfolds as the path from birth through love and sacrifice to death and the sacred beyond. The translator of epics – Homer, Herder, the nineteenth-century anthologizer of Balkan epic, Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, Elias Lönnrot, a Bollywood screenwriter, I myself translating Herder (Herder and Bohlman 2017) – makes deliberate decisions about the meaning of *epos* (ἔπος), the acts of individuals to occupy, lose, or possess the sovereign lands the epic singer chronicles. It is

possible to represent these different epic landscapes and seascapes schematically and comparatively, if not tentatively, nonetheless, with the clear goal of recognising how they are given meaning through the agency of translation itself. Such an examination of epic geography, I propose, might be represented by the following typology:

1) Creation and foundation myths
2) The geography of sacred and secular spaces
3) Local landscapes
4) Diaspora
5) Historical landscapes
6) Sovereign national landscapes
7) Colonial and global landscapes

Creation and Foundation Myths. In their beginnings, still in moments of prehistory, epic landscapes are places in which creation and foundational myths become human. Two of the best-known creation myths, 'BeReshit' at the beginning of the Bible, and the first rune of the *Kalevala*, are also explicitly dedicated to the beginning of the world. It is important to recognize that the landscapes charted by such epic moments are material and real, made of soil and water, and rendered habitable for human communities.

The Geography of Sacred and Secular Spaces. Epic landscapes are divided into two realms, generally representing sacred and secular spaces. It is these two realms that in Christian soteriological thought were first described by St. Augustine in the fourth century CE as the 'city of the spirit' and the 'city of the flesh'. Together, these two cities constituted for Augustine his *civitas dei,* the City of God (St. Augustine 1993). The two realms appeared in epic translations throughout the Latin Middle Ages and the Renaissance, where they provided models for Thomas More's 1516 *Utopia* (More 1965) and Martin Luther's Protestantism. In the *Bhagavad Gita,*

it is the plains near the mythical and modern Kurukshetra, in which the armies of the god Krishna and the soldier Arjuna meet (see Davis 2014). These two realms of the epic landscape are critical, above all, because of the space in-between – the epic moment between the sacred and musical moments.

Local Landscapes. Epic landscapes are not only metaphorical, but rather they are also filled with local detail. This is the case with the Bnai Hilal epic of North Africa, whose mobility comes in response to local moments of cultural encounter (Slyomovics 1987). In the Judeo-Christian tradition, one of the most striking examples of a local landscape transformed to an epic moment is the fifteenth chapter of Exodus in the Torah, when the Red Sea opens for Moses, but closes upon the army of Pharaoh, utilising a shift in the musical genre to chart the epic landscape of a sacred journey. It is at this point, when the biblical text shifts from a line-by-line structure to a strophic structure with internally repetitive narrative form, or ballad, that the sacred emerges most powerfully and violently in song, the 'Shirat HaYam', or 'Song of the Sea'.

> Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord, saying,
> 1. I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously;
> the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.
> 2. The Lord is my strength and my song,
> and he has become my salvation;
> this is my God, and I will praise him,
> my father's God, and I will exalt him.
> 3. The Lord is a man of war;
> the Lord is his name. . . .
> 17. Thou wilt bring them in, and plant them on thy own mountain,
> the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thy abode,
> the sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established.
> 18. The Lord will reign for ever and ever.
>
> Exodus 15, 'Shirat HaYam' / Song of the Sea' (Revised Standard Version).

Diaspora. Diaspora pushes at the periphery of epic landscapes to reinforce the centre, the point of return. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey,* thus, trace the journey of Odysseus and his followers across a seascape opened by ceaseless translations, without losing sight, in the epic itself, of Ithaca (see, e.g., the literary expansion of the Odyssean landscape in Mason 2010). That the epic landscape of the Torah generates diaspora while also projecting the possibility of terminating it could not be clearer, particularly in the final 'Song of Moses', sung by the eponymous hero of the Five Books of Moses in the epic moment at the end of the final book, Deuteronomy 32, when he recognizes that he will never reach the Promised Land.

Historical Landscapes. The relation between epic landscapes and historical landscapes is one of considerable exchange, mediated by translation. Indeed, translation through history, not surprisingly, brings an increasing number of details to the epic landscape. This is strikingly evident in the composed epics bounding the early modern Mediterranean, among them Dante's *Divine Comedy* and John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.

Sovereign National Landscapes. Epic landscapes lend themselves to translation into national landscapes, whose very geography expresses sovereignty. The Andalusian world of the original oral versions of *El Cid* became that of Castile, and then of Spain. The Kosovo of the *Kosovo Cycle* continues to be recharted through song even in the twenty-first century. The epics of the lands surrounding the Baltic Sea all reimagine mythical lands as sovereign nations during a period of rising nationalism from the 1830s to the 1870s.

Colonial and Global Landscapes. When epic landscapes are occupied and acted upon by human agency, they stretch beyond the local and the historical to acquire global dimensions. Translation afforded epic the potential to redeploy the boundaries of colonialism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; for example, when Spain's *Cid* became the basis for new national epics throughout Latin America in the nineteenth century (Altschul 2012). In science fiction, ancient and modern, the world beyond

the space of the Mediterranean is even that of an apocalypse – Atlantis, Armageddon (see, e.g., Lessing 2006). In comic-book representation it is both utopia and dystopia, as in the 2018 blockbuster Afrofuturist film, *Black Panther*, an epic about the non-existent African nation of Wakanda. At the end of the sacred journey, one reaches the epic moment, beyond which lie the unknown and death.

Epic Time, Real Time

As we reflect on the epic moment in science fiction and the popular culture of films with comic-book heroes, we are again reminded that epic lives can enter and construct real time, making it also larger than life. Such is the case with the South Asian epic, *Padmaavat*, which narrates the historical past, but has throughout history come increasingly to narrate the real time of modern India. Set against actual historical events in fourteenth-century India, an epic moment of religious conflict between Hinduism and Islam, the film *Padmaavat* engendered narratives that stretch across South Asian history, gathering narrative and music from the earliest Sanskrit epics, and stretching across the twenty-first-century religious landscapes of popular culture and Bollywood film. Released in early 2018, the most recently filmed version of *Padmaavat* is the cinematic version of an Indian epic told in countless versions during the past six centuries, which in real time unleashed controversy and conflict against the backdrop of contemporary Hindutva nationalism (Bhansali 2018). Although it is modern – *Padmaavat* circulated for only fifteen months before the Indian national election in spring 2019 – it nonetheless exemplifies the issues of religious sovereignty in South Asia that stretch back centuries (see Sreenivasan 2007).

Epic is no stranger to India's blockbuster Bollywood films, the narrative power of which amplifies the myth and history that converge through centuries of reimagining and retelling. Epic already provided the central narrative in the first Indian film, Dhundiraj Govind Phalke's *Raja Harish-*

Figure 4. Mahabharata Monolith at Kailash Cave 16 at Ellora, India. Photograph by the author.

chandra of 1913. The Indian epic moves across genres no less frequently than it transgresses historical moments, conjoining religious belief and political struggle to reshape the very foundations of the nation. Epics are embedded within epics, concentrating the moments of music and the sacred, as in the foundational battle realized by music in the *Bhagavad Gita,* as it becomes real time at the heart of the *Mahabharata* (see figure 4).

The Indian film industry – Bollywood with its Hindi-language films, as well as the regional variants that produce films in other South Asian languages across the subcontinent – grew to international fame to a large degree by making epics their own, claiming the songs and tales at the heart of epic for the screen, as India passed from colonialism to nationalism with independence in 1947. The sense of epic selfness that cinema affords in India has also historically been fragile and contested. When myth and history cohabit the epic tale on the screen, they may tell a story that some

regard as a violation of national selfness, and an exaltation of an otherness that threatens from elsewhere. Film makes epic modern, re-sounding its message through new songs and sacred symbols. The cinematic self of mythical authenticity strives to embrace the otherness of historical real time, making reality larger than even the Self wishes to imagine (Rajadhyaksha 2016).

India's national familiarity with epic cinema revealed itself to an extreme in the months leading up to the 2018 release of the Bollywood retelling of the tale of the fourteenth-century Rajput Queen, Padmavati, who sacrificed her life by self-immolation rather than allow Allauddin Khilji, the Afghan Sultan of Delhi, to witness her beauty. The film version of *Padmaavat*, directed by the highly respected Sanjay Leela Bhansali, acquired the sweep of epic from the outset, produced at a cost of thirty million dollars (extremely high for Indian standards), filmed with lavish and expansive cinematography, and supported by a rich musical score, replete with Bollywood song-and-dance sequences. The epic of Padmavati and Allauddin Khilji is extremely well known in India, finding its way into countless variants and media, even comic books mass-produced for popular consumption (figure 5).

The anticipation that greeted the release of *Padmaavat*, however, was not that of the theatregoers' intent on seeing the first screenings, but rather it spread widely across India to those who took to the media and the streets to prevent the film from being screened in the first place. Protesters and rioters, the women seeking permission for self-immolation, and the regional politicians of the dominant Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), claimed that *Padmaavat* had taken the epic to an extreme, desecrating its fundamental and fundamentalist meanings for the nation (Gettleman, Raj, and Kumar 2018).

Remarkably, the uproar about the film preceded its release; hence, it had little basis in what the film version of *Padmaavat* did or did not do. Was the film a violation of the national Self because its heroine, Padmavati, was too

Figure 5. Self-Immolation of Padmavati, Queen of Rajput (*Padmini* 1973: 29).

alluring? Why would Hindu nationalists object to a film which portrayed Hindus historically as protectors of the Rajput kingdom of Chitor, whereas the Muslim invaders were the perpetrators of evil and violence? Why did the protests split India along partisan lines, with the opposition Indian National Congress Party also staking its position against the BJP, and necessitating a ruling by the Indian Supreme Court to order the release of the film? These are the questions that one epic moment in 2018 may have unleashed, accompanied by the rise of death threats to those willing to risk screenings of the film. At the same time, we witness the epic moment formed from the musical and religious moments that are represented cinematically when individual songs from the film have been viewed hundreds of millions of times since *Padmaavat*'s release. History seeks epic, eventually drawing sustenance from the bards and singers of tales – and Bollywood film directors – who nourish the memory of the nation through time, and yet at each moment the sacred appears to be under threat.

At the End of Epic – Death and the Sacred Musical

1 Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak;
and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.
2 My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew,
as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass:
3 Because I will publish the name of the LORD:
ascribe ye greatness unto our God.
4 He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment:
a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.
5 They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children: they are a perverse and crooked generation.
6 Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise?
is not he thy father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?
7 Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations:
ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee.
8 When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.
9 For the LORD's portion is his people;
Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.
10 He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness;
he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.

Deuteronomy 32: 1–10 (King James Version).

Epic sweeps across sacred landscapes and sovereign borders almost daily in the real time of the twenty-first-century refugee crisis, and the movement of migrants across the seas connecting Africa and the Middle East; also, from Asia to Europe, from the lands of Muslims to South Asia, and from Central America to the United States. There is a crisis, too, that

further envelops the entire world as I write in 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic, which is stretching into a second year. I return to moments of crisis – this globalisation of music and the sacred in the real time that we share with those seeking refuge in Europe, Asia, and the Americas – and as I search for closure. It is impossible now, and probably long into the future, to know whether the sweep of this twenty-first-century sacred journey will find homes for the people in search of safety and sovereignty. Song accompanies the spread of political unrest and the rise of new nationalisms. The epic song of this contemporary real time celebrates heroes and cries out for us to remember those who have fallen. The heroism and tragedy of epic song sustain the counterpoint of sacred history in the real time we are sharing, and it extends that history to the soteriological.

We are once again reminded that epic is persistently a place of violence and death, no less than sacrifice on the part of the hero. I have turned to epic moments sounded by songs about beginnings, and I end with an epic moment about ending. I have done so by citing the beginning and end of one of the most sacred of all epic cycles, the Torah. Most of the epics whose journeys I have traced, however, end in death – of Moses, the Cid, and Padmavati. Death enters musically into the epic, even intruding upon its form. There is a change of genre – to the narrative of strophic form – for example, in the final moments of the fifth book of Moses, Deuteronomy, serving as my final epigraph, when the eponymous Moses confronts his own mortality before he crosses into the Land of Israel. In epic, death becomes the agent for translation from eschatological to soteriological language – to the transcendent epic moment. Song at this moment may be about the 'end of things', but it is also about 'the return to life'.

Epic's narrative becomes sacred as a means of crossing the space of passage and moving beyond it, realized historically as the confluence of music and the sacred. The songs of death in epics also affirm how they contain life and its passage to the sacred. That space, the boundary area between two worlds, opens the space of sacred journey and the violence that it en-

genders and sustains. Death reminds us that epic has sacred dimensions, and it moves across the metaphorical spaces cohabited by music, and the sacred in ways already formulated by sacred texts. As with Moses's death at the end of the Torah, death reminds us that epic ends only to begin again, always in search of new translations and modes of expression. Far from closing forever with Moses's death, Deuteronomy 32 moves from the end to the beginning of the Torah, 'BeReshit', the beginning of existence. Epic forestalls death by enunciating it and offering it up to the soteriological act of translation and return, of discovering real time once again. Epic begins anew with death and rebirth, the epic moment of music and the sacred.

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SERAFIM SEPPÄLÄ

Musical language unlocking sacred spaces: Armenian architecture experienced

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What can a sacred space tell us, and how does one process the message? The problem is familiar to most of us from our practical lives in one way or another, but it is not easy to handle in academic terms. I have chosen to carry out an interdisciplinary pursuit to examine how two twentieth-century Armenian authors, John Halajian (1926–2007) and Karpis Surenyan (1925–2011), employed musical terminology in describing and interpreting the sacred spaces of classical Armenian architecture in several medieval churches in the Armenian mountains. The focus is not on defining the technical characteristics of architectural objects, but rather on comprehending *architecture as experienced reality*: how does Halajian's and Surenyan' musical terminology contribute to the expression and interpretation of one's personal presence in these sanctuaries? This idea in turn opens a wider question on the relation of sacred architecture and music in general, which ultimately leads to the most profound enigmas of beauty and existence.

Some background reflections

To enter an ancient sacred space is an impressive experience for anyone, regardless of religious affiliation. A thousand-year-old stone church integrated into a mountainous landscape, with a dark narthex penetrated by a refined ray of light and permeated by a still echo (Figure 1), instantly

Figure 1. Monastery of Saghmosavank, Armenia. Photograph by the author, 2011.

provokes sentiments such as calmness and profoundness, in addition to providing inspiring effects for the human mind. A moment spent in a dark narthex without doing or thinking anything, may be something that one remembers clearly for many years, which, in turn, illustratively demonstrates how dynamic and effective the experience can be.

But how does one describe such experiences of being in a sacred space? How does one express and discuss profound impressions and effects that may be not clearly divisible into cognitive or emotional ones? Theological and philosophical terms and traditions of expression may appear non-sufficient, distant or artificial. In a sacred space, sensations are not private contemplative sentiments but are formed and structured in a holistic relation to the physical architectural space, and its solutions and dimensions, including its history. In other words, the space is all-penetratingly present in the inner experience. Thus, the question, to begin with, is not 'How to contemplate in a church?', but rather, 'How to experience a sacred space, its ancient structures and forms?'

The question is surprisingly rare in scholarly literature. Academic writing on sacred buildings, especially in the case of churches, usually deals with buildings as material entities, focusing on their measurements, proportions and chronological developments. However, if one aims to focus on the sacred space as an *experienced entity*, the questioning becomes much more complex. Ultimately, it is about delineating the phenomenology of sacred buildings*:* what is consciousness like when being in a sacred space? How does a sacred space appear for the mind? How does it penetrate, fill and affect the mind? This in turn is related to the elementary philosophical question: 'To what extent is it possible to represent a material object in an immaterial, intelligible medium such as language?' (Webb 1999: 59.) The actual problem, however, is not the description of material entity as *Ding an sich*, but its phenomenological presence in the human mind. In fact, there is no clear borderline between a description of a building and that of its perception and comprehension in the senses: conceptual adjectives such as 'colossal', 'impressive', 'archaic' or 'intricate' operate somewhere in-between.

One solution for these problems is to employ *musical* terminology to portray sacred spaces and their effects. The language of music deals with an aspect of reality that is based on physical and even mathematical proportions, but in subjective comprehension it appears as a coherent whole, which seems to be something other than its mathematically describable objective constituents. In music, physical and objective reality turns into an experienced internal reality – fully private, fully public. Similarly, architecture creates concrete spaces for subjective apprehension. Architecture is physical and objective, but the act of experiencing it is subjective, private and dynamic, 'architecture animated'. This reason is why architecture fills and rearranges a space, somewhat like music fills and rearranges time. The parallel has been noted often by thinkers. According to the famous aphorism attributed to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 'architecture is frozen music'. The analogy is used in many studies of music (such as Dürr

1988, discussing the 'tonal architecture' of Bach about the Gospel of John), but apparently less so in the case of architecture.

Sources and methodology

John Halajian and Karpis Surenyan are original and profound thinkers, but neither is very technical or precise in their formulations. Therefore, they must be read not only analytically and systematically but also in a hermeneutical way, combining outsider and insider perspectives to reach structuring principles in their thought. Both are characterised by being descendants of the survivors of the Armenian genocide, which kept on overshadowing their lives and visions. Post-genocidal existence, in general, is typically characterised by pessimism, cynicism and broad distrust in political goodwill, ethical principles, religious fundaments, and even human rationality in general; both authors struggled to get over this darkness.

Born in Damascus, Syria, John Halajian immigrated to the United States and became a pioneer of digital imaging and a prolific architect. He designed a considerable number of modern Armenian churches based on classical Armenian architecture, in addition to other Orthodox churches in America. Moreover, he was a productive author who wrote in English on various topics, mainly for an American-Armenian audience.

As a thinker, Halajian was a holistic intellectual for whom religion, art and science are three rivers running toward the ocean of truth. Therefore, he was fascinated by architecture and defined it as 'the only intellectual pursuit I know of that is both art and science' (Halajian 2013: 170, 192, 227, 246).

Another Armenian of Western Armenian origin, Karpis Surenyan, was born in Greece after the Armenian genocide; he moved to Soviet Armenia where he made his career. A prolific writer and translator with a special interest in architecture, Surenyan seems to have felt alien in the Soviet

system due to his religious and cultural openness. Armenians in general were not as anti-Soviet as Baltic peoples or Georgians, but Surenyan was convinced that what was called progress in the name of science and dignified values rather represented serious regression.

Of the two authors, Surenyan is superior in literary style and mystical depth, but Halajian is distinguished by his wide reading and holistic approach. Surenyan wrote before Halajian, but his distinctive work *Fortresses of the Spirit* (Ոգու ամրոցներ) was published later, long after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Without knowing about each other, both authors wrote about their personal approach to classical Armenian architecture in rather parallel terms, and this applies also to their interest in the language of music.

It is obvious, however, that the parallelism between music and architecture is not a schematic truth that would allow exact translations from the language of one system to the other. Instead, it represents wider questions on the place of architectural and musical beauty in the deepest human yearnings. Apprehension of music and that of architecture are variations of aesthetic perception. In Platonic terms, this means participation in objective beauty; in modern terms, it means that musical and architectural experiences have parallel subjective psychological qualities. In discussing the role of beauty in this context, I use the aesthetics of David Bentley Hart as a loose methodological tool, or perhaps rather, a theoretical backbone to clarify Halajian's and Surenyan's intentions. Hart's *The Beauty of the Infinite* (Eerdmans 2004) is already a classic of postmodern metaphysics and theological aesthetics, but his more recent work *The Experience of God: Being, Consciousness, Bliss* (Yale University Press 2014) is even more fruitful for its observations on the character of beauty. Hart is challenging and rewarding reading, due to his aim to see beauty as something essentially more than subjective reactions to psychological perceptions – and his ability to express this classical Platonic stand in postmodern terms.

Halajian: Form, structure and function

To define the structures and dimensions of architecture – or even music – is a rather straightforward exercise, but to define the human ways of experiencing them is something completely different. One must pay attention to subjectively perceived and constituted aspects and contextual matters such as nature, time and history.

Firstly, the medieval sacred buildings of Armenia are situated in mountainous sites and the architecture is heedful of the coherence of the buildings in relation to the *landscape*. The Churches are a kind of 'stone flowers' that burst out from the mountainsides and their holy caves. For our purposes, this means that to experience these buildings is not unrelated to their surroundings, as the perception takes place in an organic relation to the mountainous landscape around the sacred spaces.

Secondly, sacred structures, whether architectural or musical, set one in a special relationship with *time*. To enter a sacred space is to enter a relationship with sacred history; inside an ancient Church, one is in a space in which dozens of generations have prayed. Without knowing their names or faces, one may objectively know that they have prayed there, and perhaps in some way feel the presence of their prayers, which is subjective, private knowledge. In a parallel way, sacred music is appealing because it is not an invention of our time, but reflects bygone eras and echoes realities which have disappeared in both objective and subjective ways. In the case of Armenian music, the main composers Makar Yekmalian (1856–1905) and Komitas (1869–1935) are figures who represent and symbolize the pre-genocide era. Moreover, their work is based on earlier patterns that they reworked and is appealing precisely due to its archaic nature.

In that sense, a sacred space acts to widen the apprehension of time: one seems to sense not only the present but also the past. To put it otherwise, when entering an ancient space, one does not sense the separateness of the present from the past, as is typical. The dividing line is no longer

Figure 2. Monastery of Khor Virap and Mount Ararat. Photograph by the author, 2008.

there in the ordinary sense, the past being evoked directly. Such sensations certainly are expressible and interpretable in various ways; ultimately, they represent the "poetical" aspect of architecture. This is especially clear in the case of people of ancient nations, like the Armenians, for whom to enter a church is to enter their own history with its glories and persecutions.

This fact shows profoundly in Halajian's and Surenyan's works. A descendant of survivors of the Armenian genocide, Halajian's first visit to Soviet Armenia was more profound than he could foresee, and not only in a sentimental sense. When he visited the long-neglected monastery of Haghartsin in 1986, he visited only as a tourist, but 'came out as a pilgrim', as he later reflected (Halajian 2006: 33–34).

For an Armenian who had preserved his Armenian identity in the diaspora, the encounter with authentic Armenian mountains provided thrilling moods and unforgettable sentiments. Standing in front of the holy Mount Ararat, at the monastery of Khor Virap (Figure 2), the ancient birthplace of the Armenian national Church, Halajian described his sense of presence in solemn terms:

> Emotions buried in the subconscious of an Armenian, particularly from the diaspora, surface in this place under the triple impact of faith, culture and nature. I never thought those emotions were in me until I was confronted with the raw reality of the mountain; I was stunned. It was as if I felt a gravitational pull from its solitary mass. The awesome nature and symbolism of the place gave me an unreal feeling. It was as if my feet were sinking into the mantle of the earth, down to the shifting tectonic plate that kept Noah's mountain afloat. (Halajian 2006: 35.)

Likewise, Armenian architecture has a deep collective dimension. In Halajian's words, architecture is 'not a mere compilation of stone and mortar any more than literature is an assemblage of words held together with the rules of grammar'. On the contrary, both architecture and music reflect the 'macro trends of history' (Halajian 2013: 247). Architecture is, like literature, an 'expression of people's character and a most forceful and concrete statement of that people's will to be and prevail against the forces of men and nature' (Halajian 2013: 223). The definition is extremely Armenian: art represents a desperate and collective national desire for existence in the middle of destruction.

In our times, however, 'nationalism' has become a dirty word, due to the wretched history of late European nationalism and its leftist counter-reactions. Nevertheless, perhaps one is still allowed to employ the term 'national' to describe the character of art that represents distinctive 'ethno-symbolism', to use the famous term of Anthony Smith. For Smith, the Armenians served as a prototype of ethno-symbolism (Smith 2000: 46–47; 2003: 7, 66–73; 2005: 133; 2009: 45, 94). Unlike the European nationalisms based on somewhat artificial borders and relatively recent languages, Armenian nationalism has not been dependent on statehood or state boundaries; throughout its long history, it has been based rather on an ancient tradition of distinctive common culture constituted by language, religion, feasts, customs, traditions, music, dance and other arts. For Armenians, relating with the national past has been mystical and mystifying, ever

since the emergence of Armenian literature in the fifth century. Remarkably, their nationalism survived centuries without a state of their own. (For the emergence of Armenian national spirituality in the fifth century, see Seppälä 2018.) Given that churches and hymns are the oldest and most common relics of the distant past of Armenians, it is evident that sacred music and sacred architecture represent the core of Armenian culture, not only in a spiritual or religious sense but also in a wider collective sense.

More widely speaking, the rules in music and architecture are not only mechanical or grammatical, but also aesthetic and 'poetical'. For Halajian, architecture contains and consists of poetry and drama, and the same applies to music. 'Space is to architecture what time is to music.' (Halajian 2006: 57.) Their parallelism is even more functional when they are reflected as *experienced*, subjective realities. Both are unified and cohesive, because both represent a poetical way of being, a drama of a kind. For Halajian, poetry, drama, architecture and music all have their own dynamics, rules and restrictions. An architect must proceed through the possibilities and structures of form, cutting down the noise from internal discord into 'blissful global universal harmony' (Halajian 2006: 56). In this way, Halajian looks for a distinctively Armenian way to reach a universally valid and universally rewarding result.

For Halajian, there are three main roles in both the drama of architecture and music: *theme*, *constitution* and *function*. Alternatively, he also calls the three 'design-drivers' of architecture *form* (i.e., idea), *structure* and *function* (Halajian 2006: 56–57). The theme of Armenian churches is 'an abstract geometric motif' that gives to a building its coherence, continuity, identity, unity, and identifiableness.

Recognition of the parallels between architecture and music contributes to a better understanding of both art forms. Each has its own themes and structures, and in both, the theme is superior and comes before the structure. In buildings, the material follows the theme, just as the instruments follow the theme in music. In Halajian's words, 'music is defined

and recognized by a theme, or a melody', and likewise in architecture, themes are equally substantial. In Armenian churches, according to Halajian, the theme consists of an abstract geometric motif, in the same way as musical structures contain motifs of their own. 'In both cases, the theme gives coherence, continuity, identity, recognition, and unity to the entire work.' (Halajian 2006: 57.)

The *structure* supports and gives shapes to the surfaces and the inner space. In music, structure 'supports and enriches the basic theme, the harmony, the counterpoint'. In architecture, structure 'supports and shapes the envelope of the building, as well as the interior space' (Halajian 2006: 57); likewise, it gives frames and outlines to how the space is experienced.

Both music and architecture are most effective when they manifest dynamics of lightness and heaviness by presenting heavy structures with an impression of lightness. In music, this principle may manifest in most divergent ways, from the Beatles to Bach's variations, and it is also obvious in traditional Armenian sacred chants that have extremely nuanced and solemn melodic patterns, yet the singing does not lack forcefulness. Correspondingly, Halajian praises the ability of Komitas, the greatest name of Armenian sacral and folk music, to 'project intense emotion with an astonishing economy of verbal and musical expressions' (Halajian 2013: 47). The same phenomenon is found in Armenian architecture, too. The most famous example is perhaps the seventh-century Church of Saint Hripsime (Figure 3), the first representative of what is considered as classical Armenian Church architecture. (Discussion in Donabédian 2008: 83–87; images in Hasratian 2000: 306–309.) Its enormous stone dome represents heaviness by its massive stone structure and lightness by its form, symbolising heavenly firmament, and by using light through a chain of windows.

For Halajian, beauty is not accidental or subjectively constructed but rather based on the principles of composition, especially in the case of music and architecture, in which 'the beauty of form follows the truth of structure and function'. In architecture, 'the visible beauty of form reveals

Figure 3. Church of Saint Hripsime, Echmiadzin, seventh century. Photograph by the author, 2011.

the hidden truth of function', Halajian argued (2013: 215, 39). The concept of truth here refers to the fundamental essence of reality, to which beauty gives expression.

Perhaps surprisingly, Halajian claims that music has no 'function', implying that it is not a means for more fundamental goals, but rather an aim. Obviously, this claim is ontological. It implies that musical beauty is an ultimate experience – not a means for something more valuable, but an end. This idea is exactly what David Bentley Hart stated in his discussion on the characteristics of beauty: 'Beauty is gloriously useless; it has no purpose but itself'. For human consciousness, this means that 'the apprehension of beauty is something simple and immediate' (Hart 2014: 277) and cannot be reduced to its structural components. In that sense, music is a pure form of art. In architecture, according to Halajian's terminology, 'function' refers to the practical needs that the building is de-

signed to serve. In sacred buildings, these needs are constituted by the life of the community as expressed in its cult. In sacred music, such a practical function is to constitute a medium for the community's spiritual life and experience.

In this way, Halajian provides constituents for a theoretical framework to our question. Surenyan, however, approaches the topic with personal memoirs full of philosophical and mystical ponderings.

Surenyan: Organic crescendos

If Halajian in his literary output emphasized relatively abstract considerations, Surenyan based his narrative more clearly on concrete encounters and personal reflections. The central piece of his writing on Armenian architecture is a description of the seventh-century Lmbatavank (Figure 4), a tiny church of a former monastery near Artik, in North-West Armenia, which turned out to be his favourite church, although it certainly is not among the famous attractions of Armenia. Surenyan's description is of considerable literary value. This shows already in how he pays attention to the way of approaching the shrine.

How does one approach a sacred building? All ancient traditions have rites and practices to prepare one to enter sacred spaces. Medieval Ar-

Figure 4. Lmbatavank. Photograph by Soghomon Matevosyan, available in Wikimedia Commons (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lmbatavank_(2).jpg).

menian pilgrims could approach the monasteries on their knees after chanting pilgrimage songs and hymns (a rare, documented example is in Svazlian 2011: 102). In Soviet Armenia, the traditional pilgrimage culture had faded out (cf. Abrahamian *et al.* 2018), but Surenyan was still sensitive not to march into the church carelessly. He first walks around the building as if around a statue, observing and marvelling at its 'harmonious proportions, the rhythm of various forms and planes, the clean lines and transitions, the carved ornamentation of the eaves and lintels above the windows' (Surenyan 2015: 161). The concept of rhythm here expresses how the architectural shapes are present in the experience. One may note that in the case of the Armenians, rhythm is not a monotonous concept with symmetrical associations, given that Armenian folk songs are characterised by their changes of tempo and shaky rhythms such as 9/8.

Traditional sacred buildings of Armenia were often built organically, with no complete symmetry (see Figure 5). This creates organic impressions, but it also may have had a practical function: a dome constructed of non-symmetrical pieces is said to have withstood earthquakes better. The main effect, however, is an aesthetic one. In the words of Surenyan, 'the almost unnoticeable deviations from symmetry in the overall structure' contribute to the vitality of the building, 'although this is detectable only from a distance and only if you look closely.' (Surenyan 2015: 161.)

Lmbatavank Church is an example of a sacred building that manages to be harmonious without symmetry. Even the door is not in the middle: on entering, one is immediately next to the northern wall. One might see here a loose parallel with the Armenian and Caucasian musical chants that do not follow the 'symmetry' of western tuning or monotonous tempos.

But why should asymmetry be more inspiring than symmetry? David Bentley Hart answered this very question in musical terms in his exploration of the mysterious appearances of the beautiful: 'plangent dissonances can awaken our imaginations far more delightfully than simple harmonies'. Hart argued against attempts to produce simplistic definitions for

Figure 5. Organically constructed vault in the dome, Noravank, Armenia. Photograph by the author, 2008.

the beautiful, for beauty is not reducible to simplistic constituents such as proportions (Hart 2014: 279).

In other words, the lack of symmetry may create vivid and organic impressions of almost personal character. Surenyan describes the moment when this architecture opened to him as a kind of mystical experience, again expressed in musical terms:

> Then, in a flash of insight, I see a logic and sequencing in arrangement of windows. If you go clockwise starting from the north side around the church, you get the impression of a crescendo, an increase in volume, as in music. (Surenyan 2015: 162–163.)

Surenyan also pays attention to the position of the church in the landscape. The Lmbatavank church is built on a sloping hill, and from the north, it appears 'more pointed', as the southern side is characterised by 'resonance of the more accentuated architectural elements'. Due to this vividness, the church of Lmbatavank 'begins to resonate in your mind like an in intricately woven Komitas chorale' (Surenyan 2015: 162). This fact says a lot for Armenians because the liturgical chants of Komitas are an integral part of

Armenian culture. Halajian, for his part, devoted a full essay on Komitas and his genius, stressing the consummate character of his choral works in which 'each voice packs in its own layer of meaning' (Halajian 2013: 47).

Suddenly, an intuitive insight opens for Surenyan who realizes that the architect must have been a musician himself – 'a musician who in his soul could hear and recreate sounds in forms, the music of the planets, the chanting of the soul' (Surenyan 2015: 165). Consequently, the building stimulates the mind in ways that parallel musical effects.

> The irregular arrangement of the windows did indeed seem like a musical crescendo, creating a powerful, proportional build up not only in the exterior architectural form, but also inside where the pale light gradually grew stronger into a golden radiance. (Surenyan 2015: 167.)

The outer crescendo was a crescendo of space, the inner one a crescendo of light. Both terms serve to verbalize the effects of organic architectural solutions for the human mind.

Chant of the frescoes personified

On the inner walls of Lmbatavank, there are unique remains of colourful frescoes. Amazingly, the paintings are original ones from the seventh century: Christ enthroned, angels from the visions of Ezekiel and Isaiah, and Saint George (Gevorg) on a horse. Surenyan was deeply touched by the faces of cherubs, the angelic beings of higher heavenly ranks (Figure 6). The frescoes inspired him to produce one of his most creative, and most mystical, pieces of writing. The narrative is worthy of a short paraphrase:

Surenyan described his return to the same church years later, only to find that the faces were no longer visible. Shocked, Surenyan started to reminiscence that the first encounter had taken place during the sunset hours, with rays of light entering the space from the western window. Absorbed in prayer, Surenyan suddenly heard the voice of the ancient archi-

Figure 6. The Cherub of Lmbatavank. Original image by Bertramz, with edges cropped by the author. Available in Wikimedia Commons (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lmbatavank-apse-left.jpg; Share Alike 3.0 Unported license).

tect speaking to him: 'Now do you understand', the voice said, 'Go out and wander around. Come back when the sun has changed its angle.' (Surenyan 2015: 164.)

Who is the character behind the voice? Surenyan envisioned in his mind an Armenian from a different time and world, with big black eyes, a beard and thoughtful face, and then contrasted him with the Soviet Armenian present: 'but we, who are we now? Are we really heirs to his world?' The ancient master starts to talk to his mind, whispering:

> But did it ever cross your mind that I am not only a painter, but also an architect, musician and poet, as was only expected in our time? […] This church and that fresco are a single integrated work, the result of a single concept. It was a vision from high that came during prayer. (Surenyan 2015: 165.)

In this manner, Surenyan produced a mystical personification for the unity of architecture and music, the character being a figure of the distant

past, from the time of unified sciences taught in monastic academies (e.g. Tatev, Sanahin) with holistic programs. Then Surenyan turns to present to his ancient alter ego the question of modern times: is it *really* so? In the modern age, Surenyan admits that we would need some scientific proof for claiming that the church and frescoes result from one integral vision and one person. And do we *know* that he really was a musician? The problem is deeply related to our questioning, but the way of formulating the question is extraordinary indeed. Furthermore, Surenyan shows his literary talent and eloquent style by not answering. The inner voice of the past, ascetic as it is, does not challenge Surenyan's arguments, but continues its speech. 'And musician, don't forget', the ancient character smiled, 'That's important, very important.' Ancient answers obviously do not match modern questions.

Nonetheless, the key to understanding architecture and wall paintings was, for Surenyan, in the intuition that the ancient architect was a musician who could 'hear and recreate sounds in forms, the music of the planets, the chanting of the soul'. In this way, the narrative turns out to underline the holistic character of arts in the distant past. Historically, it is true that the architects of classical Armenian architecture were monastics and generalists who could master all the arts and sciences of their time. There is even no word for 'architect' in classical Armenian, but the word *vardapet*, a title of learned priest-monks, was used instead; indeed, monastic priests certainly were masters of liturgical chant. Furthermore, the monastic way of life in general pursued a contemplative approach to the whole reality, and the creation of monastery churches was ultimately an adaption and outcome of this very approach. In this way, music is as if integrated into the foundations of sacred architecture.

Moreover, the claim about music's profound connection with architecture has applications and implications of even wider character. These connections may be clarified by defining the opposite. How would it be to approach sacred spaces and their holy images *without* aesthetic touches, like that of music? The modern western person approaches icons and frescoes

like traffic signs, the main question being: 'What exactly does this detail signify?' The basic intention is to convert the visual entities into data that is manageable and controllable in discursive terms. This, however, is not the way to take hold of the contents of sacred art, which does not merely consist of signs alluding to the real content, but the sacred works rather aim to represent a vision of reality in themselves, and they must be experienced accordingly, as one whole. This approach obviously applies not only to icons and frescoes but also to buildings that constitute sacred spaces. Thus, Surenyan claims that the frescoes of Lmbatavank, like any piece of art, can be understood only with the similar 'spark of creativity' with which they were created. They respond to a reciprocal spark of appreciation, as Surenyan notes: 'They will not let us feel their pulse, their melody, their message, even if we approach them courteously, but with a cold heart.' (Surenyan 2015: 173.)

In the case of sacred art, creativity is essentially synonymous with spirituality. Surenyan, living in the Soviet Union and turning into a *homo sovieticus* even against his own will, had to labour with himself before he realised that the starting point and basis of ancient art and creativity was prayer and a prayerful attitude, for 'belief and prayer are the parents of inspiration' (Surenyan 2015: 165).

After all the musings, Surenyan, returning to the church at sunset, sees a ray of light entering the small space, as if reawakening the frescoes. In the evening light, the non-symmetric order of the windows, functioning as a set of lines of musical notation, creates on the walls a melody that climaxes in a pale light turning into gold, as the faces of cherubs appear in their own places, staring back at their beholder in a golden light. In this process, Surenyan intuitively recognises something more profound.

> It was sacred, not only as a church, but in a broader sense. Raw matter had been transformed by the spark of human creative genius and spiritualized. The melody of the raw forms of nature had been transformed and reconceived with intellectual love. (Surenyan 2015: 169.)

Surenyan's account is a rare description of what can be called 'mysticism of architecture'. It is noteworthy that his mystical notions deal with the distant *past* and *national* ethnic tradition and its long continuity. Even though he prays and is intuitively inspired, his discourse has no actual or explicit need for God. It is as if Surenyan reaches the ancient mystical vision about reality through the sacred space; God of the temple he does not even mention.

In the United States, Halajian expressed similar intuitions, yet without excluding God, in stating that 'man is at his creative best when he is glorifying God, whether it is in art, music, architecture, and so on.' (Halajian 2013: 188–189.) Even Halajian does not use 'God' in a distinctively dogmatic or specifically Christian sense. Overall, both authors see the inspiration of sacred art in much wider terms than most traditional definitions of Christian spirituality would admit.

Universal resonance

In describing the effects of classical Armenian monastic architecture that he experienced, Karpis Surenyan repeatedly resorted to musical language. He portrayed Armenian architecture as a 'colossal symphony' (մեծամեծ սիմֆոնիաներ) that he may listen to (Surenyan 2015: 151). Massive stone structures describe Armenian sacred architecture completely, and the expression 'colossal symphony' hits the mark. However, it is not by accident that he chose a term with western associations, although of Greek origin. Like Halajian, Surenyan was interested not only in the Armenian characteristics of the experience, but also in its universal character, and consequently, in Armenian architecture's contribution to the world:

> This symphony which speaks so powerfully to my heart as an Armenian also stirs my sense of universal humanity with its vital aesthetic and ethical-philosophical message like all great expressions of the human spirit on Earth in the boundless universe. With the ears of my soul I hear that symphony in its pure wholeness, in all the many sounds of the cathedrals

> harmoniously juxtaposed, in their antiphonal polyphony: the massive chorale of Zvartnots and the modulating melody of Tekor, still echoing with their full, undampened resonance. (Surenyan 2015: 151.)

Surenyan's 'antiphonal polyphony' of 'harmoniously juxtaposed' cathedrals corresponds to Halajian's melodic or architectural 'theme' with its motifs either musical or geometrical; or perhaps rather, Surenyan's terms exemplify what Halajian's more abstract discussion implies. Surenyan's discourse appears somewhat more poetical, but in a closer reading, it turns out to describe clearly the multi-layered realities.

The term 'chorale' expresses well the architectural peculiarity of Zvartnots cathedral, which was one of the most astonishing churches of the first millennium (Figures 7 and 8). The exterior part of the Church was a 32-sided polygon, practically circular; the interior part was a tetraconch.

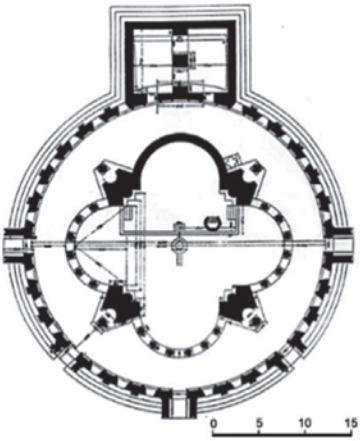

Figure 7. Zvartnots cathedral plan. Public domain, available in Wikimedia Commons (https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=329920).

Figure 8. Zvartnots cathedral, reconstruction. Original by Beko, with edges cropped by the author. Available in Wikipedia (https://hy.wikipedia.org/wiki/Պատկեր:Zvartnots_Cathedral.Model_in_"Zvartnots"_Historical_Museum_01.jpg; Share Alike 4.0 International license).

Figure 9. Tekor cathedral, fifth century, destroyed in the twentieth century. Drawing ca 1840. Public Domain (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tekor_Basilica#/media/File:Tekor_Basilica_in_an_1840s_engraving.jpg).

Repetition of endless arches and curves in a circular building was 'choral' indeed, due to the multiplicity of the entities and their endless continuity; yet one could experience their multiplicity with one look as a single entity, in the same way as musical complexity is grasped as a harmonious whole.

The reference to Tekor has a deep historical resonance for Armenians. The 'modulating melody' of Tekor refers to the famous fifth-century building near Kars, present Turkey, which was the first Armenian Church with a stone dome and contained the earliest preserved pieces of Armenian writing, dating to circa 480. (Discussion and figures in Donabédian 2008: 54–57.)

> I hear the symphony of our architecture in the great polyphonic pageant of world architecture, whose eternal journey echoes in the mystery of the enigmatic existence of time and space in the universe. (Surenyan 2015, 151.)

For Armenians, the enigmatic character of existence is deeply related to the loss and disappearance of ancestral homes and essential national symbols, such as the Cathedral of Tekor, and thousands of other ancient monuments demolished in Turkey and Azerbaijan, alongside massacres of millions of people. After the disastrous history, the present existence is sensed as a mere fragment of what should and could be. Therefore, the profound questions of existence focus on the enigmatic, inexplicable losses.

Correspondingly, the musical imagery applies not only to intact entities but even more so to the fragments of the lost past. In Surenyan's terms, the collective contemplation of Armenian monasteries was interrupted by the concrete and spiritual destruction during the genocide and Soviet athe-

ism, accompanied by massive earthquakes. Even this process, however, can be portrayed with the help of musical terms, as Surenyan does:

> But in the recent, tragic centuries of our history, and especially the 'civilized' 20th century after the Genocide and the subsequent disasters, how subdued, how plaintive our symphony sounds, its strong resonance engulfed in a thick, dark fog! Certain themes have disappeared and an empty silence has eclipsed the completeness of that symphony; some melodies mangled, others in pieces, like the muffled sobs of an orphan in distress. Still they can be heard, and they will be heard forever. Our ears are becoming unplugged. The world is beginning to listen to our great symphony. (Surenyan 2015: 151–152.)

The last words have proven to be prophetic, for some international awareness of the Armenian genocide started to emerge a few decades after Surenyan wrote them. Understandably, in the case of a small persecuted nation, the quest for 'universal significance' is also a desperate plea to make the world interested in their cause. However, a contribution to the world audience is not only an abstract rhetorical statement; it refers to *our* concrete possibility of entering an Armenian sacred space and listening to the same ancient symphony of stone in the last preserved architectural monuments of Armenia. In the depths of humanity, there is an essential need to experience continuity with the distant past in a dynamic way, and ancient sacred spaces respond to this need.

Surenyan's vision of the universal role and character of culture was a counter-reaction to the Soviet ideology he had to face daily. In rejecting eternity, the atheist ideology rejected what is most essential in man. Paradoxically, it is rather irrelevant for this claim whether man is eternal or not; even if he is not, the desire for eternity is still his deepest driving force, and this is the vigour from which the most profound culture emerges. And vice versa, the Soviet culture lacked depth for the same reason. For Surenyan, culture is ultimately a huge collective means of worship:

> Art is a fusion of religion, science, philosophy. Man worshiped eternal life from the beginning, even conceiving life after death, worshiping the universal mystery of life, the Spirit, which is the bearer of that feeling and created culture as a means of worship. Art is the holy of holies of culture. Culture is real immortality created on this earth, with its various monuments, which contain the pulse of the times as they were lived. The hues of the individual pulse of the times, nation and race are what we call style. This pulse is transmitted to succeeding generations, in every age. (Surenyan 2015: 169–170.)

For both Halajian and Surenyan, architecture and music reach their peak when they have the most boundless inspiration and the most ultimate function one may imagine – God. This scheme surpasses all national traditions and intentions, but it also fulfils them.

The message of Armenian architecture, Surenyan sums up, is a solemn trinity of unity, proportionality, and love of humankind (Surenyan 2015: 152). We may note that this message is related to how the ancient theologian-architects saw the function of sacred spaces. Universalism was present in the architectural forms and structures in a concrete way: medieval Armenian Churches have four windows in the central drum - or walls - for the four directions of the world, which in turn symbolise universality. This is also connected with the liturgical cult, for the Armenian Church has a famous ceremony of 'blessing of the four corners of the world', in which the whole world is blessed in four directions ('Antasdan', in *Hay arakelakan yekeghetsiots* 1997: 105–112). In other words, the function of a church is ultimately to resonate its blissful melody with the world in its entirety.

The Grande Finale

Linguistic imagery such as 'organic crescendos', 'chant of frescoes' and 'colossal symphonies' are not only metaphors, but they ultimately connect with wider ideas of a more general and universal nature. In other words,

they are particulars that function as applications of a certain world view. Our final task is to outline this whole. What kind of world view does such imagery represent? For Halajian, the realisation of the essential unity of science, arts and religion seems to be no less than the meaning of human life. In this process, music and architecture are the most essential tools and means, for they both have an 'uplifting power' to elevate man towards the heavenly (Halajian 2006: 153).

Halajian presents several practical examples of this uplifting – in dogmatic terms, 'anagogical' – function, both musical and architectural. Firstly, and perhaps surprisingly, Halajian presents Arabic *taxim* music as an instance of strongly enchanting and intoxicating effects that may uplift the listener into 'sustained levitation', with its 'minimalist introspections' and contrapuntal double chords. This in turn is essential because such experiences are essentially universal, and they ultimately serve to connect the listener with the whole universe (Halajian 2006: 152).

Halajian's other examples offer more detailed descriptions of the phenomenon. Bach's instrumental works, such as *The Art of the Fugue*, have sections that 'transport the listener to the far intergalactic space', and when returning home, the 'cosmic traveller feels younger'. In an ideal case, Bach is played in a Gothic cathedral where his music 'reverberates under the rich panoply of the stone ribbed vault' (Halajian 2006: 152). This harmony of musical and architectural beauty is such that the only parallel Halajian can find from the world of science is Einstein's theory of relativity, famous for its paradoxical character.

It is in connection with Bach that Halajian has documented his most profound experiences. In listening to 'The Art of the Fugue', Halajian was absorbed in its movements – that is, forms – and suddenly he felt like 'whirling with the primordial particles and dancing with the quarks while my body was dissolving into pure mind and becoming one with the essence of things.' This led him to reflect on the character of music, which opened for him the ultimate universalistic vision:

> Compared to music, science is a superficial interpreter of the power, beauty, and mystery of the universe. That music is capable of doing this, is itself part of the mystery. Maybe the universe is music. After all, isn't the universe basically structured essence? And isn't that what music is? (Halajian 2013: 211.)

Another example of powerful uplifting music for Halajian is Beethoven's colossal Ninth Symphony, the nebulous introductory notes of which remind him of the birth pangs of the universe. 'Scientists have not been able to penetrate the mysteries of this primordial, pregnant moment in the prehistory of the universe, but Beethoven has.' (Halajian 2006: 152.) For Halajian, this is a good example of how scientific and aesthetic comprehension reach out with similar basic intuition towards the same truths. Art, however, may open aspects and dimensions that science fails to express.

Finally, Halajian presents his ultimate example, the 'centrally domed Armenian Church that resonates to the choral music of the *Badarak*'. The liturgy of the Armenian Church (*patarag*, Western Armenian pronunciation *badarak*; see Figure 10) is the one that makes the most unique and uniquely profound effect on Halajian, Armenian as he is. It is here that the experience finds its most national dimensions, but due to its depth, the experience is also universal. This kind of 'spiritual nationalism', or perhaps rather 'national spirituality', is not dictated or given from outside, but it sprouts from the deepest personal consciousness that opens to the ancient collective heritage – spiritual and psychological genetics, so to say. For Armenians, the church is 'both home and Heaven, where music and architecture impact on him in a mutually resonant harmony'. But it has also universal resonance. Of all types of sacred music, the Armenian sacred chant 'comes closest to illuminating […] the Christian mystery of death and resurrection' (Halajian 2006: 152).

Here it is as if Halajian completes the visions of Surenyan. For Halajian, truth and beauty ultimately represent 'one and the same thing'; in science, truth means 'depth and universality', and beauty in art means 'astonish-

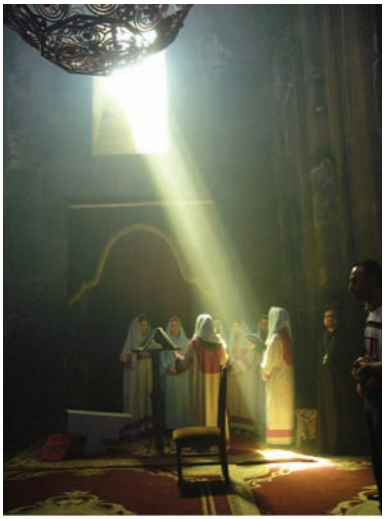

Figure 10. Choir singing the liturgy, Geghard monastery, Armenia. Photograph by the author, 2008.

ment, inevitability, and economy' (Halajian 2013: 204). At the end of the day, such a vision shows its profitability in the fact that it applies to the ways one may experience, describe and interpret separate fields such as architecture and music, both in themselves and with the help of each other.

Conclusion: Musical terms open a holistic world-view

When our two Armenian authors of divergent backgrounds enter an ancient sacred space in the Armenian mountains, they enter millennia of history and a collective space of vague ethnic-collective memory full of national losses and sorrows. But they also enter a concrete structure with vaults, columns and other architectural entities, including the use of light and acoustics. Mechanical and materialistic descriptions of technical solutions, however, are unable to express what is essential in the sacred spaces as experienced entities.

Therefore, both authors frequently resort to musical terminology. When architecture is described in musical terms, the associations function in the psychological dimension and refer to the *space as experienced*.

Surenyan applies musical terms in a more phenomenological way, while Halajian goes on to discuss them in more abstract and general terms, and concerning a wider context. Surenyan, with a somewhat more poetical approach, even generates a personification for the unity of music and architecture to discuss the theme with him. It is remarkable, however, that their approaches ultimately make a rather coherent whole.

In both cases, the use of musical expressions aims to reach more widely than merely employing metaphors for architectural structures. For both authors, the musical terminology opens a holistic world view in which music and architecture ultimately are one, and in service of one truth. For Surenyan, this is nostalgia for the lost era of unified Armenian sciences when spiritual inspiration produced architectural and musical compositions. In that sense, music is as if integrated with the sacred architectural entities from their very emergence, and this music offers its resonance for those who experience the structures. For Halajian, the unity of architecture and music is rather a manifestation of the unity of truth and beauty, which is eternal and universal. Nevertheless, Surenyan does approach similar universalistic visions, but mainly from the basis of the lost Armenian spirituality of bygone eras. On may note that despite the dark legacy of genocide, both thinkers end up with a rather optimistic and holistic worldview.

From the academic point of view, the obvious weakness of these musings is their inexact character. Nevertheless, the ideal of exact expression is limited in itself: it serves certain aims, but these aims cannot carry one to the most profound human aspirations that can be articulated with expressions, such as understanding existence, reaching awareness of cosmic harmony or grasping the meaning of life. Such aims are not fully definable in linguistic terms, and therefore the human mind ultimately needs music and architecture in the first place: to enjoy musical pieces or to observe architectural entities, not only for the sake of pleasure but to grasp and realise something more profound relating to the meaning of existence and

cosmic harmony. Therefore, we immediately sense something profound, appealing and stirring when we enter ancient sacred spaces in the Armenian mountains or elsewhere.

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HELEN ROSSIL

The hierophany of heterophony in traditional Danish hymn singing

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> Finally, and what a relief to my ear and my sense of music, this jarring and annoying conflation of cats' wailing, owls' screaming, pigs' grunting, dogs' barking, lambs' baaing, horses' whinnying and ducks' quacking, ended. In all Lutheran churches, where the song is not cultivated, and there is no organ to drown the song, it disturbs the musical ear and makes the church service totally ridiculous, partly scary and not at all edifying.[1] (Ussing 2014 [1850]; translations from Danish to English by the author unless otherwise indicated.)

In this way, the vicar Rasmus Ussing describes the hymn singing in a Danish parish church at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Folk hymn-singing traditions and reactions of this kind are found throughout the Nordic region (Sass Bak & Nielsen 2006). In my analysis, I deal with the tradition of a Danish revival movement, The Stalwart Jutlanders (*De stærke Jyder*), by exploring their special vocal style, Kingo-singing, when they were performing hymns from 'Kingo's Hymnal' (*Kingos salmebog*), the official Danish hymnal from 1699 to 1798.

In the Nordic countries, the introduction of vernacular liturgy from the Reformation onwards stimulated a rich production of hymns, although the creation of a tradition of congregational singing in unison was gradual. Few churches had organs or musically trained staff. Instead, the parish clerk, the assistant of the vicar, whose responsibility for the church song was only one

of many duties, would lead the church singing, a practice that resulted in a great variety of hymn singing. Furthermore, the new musical practice in the church enabled and encouraged people to sing religious songs also in the private sphere. Accordingly, while the Reformation introduced new musical and performative ideals, it also facilitated deviations from them.

About 300 years later, efforts such as the introduction of organs and chorale books as well as musical training of church staff gradually led to greater uniformity in church singing. However, local traditions did survive in some countryside churches. Moreover, a new wave of religious folk singing emerged when Pietistic revivalism took hold in the early nineteenth century. In most Protestant countries, singing was a prominent feature of revival movements and a highly likely cause for their popularity. Hymns as well as other spiritual songs were sung at the revival meetings whose musical performance the church authorities could not influence. Collectors and scholars from the Nordic region have recorded folk hymn singing traditions for the past 200 years.

With this broad sketch of traditional hymn singing in a Nordic context, I want to provide a backdrop for the remarkable divergence in the position of this musical tradition in Denmark in later times. While hymns are an integral part of the vocal folk repertoire in Sweden and Norway, and are, for instance, a beloved genre of Norwegian *kappleik* folk music competitions, the interpretation of traditional hymn singing, based on recordings, is not part of the Danish folk music scene. Likewise, the field has attracted very little Danish scholarly attention. While scholars such as Ilmari Krohn in Finland (1867-1969) and Carl Allan Moberg in Sweden (1896-1978) founded or consolidated their academic careers with studies of folk hymn traditions, the first extensive Danish study in the field, by Kirsten Sass Bak, appeared in 2006; (for earlier minor contributions, see Sass Bak 2006: 168-169).

The reasons for this lack of Danish interest are many and complex. One reason is musical; the recorded Danish material does not exhibit the same exotic and melismatic character as that of many other Nordic folk hymn

traditions. Thus, Danish folk hymn singing does not conform to common conceptions of a Nordic folk song style and has apparently no appeal to contemporary performers of traditional music.

Another reason is the cultural marginalization of the Danish folk hymn tradition. In Sweden and Norway in the early twentieth century, the folk hymn tradition became associated with a national discourse. Two examples are the Swedish 'Folk Music Commission' founded in 1908, which considered hymn melodies as a particularly authentic genre (Lundberg 2004), and Edvard Grieg's Op. 74, '4 Hymns after Norwegian folk tones' (*4 Salmer efter norske Folketoner*) from 1906. Indeed, in Denmark, music also played a prominent role in the nation-building agenda of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that emphasized the notion of a 'national spirit' expressed through the 'music of the people' (Koudal 2005). However, the musical conception of this 'national spirit' did not correspond to the actual musical practice of traditional hymn singers.

Nevertheless, these idealized conceptions became widely disseminated, not least through the increased popularity of the folk high schools in Denmark that were founded on the ideas of pastor and writer N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783-1872). One ideal of the folk high schools was the edification of 'the people' through communal singing, including hymn singing. In the early twentieth century, composers Carl Nielsen (1865-1931) and Thomas Laub (1852-1927) sought to cultivate further these ideals musically. Considering themselves as successors of J.A.P. Schulz (1747-1800) and his *Lieder im Volkston*, they coined the concept of the 'the folk-like song' (***den folkelige sang***), which featured edifying Christian and patriotic song texts of a high poetic standard set to simple harmony-based melodies. Not least, such songs should – with reference to Schulz – reflect a *Schein des Bekannten* (appearance of familiarity) (Reynolds 2010: 121–162). Again, while the concept of 'the folk-like song' did not accord with the actual practice of traditional singers, it nonetheless became culturally normative through the wide reception of Nielsen's songs in particular. This also applies to the

musical practice of the established state church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark (*Den danske folkekirke*).

Understanding Danish traditional hymn singing practice

I explore a hymn-singing tradition that even to a trained listener will not reflect a *Schein des Bekannten*, namely that of The Stalwart Jutlanders, a Pietistic revival movement that existed in Denmark from around 1790–1960. Singing played a defining role in the social and religious lives of The Stalwart Jutlanders and their conflicts with the surrounding society. Living in social and cultural isolation, the movement conserved and cultivated a vocal practice that most likely had its origin in the century of the Reformation (Sass Bak 2006: 158). As Sass Bak has pointed out, the very idea of communal singing in unison introduced with the Reformation was new and essentially different from the hitherto individually-based oral tradition, hence the slow adoption of the practice of singing in unison. However, I do not claim that my study is generally applicable to rural hymn traditions in earlier times; rather I seek to demonstrate how The Stalwart Jutlanders sought and expressed their religious identity through conserving a particular and archaic way of singing. This vocal style was intricately connected to the use of 'The Prescribed New Church Hymnal' (*Dend Forordnede Ny Kirke-Psalme-Bog*), published in 1699 by Danish bishop and poet Thomas Kingo (1634–1703). The hymnal was, and still is, popularly called 'Kingo's Hymnal', although not all texts of the hymnal are by Kingo. Correspondingly, the vocal style is called Kingo-singing.

I pay special attention to the tradition of vocal heterophony, aiming to offer a deeper understanding of the phenomenon beyond the level of sound. Considering the singing tradition of The Stalwart Jutlanders as a religious and social activity, I address questions such as: Which role did the material object of the hymnal play in the vocal practice of The Stalwart Jutlanders? Why did they insist on a vocal style that segregated them from

wider society, and how could a particular way of singing reinforce their sense of community and convey their encounter with the sacred? Through the answers to these questions, I hope to provide a better understanding of the reasons for the maintenance of a hymn-singing tradition, which differs greatly from prevailing aesthetic ideals of Danish vocal traditions.

Descendant of The Stalwart Jutlanders, theologian and pastor with the Evangelical-Lutheran state church of Denmark, Johannes Enggaard Stidsen (2002), has offered a unique perspective in his book about the movement. Kirsten Sass Bak (2006) has with her extensive musicological study of Kingo-singing provided knowledge fundamental to further studies. Žanna Pärtlas's (2016) discussion of theoretical approaches to the phenomenon of heterophony has inspired the analysis of the singing practice of The Stalwart Jutlanders by discussing sonic, mental, social, and religious aspects of heterophonic singing. I illuminate the mental processes connected with the musical practice of The Stalwart Jutlanders by tape-recorded interviews with community members. Furthermore, I examine the question of the social relations expressed in the heterophonic practice based on Thomas Turino's concept of 'participatory performance' (Turino 2008). Regarding the final and essential aspect, i.e., the religious experience of the singers, I have consulted core literature on the phenomenology of religion. Though frequently appearing in literature about spiritual music, the concept of *the sacred* or *sacred space* is most often undefined. Dealing with a movement of religiously devout people who expressed and experienced faith through the musically materialized word, it seems a theoretical approach is required that acknowledges the experience of the sacred. Building on Mircea Eliade's conceptualization of the sacred and its manifestation in the profane, referred to as 'the hierophany' (Eliade 1987 [1959]), I seek to demonstrate how The Stalwart Jutlanders achieved an experience of the sacred through their heterophonic singing practice.

In his ground-breaking book *The Sacred and the Profane* from 1959, Eliade (1987 [1959]: 11) defines a *hierophany* as 'the manifestation of

something of a wholly different order, a reality that does not belong to our world, in objects that are an integral part of our natural, "profane" world'. According to him, the paradoxical nature of a hierophany cannot be overemphasized. For example, a stone is still simply a stone, while to *religious man* it simultaneously reveals its supernatural power and cosmic sacrality. Only *religious man*, who 'deeply desires' to live in the sacred, will experience the hierophany, i.e., the sacred powers of otherwise profane phenomena. *Religious man* will always 'tend to live as much as possible *in* the sacred or in close proximity to consecrated objects,' since only the sacred is experienced as real, i.e., 'saturated with *being*.' (Eliade 1987 [1959]: 12). A hierophany can take any possible form, varying between cultures, and is not limited to material objects. Even the human body or human actions, like singing, can be a manifestation of the sacred to people who recognize it as such. A hierophany not only manifests itself in time and space but also transforms them into sacred categories as a breakthrough of sacred powers. Hence, hierophany is a key concept in understanding religious life and is suited to shedding light on the religious content of the vocal practice of The Stalwart Jutlanders.

I examine the sonic, mental, social, and religious aspects of Kingo-singing by analyzing sound recordings that feature The Stalwart Jutlanders. From 1958–1963, Danish composer and ethnomusicologist Thorkild Knudsen (1925–2007) made 256 recordings of spiritual singing with The Stalwart Jutlanders, of which 124 represent examples of the Kingo tradition. The primary challenge of those sound recordings is the lack of documentation of communal congregational singing. Although the recordings of individual singers reveal vocal features that refer to a collective musical situation, there is in these recordings only very little direct audio documentation of a group musical expression. Therefore, I attempt to compensate for this shortcoming by a thorough analysis of a single recording with a small group of singers in which the vocal interaction of the individual singers is clear. To establish a broader and reliable impression of the

congregational hymn singing practice of The Stalwart Jutlanders, I begin with a contextualization through other sources. Furthermore, a characteristic of the vocal style of Kingo-singing, in general, is used to support my attempt to reconstruct the sound image of congregational singing. (For an overview of the complete recordings with The Stalwart Jutlanders, see Stidsen 2002: 208–217.)

The Stalwart Jutlanders and 'Kingo's Hymnal'

As with the rest of the Protestant world, Denmark experienced a wave of pietistic revival movements in the early nineteenth century as a counter-reaction to the rationalist currents of contemporary theology. The Stalwart Jutlanders emerged around 1790 as the first of such revival movements in Denmark, and probably the most legendary. The name, originally a sobriquet, indicated their adamant conservative worldview, which also shaped their musical practice. The Stalwart Jutlanders rejected all attempts of modernization of the church and aspired instead to maintain Lutheran orthodoxy. This so-called 'double origin' (Stidsen 2002: 67 ff) in orthodoxy and pietism may seem paradoxical. However, The Stalwart Jutlanders reacted to the rationalist currents of the established Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Denmark, which they considered having betrayed core Lutheran ideas. Their pietistic individualization of faith enabled them to define their own theological teachings, even though these were more conservative in nature. With their conservative and devout attitude towards life, The Stalwart Jutlanders constituted a paradigmatic example of *religious man* as conceptualized by Eliade (1987 [1959]).

This conservativism was also reflected in the events that heralded the founding of The Stalwart Jutlanders movement. When the currents of the Enlightenment in contemporary Lutheran theology achieved the status of official doctrine through the authorization of new versions of the Catechism and hymnal, the situation triggered a series of internal conflicts

within some communities of the state church. The Stalwart Jutlanders refused to use the modern rationalist Catechism commentary 'Bishop Balle's Commentary' (*Balles lærebog*) from 1791, and 'Evangelical Christian Hymnal' (*Evangelisk-christelig Psalmebog*) from 1798, and instead insisted on retaining the older - and in their view faithful - versions: Pontoppidan's 'Truth leading to Piety' (*Sandhed til Gudfrygtighed*; translation from Appel 2011) from 1737 and 'Kingo's Hymnal' from 1699.

The Stalwart Jutlanders refused to send their children to public schools where 'Balle's Commentary' had become mandatory. It was ultimately a question of either salvation or damnation for their children. The 'Catechism conflict' would result in severe consequences for their community members: fines, restraints or even imprisonment (Stidsen 2002: 80–83). When, in 1839, The Stalwart Jutlanders were granted permission to educate their children in their own private schools, this schism was legally solved, yet this solution must also have increased the social isolation of the movement.

The conflict that took place in the church space itself was different. Abstaining from Sunday Mass or separation from the established Evangelical-Lutheran church was out of the question for orthodox Lutherans and thus for The Stalwart Jutlanders (Stidsen 2002: 63–69). Accordingly, when the 'Evangelical Christian Hymnal' was adopted by the state church in place of 'Kingo's Hymnal', The Stalwart Jutlanders, with their desire to live in the sacred, resisted this change, using their voices as tools of resistance. When a parish clerk embraced a new hymn or a new version of a popular hymn, The Stalwart Jutlanders 'took the tune from the clerk',[2] as phrased by a journalist in 1888 (Stidsen 2002: 91). In an earlier source, Jens Andersen recalls a battle of voices in 1802: 'I could shout and Claus could sing, but then came seven loads of devils and seven loads of clerks, but we sang no less determined; when Claus took the communion, I sang one, and when I took the communion, Claus sang; but we won.'[3] (Feldbæk 1990: 310)

These strong reactions to the new editions of the Catechism and hymnal must be viewed against the background of the special status that scrip-

ture enjoyed in Protestant culture. Religious books were vital tools during the long period of consolidation of Lutheranism following the Reformation in Denmark in 1536 (Appel 2001: 115–159). However, the strategy of disseminating the official doctrine through books also had unintended consequences. With the emphasis on the 'absolute sovereignty and otherness of God' (Scribner 1993: 482), the Reformation eliminated any validity of religious objects. Whereas believers before the Reformation could seek the sacred in many different places, in many different things or even persons, now only the word of God was an acceptable manifestation of the sacred. Since, however, 'the Reformation did not remove the popular desire for instrumental application of sacred power to deal with exigencies of daily life' (Scribner 1993: 484), religious books came to substitute the realm of religious idols. The reified divine word was perceived as possessing the powers of protection, providence, or healing in critical situations of life (François 1995: 222–224). As in pre-Reformation times, the borders between the sacred and magic were often blurred (Scribner 1993).

In the Nordic region the hymnal, in particular, seems to have enjoyed a status as a magical object. In both Sweden and Denmark, folklore records from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries provide multiple examples of a superstitious perception of the hymnal. It was, for instance, a widespread tradition to protect cattle with a page of the hymnal nailed to their stalls; the hymnal could also serve as an amulet in either a cradle or coffin, i.e., extending divine protection during fragile phases of life. You could also predict what the New Year would bring through a blind choice of a hymn, e.g., a wedding or death. Also, the hymn singing practice itself could serve as an incantation, as protection from war, or it could accompany breast-feeding as a way of feeding the child with the word of God (DFS; Klintberg & Mattsson 2018).

Even The Stalwart Jutlanders with their firm belief rooted in Lutheran orthodoxy seem to have perceived the sacred powers of books as being quite concrete. Stidsen (2002: 76) describes how 'the mistrust of outsiders

often developed into a manic terror of being "defiled" by other teachings and other books'[4]. When Therkel Hansen asked his mother how she could know that the new hymnal conveyed false doctrine when she had never even opened it, she answered 'No, I don't want to look at it because I could be seduced'[5] (Stidsen 2002: 76). Other sources testify that outsiders characterized the religious life of The Stalwart Jutlanders as idolatry, and that they were even suspected of burning rationalist inspired books (Stidsen 2002: 70–76).

Apparently, the resistance against the 'Evangelical Christian Hymnal' was rooted in a melding of theological analysis with religious emotions. A large number of core hymns from 'Kingo's Hymnal' had been removed or strongly revised. Not least, the structure had been changed. Where 'Kingo's Hymnal' was structured *de tempore*, i.e., liturgically founded and following the church year, the new hymnal was organized after modern practical categories. Thus, the connection with earlier generations of hymn singers, and with the experience of the breakthrough of mythical time in the annual cycle of recurrent hymns, was discontinued, and the new hymnal did not possess the qualities of a sacred book.

Hymnals and hymns were central to the lives of The Stalwart Jutlanders. They collected books, many of them made copies of hymnals or were productive as hymn-writers and they were keen singers (Stidsen 2002). Through the act of singing as bodily transformation and materialization in sound, The Stalwart Jutlanders could share the experience of the sacred powers of the words of the hymns. With their devotion to 'Kingo's Hymnal', they also preserved the specific vocal style associated with the hymnal, Kingo-singing. So, what did it sound like? As always, when dealing with oral traditions, there is no simple answer.

Sass Bak (2006: 184–188) has demonstrated how the singing practice was based on the principles of oral vocal tradition, resulting in a variety of different hymn versions of the same melody. She has also portrayed a series of examples of sources from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries

in which musical authorities complain about the state of hymn singing in parish churches, lamenting the lack of unison. Despite these very strong indications, Sass Bak (2006: 159) offers the following verdict on the Kingo-singing tradition: 'whether genuine heterophony […] was practised to any great degree is uncertain but not inconceivable.'

Of course, a discussion of this crucial question depends on the definition of heterophony, or 'genuine heterophony'. First, I would like to emphasize the aspect of listening. Even with limited empirical material, the few existing recordings of group Kingo-singing convey an entirely different listening experience than exhibited by the recordings of individual singers. *Something* seems to be happening among the singers.

Heterophony in Danish sources

According to Žanna Pärtlas (2016: 44), heterophony occurs in different forms within different musical traditions around the world; 'being intrinsically connected with oral and collective music creation, [it] has no direct analogies in Western written music', and is therefore 'difficult to describe using standard European terminology'. She suggests a combined approach where heterophony is interpreted 'as a musical, social and psychological phenomenon' and arrives at the following definition:

> different types of music making […], which are characterized by a multilinear texture and which come into being through the process of the simultaneous variation of the same melody when the performers do not control the quality of the vertical sonorities. (Pärtlas 2016: 67).

Another essential aspect in a theoretical approach to the singing of The Stalwart Jutlanders is the religious experience of the singers. With this expansion of understanding, the heterophony of The Stalwart Jutlanders must be regarded as a sonic, social, mental and religious phenomenon of music.

The historical sources that indicate a heterophonic practice mostly consist of negative opinions voiced in a public debate about the state of congregational singing, especially that of parish churches. To reflect this general perception, I quote a few significant comments, which are listed in chronological order, except for the first and most recent comment, due to its unique standpoint. M.K. Sand was a teacher and parish clerk who collected traditional hymn melodies. In a collection published in 1918, he wrote a note about an informant, J.V. Steendorph from Gørding:

> My teacher and predecessor in the office from 1824–62. In his time 'the mastersinger' of the Western Region with a rare high and sonorous tenor-voice. He read music and sang with the implied ornamentations (i.e. embellishments) [grace notes in Sands transcription] which can still be heard with several elder people.[6] (Sand 1918: 10.)

Sand's testimony is relevant in many ways. He shows great admiration for his teacher whom he seems to perceive as a representative of the folk hymn tradition. He clearly sees no contradiction between the ability to read music and the ornamentation of the melody; rather, he simply offers two examples of Steendorph's masterly skills. The information about the embellished singing style of the elder generation not only confirms the existence of the practice; it also demonstrates a positive discourse about the phenomenon that must have existed, not only among parish clerks but also in the congregations.

Compared to other sources, mostly representing authorities in the form of e.g., chorale book prefaces, M. K. Sand stands alone with this position. The notion of a musical correspondence with confessional uniformity seems to have been present from the very beginning of Protestant musical congregational practice in Denmark. Thus, the preface to 'Jespersøn's Gradual' (*Niels Jespersøns Graduale*) from 1573 states:

> that there might once and for all be found a good means and manner / to advise these stubborn Parish clerks and other Church servants / who are to blame for our Churches not keeping to a firm and rightful form of song and ceremony according to the Ordinance. (Quote from Sass Bak 2006: 159).

Around 200 years later, the 'firm and rightful form of song' had still not been achieved, according to the preface of *Breitendich's Chorale Book* from 1764. Also, this ideal seems to have developed into an actual concept of unison:

> For just as the devotions are truly furthered when everyone in the Church sings with one tongue and one tone so to speak, so too are they hindered when each sing with his own tone. (Quote from Sass Bak 2006: 159).

In the nineteenth century, when the 'music of the people' experienced new interest in Danish musical culture, a greater appreciation of the practice of traditional hymn singing was perhaps to be expected. Indeed, composer and song inspector A. P. Berggreen (1801–1880) took the initiative to collect different variations of traditional hymn melodies aiming to 'construct a basic norm' (Sass Bak 2006: 15). He also collected and edited 'Folksongs and melodies' (*Folke-sange og Melodier*; Berggreen 1842: II) in the preface of which he reflects upon the nature of music. Although the preface does not specifically deal with hymn singing, it nonetheless reveals a fundamental aesthetic approach to traditional singing that was characteristic of the time. Berggreen (1842) claims that:

> *any* melody […] is based on a certain progression of harmonies; and even if those melodies are invented without a *thought* of harmony, then they are not invented without the *vague feeling* of the underlying harmonies, the laws of which might earlier not have been known […].[7]

He even claims that in cases where a sense of harmony is absent, the modern musician should 'restore' it:

> Here it is important, through the art of harmonies to bind that, which threatens to fall apart – to bind the notes of the melody through the harmony, like the flowers in a bouquet are bound with a ribbon.[8]

Berggreen (1842) is here not specifically addressing a heterophonic hymn-singing tradition, but he does tentatively exclude such a practice. To follow a homophonic norm, as advocated by Berggreen, does not exclude the possibility of musical ornamentation, but it does limit it substantially. The more simultaneously performed variations of a melody are dependent on a harmonic structure, the more limited the options become. According to Pärtlas's definition, heterophony and homophony must be mutually exclusive since a basic harmonic structure will always act to control 'the quality of the vertical sonorities'. That Berggreen never succeeded in constructing a 'basic norm' does not imply that a heterophonic practice existed. However, it does confirm the immense gap between musical reality and aesthetic norms.

This brief account of the development of official vocal ideals from uniformity over unison to homophony not only demonstrates an increased distancing over time from a heterophonic practice, but also sheds light on observations made previously regarding individual variants of the Kingo-singing tradition. Sass Bak (2006: 178) mentions two features of the Kingo tradition that indicate a heterophonic practice. Firstly, she states that the 'majorization' of Danish oral tradition, which predominantly took place during the nineteenth century, eluded the Kingo tradition. Thus, while the vocal practice generally changed from a modal framework to melodies in major, Kingo-singing represented a preservation of a predominantly modal tonality with low harmonic tension, which rather than complying with a homophonic pattern would enable a heterophonic vocal expression.

The other feature that I would like to emphasize is form, which is related to tonality. Sass Bak (2006) emphasizes the tendency of combining formal simplification with melodic ornamentation. For example, a modulating B part in the chorale book version of a hymn may in the oral version have been replaced by a repetition of the A part. Sass Bak (2006: 171) attributes the phenomenon of formal simplification to oral practice: 'the ear demands fixed points, and prefers identical passages to many different formal sections'. This fact is true, but also, formal simplification is a precondition for heterophonic practice. With formal and tonal simplification, the 'simultaneous variation of the same melody' is achievable.

A recorded example: *Lov og Tak og evig Ære*

Among the few archived recordings featuring more than two singers, this version of *Lov og Tak og evig Ære* (DFS Mgt GD 1958 28, B) provides the clearest example of heterophony. Thomas Kingo wrote the text, and the melody is based on Ps. 42 from *The Genevan Psalter*. It was a favoured melody of The Stalwart Jutlanders, sung with at least five different hymn texts. The recording features four singers: Henrik Therkelsen Christensen, Christen Mathiasen Christensen, Ole Olesen, and Rasmus Rasmussen.

> Praise and thanks and eternal glory / be upon you, O son of God's heart,
> who wished to be a servant, / and is of David's kin,
> Sweet Jesus, teach me, / to wander rightly
> and follow in your footsteps, / Yes, rejoice in your path.

The first line follows a standard chorale pattern with a repetition of the same phrase cadencing, first in the dominant, then in the tonic. The accentuation of these cadences conveys a strong sense of major among the singers. In the same cadences, however, the singers perform 5 instead of 6 as notated in the chorale book versions of the melody (see Sass Bak 2006: 187–188), and thus they seem to exclude the subdominant. The recording

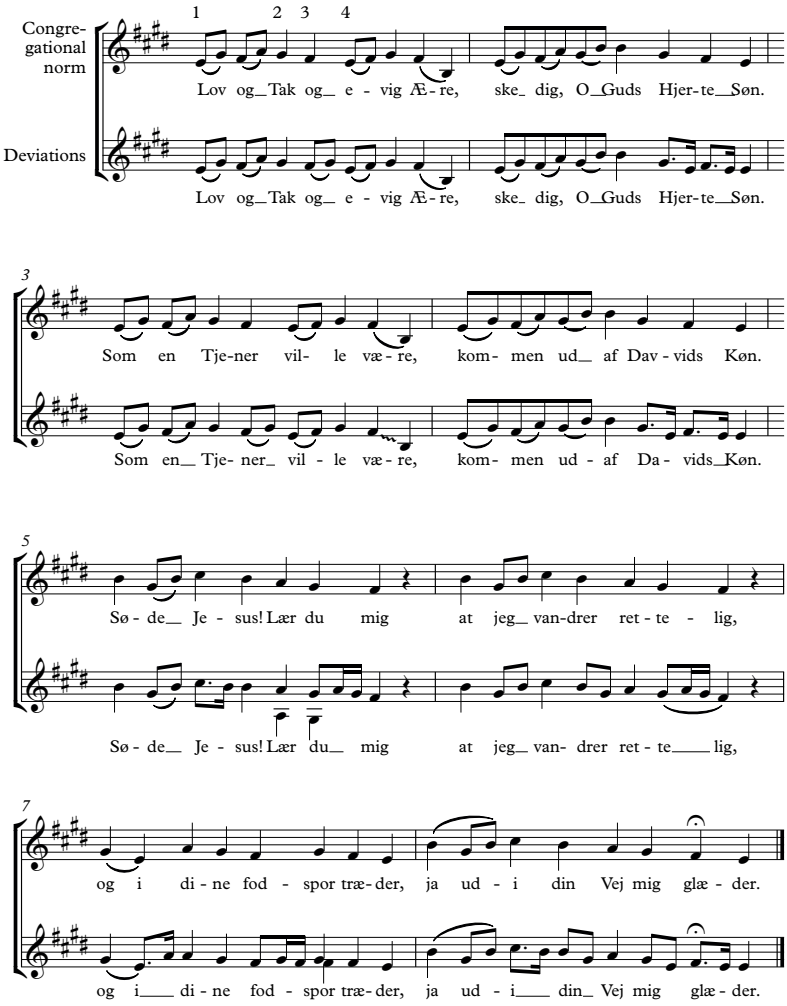

Figure 1. Transcription of the hymn singing.

seems to demonstrate a simplified, harmony-based approach and thus a sort of texturally blended form.

Other features of the recorded example confirm the heterophonic practice more explicitly. In terms of figurations, I have identified two categories; the first comprises the already established staircase quaver figurations, which is a recognized congregational melodic norm (Sass Bak 2006: 186). The second category consists of spontaneously improvised individual ornamentations of which some (in 1 and 3) follow the well-established ascending pattern of staircase thirds in equal quavers, while others (in 2 on 'Hjertesøn') follow a descending staircase pattern of dotted rhythm, forming an upbeat to the following note. Others can be described as consisting of freely performed trills (in 5 on 'du'), octave doubling (in 5 on 'lær du mig'), a sort of *glissando* (in 3 on 'være') – or be described as a kind of noise (in 7 on 'Fodspor').

When gathering the examples of the 'lack of control of the vertical sonorities', an overall image of a dense and unclear texture emerges. This texture is furthermore emphasized through the vocal style of the singers characterized by a liberal attitude towards beginnings and endings of both single notes and whole phrases; a natural take on the voice without blending register (individually) or timbre (collectively); and a preference for gliding. The slow tempo (c. MM 48) leaves scope for many nuances in the beginning, middle and ending of each syllable, especially – as always in oral tradition – on the long notes at the end of the phrases, which the modern trained listener will perceive as either being 'too long' (7) or 'too short' (2, 4, 5 and 6). The richness of vowels of the Danish language is also prominent, and different colours can occur at the same time.

The singers furthermore share a strong sense of unity. Nobody pushes the tempo; instead, everyone leaves space for the individual style of their co-singers. Likewise, nobody counts before singing. One singer begins cautiously, and after a few seconds the others join in, one by one, allowing the hymn to flourish in heterophonic unity (see Fig. 1). Most prominent is

the unity of the heavy accents on each beat. The accentuation of stressed as well as unstressed beats (and syllables) in conjunction with the slow tempo results in a lack of clear metre. While on the one hand, this contributes to the density and lack of clarity of the texture, it can on the other hand, also be perceived as fixed points in the murky waters of heterophonic singing. Kingo was a great poet of the Baroque and a master of poetic metres easily mastered by the singers, which is reflected in the hymn text in this recording. However, 'Kingo's Hymnal' also includes plenty of hymns from 'Thomissøn's Hymnal' (*Thomissøns salmebog*) from 1569, which had not been reformed according to modern metrics. Here, anchors in the more freely flowing syllables may have been required as a kind of compensation for the lack of a firm metre. Using heavy accents, the singers could create a common pulse, although such a pulse would not correspond with a fixed metre or indeed a modern conception of the phenomenon. Some of the metrically irregular hymns from 'Thomissøn's Hymnal' formed the core repertoire of The Stalwart Jutlanders and were arguably crucial in the formation of their singing style.

In an interview with members of The Stalwart Jutlanders, Thorkild Knudsen asked how they managed to coordinate the complicated accents in the irregular metre. Niels Jacobsen answered that they attempted to 'follow the rhythm through moving the body' though this was not a 'determined metre' that 'would fit into a certain system according to regular conceptions of music'[9] (DFS Mgt GD 1960 011). This statement corresponds with an anecdote on the same tape about a then former pastor who was no friend of Kingo-singing. According to Jacobsen, pastor Eriksen claimed that 'to sing Kingo, one needed to be more familiar with gymnastics than with music.'[10] This way of creating clarity through 'moving the body' must be related to the heaviness of the many accents, which is one of the most prominent features of the Kingo-singing style.

The mental process of heterophonic singers

The interviews also raise an interesting question about the cognitive aspects of heterophony. Pärtlas (2016: 60–62) states the lack of control of the vertical sonorities does not depend on a conscious notion of heterophony. The clear preference for a figuration in staircase thirds heard on *Lov og Tak og evig Ære* exemplifies a compromise between horizontal and vertical musical thinking, and thus probably is not an entirely conscious musical expression.

Nevertheless, the interviews reveal that even though the singers had not developed a general terminology with which to discuss the experience of singing, several statements demonstrate a great awareness of the musical practice. Among them a comment by Henrik Therkelsen Christensen on the most frequently performed hymn in the recordings, *Aleneste Gud i Himmerig*, a hymn version of the *Gloria*: 'There would be as many deviations as there were singers'.[11] (DFS Mgt GD 1960 001). Truly, all versions featured on Knudsen's recordings are slightly different; the singers are arguably aware that the frequent repetition of a specific hymn will not lead to one firm version.

Other comments by the singers interviewed show that the vocal practice is connected with a specific way of experiencing music, for instance by Niels Jacobsen who claims: 'Those who use the new tone need to swallow the melody many places.'[12] (DFS Mgt GD 1960 07). I interpret this statement as a defence of a heterophonic practice where 'tone' is to be understood as style rather than melody, and where 'new' refers to the formal approach to a homophonic norm with a regular metre. Singers who need to follow a metre and a fixed harmonic progression cannot really immerse themselves emotionally in the music.

That this sense of a limitless and total musical expression is also associated with an experience of community and religion becomes clear in the following reflection on the modern hymn-singing style:

> I think maybe something is missing. The old melodies without musical accompaniment better expressed what we were just talking about [the religious feeling expressed in singing] than the new ones can. They are more part of a scheme, the new ones; they have to be – that's the way they are directed from the organ and the choir. The congregation – it isn't entirely congregational singing like it used to be. (DFS Mgt GD 1960 010; Translation from Sass Bak 2006: 181).

Accordingly, a general understanding of heterophonic practice that implied a connection with the social and religious experience of singing existed. This vocal practice indeed depended on the group identity of the singers.

Expressing community through heterophony

Singing served two main social functions for The Stalwart Jutlanders:
1. Social bonding within the group;
2. Demarcation concerning people outside the community.

Assuming that the conditions that intensify community inclusion are the same as those that exclude persons who are not part of the community, the following analysis focuses on the first category.

With his conceptualization of 'participatory performance', Thomas Turino (2008) offers a valuable approach to the issue. The basic definition of participatory practice is:

> a special type of artistic practice in which there are no artist-audience distinctions, only participants and potential participants performing different roles, and the primary goal is to involve the maximum number of people in some performance role. (Turino 2008: 26.)

That social interaction rather than the piece is the most important aspect of a participatory performance does not imply that the musical sound holds no significance for the performers. What it does imply, however, is that the ideal sound encourages participation. Based on his extensive fieldwork, Turino identifies a series of style features of participatory music from which two main categories can be deduced.

One category features performative elements that enable musical participation regardless of the skill levels of the participants. The prominence of 'dense textures' in *Tak og Lov og evig Ære* help to 'provide a crucial cloaking function that inspires musical participation' (Turino 2008: 46). In the heterophonic performance of the recording, the number of voices and their individual movements are not distinguishable, so a potential new singer would be able to sneak in without really being noticed. The same cloaking function can be observed in the '"feathered" beginnings and endings' (Turino 2008: 59). As previously noted, the singers join in one by one. There is no imperative for singers to start at the same time on the first beat, nor to observe any precision in timing with the end of the phrases. What does hold importance, however, is the creation of a common space with scope for everyone in the group.

The other category concerns what Turino (2008: 41–44) calls the 'social synchrony', i.e., musical and performative elements that make the participants feel 'as one'. With a performance practice where everything is not planned and timed, participants need to pay special attention to each other during the performance. This demand for social synchrony, and thus the bodily involvement ('moving the body') of the participants, builds a sense of common identity. The feature 'constancy of rhythm/meter/groove' (Turino 2008: 59) is probably mostly associated with dance music, but it is fully applicable to the practice heard on the recording. The many accentuations form a common pulse that encourages a high degree of communal participation.

Turino (2008: 31) mentions the importance of different participatory roles that can ensure an 'ever-expanding ceiling of challenges', so that

people of different skill levels can contribute with the same level of commitment and enthusiasm, for instance by playing instruments of differing prominence. This is clearly not the case with The Stalwart Jutlanders, who all solely contribute with their own voice and share the exact same performance conditions. A core religious practice of The Stalwart Jutlanders, singing was never merely a social or musical activity detached from religious worship. Singing was an expression of community, but the community was grounded on a shared faith and doctrine.

The religious experience of heterophonic Kingo-singing

Emphasizing the individually performed ornamentation of traditional hymn singing, Thorkild Knudsen (1968: 10) stated that 'the group-song of the religious higher-culture becomes solo song in the folk culture', and concluded that congregational singing consists of 'individual people, who in the singing fellowship reserve the freedom to bear witness to their relation to God on a personal basis'. This conclusion seems to be developed based on his own recordings, the majority of which feature individual singers. However, listening to *Lov og Tak og evig Ære* conveys a very different impression, namely that of a musical collective where the movements of the individual voices are indistinguishable. Thus, individuality in the context of communal singing is transformed into a sense of objectivity, which transcends the participatory frame.

A similar transcendence is achieved through the features 'highly repetitive and short, open redundantly repeated forms' (Turino 2008: 59). The Stalwart Jutlanders nurtured a rather limited repertoire of core hymnal melodies that they sang using different texts, so the association between melody and a specific liturgical content must have been loose. The melody of *Lov og Tak og evig Ære* was used for Passion and Christmas as well as other occasions during the church year. Also, the formal simplification, the low harmonic tension, and the formulaic staircase ornamentation of

the melodies reduced the melodic differences. While the constant repetition of the same melodic material obviously supported musical participation, it must have led to an experience of singing a specific style rather than the singing of specific melodies.

An awareness of style was especially important in devotional practice at home, where also other kinds of spiritual songs were performed. Through the special Kingo style, the singers would become aware that this way of singing, originating in the liturgy of the church, was unlike anything else. Although speculative, I would like to mention the not entirely inconceivable idea that the dense and asynchronous texture could be experienced as an imitation of the acoustics of the church room. Admittedly, parish churches did not have the acoustics of a cathedral, but still they were a different space compared with a private home. In any case, the doctrine – and to The Stalwart Jutlanders, the true faith – of 'Kingo's Hymnal' could not be expressed through ordinary profane music, but only through a specific style of a sacred sound – a vocal hierophany.

According to Eliade (1987 [1959]), the sacred can manifest itself in both time and space. The hymn-singing practice of The Stalwart Jutlanders seems to have comprised both dimensions. Modernized hymn singing, being 'part of a scheme […] directed from the organ and the choir' could, in their experience, not completely fill and sanctify the church room. Conversely, the dense texture of the Kingo tradition could - even in private homes - embrace the singers with a sound that constituted a sacred space. The hymnal was a portable sacred space, the powers of which were brought to life through the heterophonic singing voices.

Being an activity that unfolds over time, Kingo-singing could transcend profane time, 'ordinary temporal duration' (Eliade 1987 [1959]: 68). The constant repetition of the same melodies and ornamental formulas in a musical practice that did not obey rules of unison, harmony, or metre, offered a musical experience 'of a wholly different order'. Thus, the breakthrough of sacred time was not only conveyed by the liturgical order of

the hymns, but also – and not least - by the musical performance of the heterophonic Kingo style itself. In the words of Niels Jacobsen: 'It's as if the feeling that … animates the people also expresses itself in the song. In both text and melody.'[13]

Rehearing the Kingo style of The Stalwart Jutlanders

Recordings that document a heterophonic practice among The Stalwart Jutlanders are scarce, and the example analysed here must be considered a reminiscence and reconstruction. Nevertheless, even a reminiscence contains remnants of the original practice. A comparison of the example analysed with the preceding tape recording demonstrates the process of reconstruction. The impression is that the tradition portrayed is a little rusty, but after some time, the singers are back in the groove. It would therefore be reasonable to consider the recording of *Tak og Lov og evig Ære* as a reliable example of Kingo-singing.

This musical practice is, as Kirsten Sass Bak (2006: 188) has emphasized, rooted in an individually-based oral tradition. However, unlike other forms of oral tradition, Kingo-singing was performed within the congregational community, and it is in this collective form of performance that we should think of it. Although the recordings of individual singers constitute most of the documented material, such performances were exceptions in relation to the congregational aspect of the tradition. The joint participation of congregational performance would bring into play the whole complex interaction between sound, emotion, community and religious experience.

The immense cultural impact of Danish folk high school singing had the unfortunate consequence that other traditions fell into cultural oblivion. The 'folk-like song' style, especially of Carl Nielsen was – for good reasons – very successful, but it was aesthetically as far removed from the Kingo style as it could be. Rather than pursuing the ideal of the *Schein*

des Bekannten, The Stalwart Jutlanders sought an encounter with 'something of a wholly different order'. The folk high school tradition, with its influence on the aesthetic norms of the state church, cultivated a style of textural simplicity and clarity, which in the case of Carl Nielsen's formally, harmonically and motivically through-composed melodies, has been described as 'a concentrated, refined version of his art song style' (Reynolds 2010: 216). In contrast, The Stalwart Jutlanders developed formal and harmonic simplification to enable the creation of the dense texture of heterophony that to the singers revealed itself as a hierophany.

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Notes

1 'Endelig ophørte til Lise for mit Øre og min musikalske Sands denne skærende og skurrende Sammenblanding af Kattemijav, Ugleskrig, Svinegrynten, Hundebjæffen, Lammebrægen, Hestevrinsken og Anderskræppen, som i lutherske Kirker, hvor Sangen ikke dyrkes og et overdøvende Orgel ikke findes, støder det musikalske Øre og gør Gudstjenesten tildels latterlig, tildels uhyggelig og uopbyggelig.'

2 'Tog tonen fra degnen.'

3 'A kun rov å Claus kund syng, men så kom der syv læs dævl og syv læs degne, men vi sang lige rask; da Claus gik op til alteret, sang a jen, og da a gik til alters, sang Claus; men vi stod os.' (Feldbæk 1990: 310).

4 'De stærke Jyders mistillid udartede ofte til en nærmest manisk frygt for at blive "besmittet" med andre lærdomme og andre bøger.'

5 'Nej [sagde hun], jeg vil heller ikke se i den, for så kan jeg blive forført.'

6 'Min Lærer og Formand i Embedet fra 1824-62. I sin Tid Vesteregnens 'Mestersanger' med en sjælden høj og klangfuld Tenor-stemme. Han sang efter Noder med de antydede Forsiringer (dvs. udsmykninger), som endnu går igen hos adskillige ældre Folk.'

7 '[...] enhver Melodie [...] er baseret paa en vis Følge af Harmonier; og ere end hine Melodier opfundne uden Tanke om Harmonie, saa ere de dog ikke opfundne uden den dunkle Følelse af de til Grund liggende Harmonier for hvilke man vel tidligere ikke kjendte Lovene [...]'

8 'Her gjælder det derimod ved den harmoniske Kunst at forbinde Det, der truer med at falde fra hinanden, - ved Harmonien at sammenholde Melodiens Toner, ligesom Blomsterkosten ved Baandet.'

9 'I nogen grad ved rytmen som man ligesom søgte at passe ind ved at holde kroppen i bevægelse i takt med, så vidt gørligt. Nu er det jo ikke sådan nogen fastlagt takt som man kan anbringe i bestemt takt efter almindelig musikopfattelse. Men alligevel så var det sådan at kroppens rytme, den fulgte med, i nogen grad, det var meget almindeligt.'

10 'Skal man synge Kingo, da skal man være mere hjemme i gymnastikken end i musikken.'

11 'Lige så mange der synger den, lige så mange små afvigelser vil der blive i den.'

12 'De der bruger den ny tone, der skal melodien sluges mange steder.'

13 'Men det ligesom at den følelse som … besjæler de mennesker, den finder også sit udtryk i sangen. Det gælder både tekst og melodi.

ANDERS DILLMAR

‘The sacred’ in relation to ‘church music’ in Swedish debates at the beginning of the eighteenth century and the end of the twentieth century

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The concept ‘sacred’ has been understood in rather different ways over time. My aim in this article is to give a *historical* and *hermeneutical* perspective, with a focus on ‘church music’ in a broad sense. Today discussions about this issue not only refer to questions about aesthetically ‘good’ or ‘bad’ music, but also to the question of *how music best expresses and promotes a sacred dimension and an experience of holiness* in the Christian service. Debates about these questions can be found extensively both historically and in modern literature; the two periods studied here are examples of this debate. Growing globalisation has made it obvious that the answers are related to contexts and situations.

In the text of the specific material – two extensive Swedish debates when different Swedish chorale books were produced – I will concentrate on how the concept ‘sacred’ and its contextual equivalents such as ‘holy’ and ‘mystical’ were used. Here concepts regarding ‘the sacred’ were usually explicitly stated, but they were not always in focus in the texts, rather they were underlying the reasoning about other issues. The analysis of the texts is *qualitative*; no attention is paid to quantitative aspects as to whether some words were used more often than others. All original texts are in

Swedish, but I have translated the concepts into English. In ambiguous cases the original is found in the footnotes with an explanation.

My approach is *hermeneutic* and *inductive*. The aim is to describe a geography for 'church music and the sacred' at two different historical times. Since there are more than 150 years between the two discussions, it can be questioned whether the concepts had the same meaning. There are certainly linguistic problems here, as in all hermeneutic approaches, but since the context is essentially the same, the concept 'holy' (*helig* in Swedish) is moving reasonably within the same sphere, regardless of the time interval. Consequently, it is possible to see which connotations the concept has had at different times – and most interestingly, if there have been any major changes.

This issue might perhaps be narrow, since 'church music' comprises much more than chorales. On the other hand, chorales are very central, since hymns are sung by the whole congregation both in services and otherwise, and thus the issue relates directly to more people than the music performed by choirs and soloists, the latter perhaps more generally perceived as 'church music'. For reasons of clarity, it might be said that a chorale book contains the musical accompaniment to a Hymnal (*psalmbok*), which covers the texts – and sometimes also gives the melodies – of the congregational songs used in church services and other gatherings.

The production of these chorale books in Sweden intensified the debates, which in both cases were rather extensive and very often expanded to apply to other sorts of 'church music' as well. Thus, the debates on these chorale books are at the core of the issue of 'church music and the sacred'. In my earlier publications, I have described and analysed these two Swedish debates separately, as well as the work with the music (Dillmar 2001; Dillmar 2007; Dillmar 2015d). My texts are the starting point for this article, but all references will be given to the original sources. As far as I know, these Swedish discussions about church music and the sacred have not been compared in this way earlier.

In short, my focus is *to compare arguments in these two historical contexts to find both similarities and differences and to achieve more knowledge about the development of the concept 'sacred' in relation to 'church music' – or using a later expression, the 'sacred' in relation to 'music in the church'*.

Of course, questions about 'the sacred' could be related to different methods and models in ecclesiological and liturgical research (Dulles 2002: 26-94; Fagerberg 2004: 110), but this is beyond my purpose; this task can be done later. Also, it is noticed that not only the concept of 'sacred' can be questioned, but also the concept of 'music' because it is far from unambiguous.

Historical background

When Sweden became a protestant nation during the sixteenth century, a repertoire of hymns began to grow very slowly, often translations of German hymns but also original Swedish texts as well as melodies. The songbooks were first produced locally and perhaps mainly used by choirs, but during the seventeenth century congregational singing became normative. The first Hymnal for the whole of Sweden emerged in 1695, with the music printed in an extensive edition, nowadays often referred to as *Choralpsalmboken 1697*.

After very long discussions about the inadequate language of this Hymnal, a new one was printed in 1819 with the clergyman Johan Olof Wallin (1779–1839) as editor. The former Swedish court conductor Johann Christian Fredrik Hæffner (1759–1833), then working as *director musices* at the University of Uppsala, became editor of the chorale music at a very late stage of the work, under the supervision of the hymn committee. The debate on the chorale music was rather extensive. Hæffner was already well-known for his chorale book edition in 1808, of which at least two copies also are preserved in Finnish church archives (Tuppurainen 2000; Dillmar 2001: 187; Proceedings of Swedish Royal Academy of Music Feb-

ruary 1808); Finland until then was a part of Sweden. Hæffner earlier had been organist of the German parish in Stockholm and was later appointed as cathedral organist in Uppsala. His new chorale book for the Hymnal of 1819 was printed in two parts, in 1820 and 1821, and used – primarily the first part – in Sweden for more than 100 years with only small changes. Copies of the edition 1820/21 also are preserved in Finnish church archives. After the Hymnal of 1937, even the next Swedish chorale book from 1939 got the same musical style as the chorale book from 1820/21.

With rather new ideas concerning language and music, an ecumenically-based Hymnal (with melodies) was edited in 1986, after more than 25 years of work. An associated chorale book was printed in the following year and is still in use with some supplements. The principal music editor was Harald Göransson (1917–2004), organist and teacher (eventually professor) of liturgy and music theory at the Royal College of Music (*Kungliga musikhögskolan*) in Stockholm. For many years he was perceived as the foremost spokesman for church musicians in Sweden. Some of those were involved in the work with the chorale book as 'experts', but the surrounding discussions involved far more people. Göransson also was Editor in Chief of the music to the Swedish Church Handbook 1986. At the age of 75, he even presented an appreciated dissertation in musicology on the above mentioned first Swedish chorale book of 1697.

'Sacred' music discussed two hundred years ago in Sweden

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, J.C.F. Hæffner in his own texts often returned to the 'high, serious, devotional and worthy' character he perceived was required of 'a correct church song[1] and thus distinguished it from secular music (Hæffner 1808: 7). Not only the music but also the language of the worship should elevate people from everyday life, and be characterized by the eternal to awaken 'devotional stillness and holy feelings' (Hæffner 1810b). The commonly used concept was 'simplicity',

which also contained spiritual elevation, non-everydayness.

The solemnity of the service and the emotion of devotion were – due to Hæffner – largely based on music (Hæffner 1810a). Here, not least, the 'church modes' were important, and Hæffner thought that he had found a related tonality in the old Swedish folk tunes. He argued that anyone who heard the 'Old Swedish Folk Song' directly from the lips of ordinary people would realize that it could not be adapted to 'modern form' – major and minor tonalities – without being destroyed (Hæffner 1818: 78f; Hæffner 1821b: nr 95). He argued that the same was true of the Lutheran chorales. Their 'true genius' could not be expressed adequately in terms of major or minor, since the church modes struck 'a special string of the soul' (Hæffner 1821c: nr 45) and could put a listener 'in a mood of serious solemnity'. The church modes were assessed as necessary so that the service did not become profane or 'un-sanctified' (*ohelgad*; Hæffner 1821b: nr 95; Dillmar 2007: 172f).

Despite his appealing words about the song of country people, Hæffner was critical of their often-embellished vocal practice when singing chorales. This kind of singing later has been called *multi-heterophony* (Bohlin 1993: 126) and 'the Old Way of Singing' (Temperley 1980/1995: 363). Hæffner found that it was influenced by the embellished playing of the organists, which he judged as inappropriate in church (Hæffner 1821a: II; 1821b: nr 94). During the hymn, the organist's one and only duty was to 'lead the song and express its pure chords without any embellishments, doubling or artificial harmonic effects' (Hæffner 1821a: II). The embellished practice was considered as negative by many of the musically educated at this time, but in the sixteenth century it had been seen as positive for worship, since it was believed to awaken a desire to praise God (Rietschel 1892: 25).

It is worth noting that Hæffner never mentions *alternatim praxis* anywhere between the congregation and the organ in every other verse of the hymn, even though this old praxis might still have been in use. Other instruments

could be used when no organ was at hand to lead the hymn singing. For use at solemn occasions and funerals, Hæffner's choral book thus contains settings, not only for the organ, but also for timpani and wind instruments: oboes, clarinets, bassoons, tubes and trumpets (Hæffner 1821a: 15–20).

Still, first and foremost, the chorale, according to its Lutheran origin, was 'a song for the congregation' (Hæffner 1821a: II). The singing aimed at a 'common edification' and 'praise of God'. This Christian view was very old, quoted around the year 200 (Hippolytus of Rome 1994 [around 202]: 33). According to Hæffner, the 'strong character and high excellence' of the chorales demanded powerful singing 'with a loud voice' to express inner confidence and belief in God (Hæffner 1812; 1821a: II). He also was convinced that during the Reformation period the congregation had sung most of the hymns in four-part (Hæffner 1822a: 126). This opinion is nowadays considered a misunderstanding between the singing of the congregation and the singing of the choir. In Sweden, he had observed a similar contemporary folk vocal practice, where 'no whole assembly, from the lowest peasant church to the most brilliant one in a capital, sings [only] the simple [chorale] melody'. Hæffner wanted to cultivate this practice, but at the same time, he was generous to local melody variants and argued that they could be used if they were established.

He also saw the triple time as disgraceful to the solemnity of worship; it belonged to dance (Hæffner 1822a: 128), and he described it as 'menuett', 'wals' or 'passacaill' (Hæffner 1812; Hæffner 1813). His description of it as 'un-courtly' (*ohöfwisk*) might also suggest a theological view, which considered worship music as heavenly court music. Triple time had been a prominent feature of *Koralpsalmboken 1697*, but already one year later one of the editors argued that the even rhythm should be most appropriate for church music (Moberg 1935: 243). This criticism of triple time also constituted the orthodox Lutheran reaction to some pietistic songs during the eighteenth century, thus the derogatory name 'Pietistenwalzer' (Blankenburg 1979: 267-283).

Hæffner's view was that 'the beautiful art' of music should 'preach of the divine', not least through the harmonies of the 'holy song'; thus, the hymn singing had mystical dimensions (Hæffner 1817/1840: 6). Even the melodies were described as something 'holy', which had prevented him from carelessly changing them; rather, he had tried to restore them nearer to the 'original' version, from which they had deviated during long use in Sweden (Hæffner 1822a: 129). Perhaps because of this action, he said he had written his chorales 'for eternity' (Hæffner 1821a: II).

Hæffner was not alone in his views; on the contrary, many contemporaries supported him. According to one of the greatest Swedish advocates of church music at this time, the clergyman Johannes Dillner (1785-1862), worship music aimed at 'incorporating the Holy Word in the heart and soul, and at creating believing and repentance' (Dillner 1845). This view did not mean that the church was hostile to artistic singing – Dillner himself was a very good singer and often visited performances at the Royal Opera House in Stockholm. He said that 'too much artistic beauty, how adorable it might be, would damage the unity of the service', which then would lose 'the true praise of God' and the ability to cure 'ills of the human mind'. According to Dillner, singing in worship – both in unison and in parts (choir) – had mystical dimensions as a sort of *unio mystica* praxis, not least related to the church modes. In this 'singing of the glory of God and of the edification of the heart', the 'omnipresent good Spirit was at hand in every moment' (Dillner 1830: IXf). The church service should also reflect 'God's harmony and order' – the cosmos, not chaos, which very likely was said concerning Paul's Letter to the Corinthians 14:40. At the funeral of Hæffner in the Cathedral of Uppsala 1833, Dillner in his speech reminded that Hæffner through his music had brought people 'near the border of the holy' (Dillner 1840).

A Swedish organist Carl Johan Moberger (1762–1844) in the debate described how instrumental accompaniment could enrich the hymns and make them more solemn. Thus, he complained about the widespread

'bad habit' (*ovana*) of playing only every other verse (Moberg 1935: 217), which implied that the congregation sang some of the hymn verses without accompaniment, even where the local church had an organ, which was not the case everywhere. At the same time, the organist should have a 'serious and solemn direction[2] both in mind and playing; embellishments should not be used since they could weaken or completely eradicate the emotional expression (Moberger 1805: 38f). To be a skilled organist was described as something totally different from 'a madman' (*en ursinnig*), 'with hands and feet rushing' all over the organ.

The famous Georg Joseph Vogler (1749–1814) – who visited Sweden at the end of the eighteenth century – recommended the organists use suspensions and minor chords, instead of the often-played melodic ornaments and dominant chords with *septima*. In this way, he thought the organist could inspire the worship (Grave & Grave 1987: 171; Bretschneider 1980: 331).

The editor of the Hymnal 1819, J. O. Wallin, in his preface wrote also about how the sound of the organ together with the voices of the congregation in hymn singing created 'a stream of holy pleasure through the veins of life'.

Other contemporaries pointed at the character and special purpose of the church building, which required music emphasizing the dignity and solemnity of the space, expressing 'something sacred and impressing' and leading to 'silence and order' (Anonymous 1816).

A parliamentary debate in Sweden at this time also revealed nationalistic dimensions; singing in church was considered to preserve public feelings for 'holy objects, religion, ancestors, and motherland' (Hedrén 1818). Worship also required sufficient space, as the soul needed time to leave everyday life and to reach 'the universal, the eternal that is the highest goal of all religion (*cultus*)' – and vice versa (Hedrén 1823: 33). Still, in the 1870s, when the Swedish composer Franz Berwald (1796-1868) revised the chorale book of Hæffner, the purity of the chorale settings was judged

as important for the reputation of Sweden as a nation of culture (Bohlin 1994: VIII).

In the middle of the century, the chorale was described as 'inseparable from Christianity', and was named 'the most Christian of all Christian music'. But this was not primarily interpreted as linking Christian people together; rather, it meant an opportunity for each individual to 'put into the song [and singing] his most precious and holiest feelings'. In other sorts of music, somebody else already had done this action, the writer argued (Hildebrandsson 1857: 8, 14).

Of course, there also were critical voices against Hæffner among his contemporaries, especially the secretary of the Swedish Royal Academy of Music (*Kungliga Musikaliska Akademien*), Pehr Frigel (1750–1842), who criticized the reluctance towards triple time (Frigel 1812; Dillmar 2001: 230). Like Hæffner, he admitted that the church modes gave chorales 'a certain mystic holiness', but also modern major and minor modes could create 'outstanding, touching and uplifting melodies in a true Chorale style'. Lastly, he did not agree with Hæffner's recommendation to sing the chorales loudly; instead, Frigel wanted softer performances, 'with half voice', as was practised in Germany.

Another critical voice was the cantor at Saint Jacob's church in Stockholm, also a teacher at the Royal Academy of Music, Carl August Stieler (1780–1822). He admitted that the chorale was 'the most solemn and sublime of all songs' and should be 'something sacred' (Stieler 1820: 48f). He continued that this sacredness was only related to the purpose of worshipping the Supreme Divine Being, and it was not part of the music and its style. According to this purpose, he said that the chorales had to be sung 'solemnly and slowly', and that a hasty tempo took away their dignity.

Despite the slow tempo linked to the solemnity of the purpose, Hæffner and others considered the singing of chorales in some Swedish churches to be too slow. Also, the organists often had the 'tiring habit' of playing slower than the congregation wanted to sing (Hæffner 1821a: XXIV, III;

Dillmar 2001: 425). He recommended 'a musical singing', related both to the poetry and the melody. To sing the hymns too fast was described as 'detestable' (Hæffner 1822b: 25). These views also were in accordance with the first Swedish Church Law from 1686 which stated: 'neither too fast nor too slow'.

These rather common ideals at the beginning of the nineteenth century certainly were related to Pope Benedict XIV's Encyclical *Annus Qui* from 1749, which turned against all theatrical expressions in the liturgy and instead wanted music aimed at 'spiritual contemplation' (*Annus Qui Hunc* 1749; Gerhard 1989: 184ff; Grave & Grave 1987: 125; van Boer Jr 1983: 34). Here the ideals were described as 'the dignity of the church song' and 'the purified taste' (Bretschneider 1820; Burkhardt 1999: 100f). Already the earlier Lutheran tradition had perceived the style of church music as full of majesty, dignity, seriousness, art (Rhyzelius 1733; Dillmar 2011) and power – sometimes also too powerful (Consett 1789 letter 6) – all related to the 'sacred' or 'holy' dimension of the service.

'Sacred' music in the late twentieth century

By the middle of the twentieth century, Harald Göransson presented what he called 'an on-going international reformation' of church music, to make music part of the worship service and not only a nice-sounding aesthetic attachment to it (Göransson 1944a). As in the discussions from the nineteenth century quoted above, the Christian worship was primarily still seen as directed towards God, and thus demanded 'the very best', theologically and musically: 'highness, quality and durability'. Church music's main role was in a 'worthy way' to serve 'the glory of God' and 'the preaching of His word'. The 'liturgical office of the congregation' consisted of 'praising God without too much of propaganda purposes' (Göransson 1954a). In collaboration with Göransson, his friend bishop Gustaf Aulén (1879–1977) wrote about the ongoing renewal of the High Mass and ex-

pressed that 'true church music' should be characterized by 'reverence to the holy' and that the service's fundamental tone was 'praise', (Aulén 1961: 221 – references to Göransson on page 187).

Much of this is a reminder of the Roman Catholic view of sacred music or *musica sacra* expressed in *Motu proprio* 1903. Yet Göransson, in 1944, described it as an important and 'true protestant vision'. It should be respected so that the congregation could perceive the music as 'its own joint expression for praise and worship'. Otherwise, he feared that people might turn towards 'the spiritual schlager'. Certainly, the church had full freedom to use 'any music which could serve her purposes', but it was important to think through the connotations which the music aroused, as well as artistic authenticity and musical quality – and everything must be marked by love for fellow human beings (Göransson 1959). An important dimension of music and music-making was its 'creative joy', which – if properly used – could lead to 'endless blessing' (Göransson 1950a). Different music styles could complement each other very well, provided that the music tried to voice 'something of the inexpressible' (Göransson 1944b, 1957).

Göransson saw choir singing as part of the common song of praise, even when only a smaller group performed it, 'on behalf of the others' (Göransson 1954c). Gregorian chant served the God-given Word by joining people into the 'the praying church on earth' as well as 'to Christ himself' (Göransson 1952b). This chant also surpassed all 'musical crises and the antagonism between generations' (Göransson 1954b nr III). Against the critics of Gregorian chant, Göransson formulated the basic question as: 'what is meant by worship' (Göransson 1952c). He argued that it was a 'distortion' to define 'worship' primarily as missionary.

Göransson considered the rather simple songs of the nineteenth century, used for instance by the Salvation Army, as 'street songs' with spiritual words (Göransson 1954d). The congregational chorales of the sixteenth century Reformation were qualitatively superior, but when addressing 'people on the street', he still considered the songs of the Salvation

Army as outstanding. Likewise, Göransson admitted that 'in the emotionally atmosphere of a revival meeting, the contemplative Gregorian chant has nothing to contribute' (Göransson 1952c). There were – and must be – 'other worship forms than the High Mass', with other purposes and content (Göransson 1954e). In his liturgical teaching at the *Kungliga musikhögskolan*, he tried to achieve a fruitful synthesis between missionary 'evangelism' and 'aesthetic demands' (Göransson 1958/1961).

More and more Göransson began to discuss twentieth-century modernist church music. Already in 1946, during a study journey to Paris, he learned to know the organ music of Jehan Alain (1911–1940) and soon performed it in a radio concert (Göransson 1946; Dillmar 2015b: 90f). Some years later he let Paul Hindemith (1895–1963) exemplify an ethical dimension of music (Göransson 1949; Hindemith 1949; Dillmar 2015b: 188). Nevertheless, Göransson did not want to reduce church music to an aesthetic or ethical question; it 'always has to serve the liturgy and Christian message' (Göransson 1958/1961). He regretted that contemporary 'new' music often was set aside or rejected in church, deemed as 'unnecessary experiments' (Göransson 1950b; Wallner 1971: 58). On the contrary, as 'unloaded with religious language', this music had a great opportunity to be filled with associative content (Göransson 1954c).

Too much use of old church music could give the impression that the Christian gospel was only 'old tales' and irrelevant to the present time (Göransson 1959). Although only few people accepted the singing of a popular melody like *Rumba in Balders Hage* with spiritual words as a *gradual* in the service, Göransson argued that church music had to be 'renewed in one way or another' due to 'our own means of expression' (Göransson 1948). Otherwise, the church would become a museum of fine old music, so 'mummified' (Göransson 1958/61). At the same time, he was convinced that traditional church music would survive as the 'mainline' (Göransson 1971a). Also, there was a clear pan-Lutheran thinking related to the chorales (Göransson 1963).

Göransson's thoughts developed with strong references to history; for example, he was reminded that sixteenth-century worship services in Wittenberg had been characterized by an extraordinary musical wealth. Four hundred years later this ought to inspire 'coexistence of differences', by which he meant 'any music at all, if working properly' (Göransson 1961; 1962).

Thus, every instrument – not just the organ – could contribute with 'something of religious and artistic value', and so-called 'worldly' music could also be used (Göransson 1963/1964). For some church musicians his position became just too much; for others it was a true liberation. While Göransson thought well of both jazz and popular music paving the way for the divine message, he questioned at the same time why everything must be 'understandable and simple' (Göransson 1965b). Rather, he emphasized artistic sustainability and room for 'the mysterious and the overwhelming (*det mysteriösa och oerhörda*)'. At that time he could well imagine how this approach was expressed by 'ultramodern' electronic music.

One example of this concept was in 1966 when Göransson and the well-known Swedish composer Bengt Hambraeus (1928–2000) developed music for the High Mass, mixing traditional Gregorian chant with contemporary modernist music, in which eruptive clusters were used to 'express what can not be expressed', the presence of God's greatness (Göransson 1970; Hambraeus *Preludium – Kyrie – Sanctus* 1966). For many listeners, this music became 'a revelation of the deepest meaning of Holy Mass' (Göransson 1966). Göransson himself described the *Sanctus* of this music as unique; he knew no other piece of church music which 'in such an overwhelmingly way' expressed man's *tremendum et fascinosum* concerning God (Göransson 1973; Otto 1924).

Another Swedish composer, Sven-Erik Bäck (1919–1994), with a commission from Göransson, wrote music for the High Mass (*Uppbrottets mässa* 1968) with focus on 'the presence of holiness' in the altar, including a now worldly famous chorale written in a kind of twelve-tone compositional technique. Göransson the same year probably referred to this cho-

rale, when talking about 'the living chorale, as an artistic phenomenon' (Göransson 1968).

On the other hand, Göransson also questioned how well the Christian service could handle big stylistic differences before its unity broke apart (Göransson 1965a). His view was that musical contrasts created life and excitement – provided they had the 'same spirit' and did not contradict each other. Since good music lasted longer than bad, in the long run good music probably was the 'most effective' music – although it was not the church's task to provide musical 'upbringing' (Göransson 1980b). Radically modernistic music 'with its often violent modes of expression' – for example clusters played with the organist's elbows – could highlight 'the tremendous' concerning God. A soft, heartfelt melody, on the other hand, could emphasize the meditative character of the worship service. Göransson thought contemporary 'folk music' could give 'a special timeliness' and meet those who felt 'alien to the church's traditional music language', (*SOU* 1974:66: 132).

Göransson's personal view was that church music should be 'a challenge to concern (*oro*)' and engagement, even if the musical results sometimes were 'tentative and short-lived' (Göransson 1972b; 1980a). 'Sacred' music arose when the music, regardless of genre and style, interpreted the Christian revelation (Philipson 1984). Here, Göransson referred to his friend and famous theologian Olov Hartman (1906–1982): 'The possible sanctity comes from the revelation which the words interpret'. The Second Vatican Council had recognized that there was no sacred music style; *musica sacra* only meant that the music should serve the liturgy (Göransson 1972c; *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 1963: VI; Ruff 2007: 310).

During his most radical 'modernistic' years around 1970, and under the influence of the growing popular music of the 1960s, Göransson admitted that it was an art to keep 'the balance' between different styles of church music, which could be uplifting as well as violating (Göransson 1972d). But 'the risk of superficiality' had to be weighed against 'the far

greater risk of an authoritarian and conservative conceptual narrowing of church music'. Göransson argued that the old 'boundaries between sacred and profane' built upon a theology that divided reality into two parts: Christ, and the world (Göransson 1972a; compare with Aulén 1953: 192f). With explicit reference to the 'secularization theology' of the late 1960s, he claimed that there was only one reality, created by God. Christ had entered this reality and thus no boundary any longer existed between the holy and the profane; attending church should not be a 'visit to another world'. Instead, the Christian mission was about 'realizing the gospel in the world' together with others. Anything could be sanctified through Christ, who of course still was the centre – 'Jesus Christ himself'. The church should not trouble him with questions about the possibility of praising God with electric guitars or playing the organ with elbows. In everything 'personal judgment, knowledge and imagination' was needed (Göransson 1974).

At this time Göransson was perceived as a front figure for both modernistic and popular music in the church, besides being an expert on chorales. At the Nordic church music meeting in Iceland in 1971, it was suggested that the term 'church music' should be replaced with 'music in the church' (Fæhn 1970). Rather typical for the time and somewhat ironic, electronic Ahlborn organs were nevertheless marketed with reference to their 'sacred sound' (*Vår kyrka* 1971).

Musica sacra had to be 'redefined'; church music no longer should be 'isolated or different'. (Göransson 1972b). Widened musical expressions could reinforce the immense and mystique of the service, the main target must be 'expressional richness' (*SOU 1974:66:* XXVII). Göransson referred to the *Book of Revelation* 14:2–3 in the Bible, where heavenly music was described 'like the noise of great water' and 'a song that nobody could learn' (Göransson 1980b). Thus, church music still had a mysterious or 'sacred' dimension, but not primarily related to any certain musical style.

Conclusions

The purpose of this article was to create a geography of the use of the concept 'sacred' and its equivalents in two Swedish discussions about church music, which were more than one hundred years apart. A comparison reveals many similarities – but also two rather distinct and different views.

When summarizing the *similarities* between these two views in Sweden concerning 'church music and the sacred', it is easy to observe a joint focus on 'praise of God', but also on the 'edification' and 'contemplation' of the congregation.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, this focus was labelled 'solemnity' or 'highness', which demanded a 'serious, devotional and worthy' character of the service and its music, for example 'outstanding, touching and uplifting melodies'. The singing in the worship – both in unison and in parts (the choir) – had mystical dimensions, as *unio mystica* praxis, not least related to the church modes. Church music should lead to 'devotional stillness', 'repentance' and 'healing' – the last understood more in spiritual and psychological terms rather than as bodily healing – and should reflect 'God's harmony and order'. In the late twentieth century, this concept was phrased as 'giving the very best' of 'quality and durability'. The purpose of the service was still labelled as a meeting with the 'mysterious' and 'immense', with 'something of the inexpressible', both *tremendum et fascinosum*. The church choir was in both times a part of the congregation and its singing.

However, more *unique thoughts* have been found; unique in the sense that they are not seen at all – or differently expressed – in the opposite debate.

In the nineteenth century, certain musical expressions were more 'sacred' than others, and many people also experienced these statements as normative in relation to the Christian service. During the twentieth century, this view has partially been replaced by a more diversified musical

attitude, not so much related to style but more to the intention of use. Among others, Pål Repstad and Jonas Lundblad have related this change to a general theological shift towards the aesthetic combined with an increased focus on creation (Repstad 2013: 36; Lundblad 2010). Yet, already at the beginning of the nineteenth century, some voices were emphasizing the intention and purpose of use more than a special musical style (Stieler 1820); so, the picture in this regard is mixed.

In the nineteenth century, the harmonious singing of the choir and the congregation, not least in four-part, was described symbolically as the preaching of God. This description was true also of the congregational singing of hymns in unison. The so-called church modes were assessed as necessary so that the service did not become profane or 'un-sanctified', which thus was the label for the contrariety of true church music and true Christian service. Thus, the chorales were stylistically distinguished from secular music. The church modes gave the melodies a rather widely recognized mystical dimension, which some of the writers connected to *unio mystica*. Different opinions about the loudness of the singing and triple time were also motivated theologically, thus related to 'the sacred'. Lastly, there also were Swedish nationalistic dimensions in the nineteenth-century debates on chorales.

In the late twentieth century, new and 'other worship forms' related to different purposes were acknowledged. If the previous century had searched for an *original* Lutheran music tradition, the latter century partially questioned the use of preferably old music as something that could turn the church and the service into a museum. A call for 'creative joy' aimed at generating 'new music' in new musical styles, which could be filled with associative content – provided the music was of high quality, artistic authenticity and sustainability. These words were said in a time of post-war modernism and growing popular music. Although the term 'profane' sometimes was used, it mostly related to use and intention than to musical style. Christ had entered this world and no boundary any longer

existed between the holy and the profane. Chorales were a pan-Lutheran singing tradition, but not musically distinguished from secular music. No nationalistic thoughts were linked to the chorales, but local variants could be valuable. The invitation and exhortation were to use every instrument as well as every music style – classical, jazz and popular music, and also 'ultra modern' and electronic music – since 'contrasts create life and excitement'. The objective was 'coexistence of differences' and 'expressional richness'. The purpose of 'music in the church' was not only devotion; it also should be 'a challenge to concern' and engagement.

To some degree, the discussions also revealed a changed experience of the church building. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the building explicitly related to sacredness, but in the late twentieth century – at least slightly – it changed to one building among others. At the same time, it was argued that there 'had to be room for the mysterious and immense' in church and its music. Thus, all 'good' church music *still* maintained a sacred dimension at the end of the twentieth century – but with different connotations than earlier. Although this broadening of thought in part depended on, and was caused by, the technological developments of the time, it is worth noting that they led to new theological models of relating 'church music' to 'the sacred'.

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Notes

1 'En rätt Kyrkosång'; rätt ('real') alluding to both doctrinal and musical qualities.

2 'Den allvarliga och högtidliga riktning'; riktning ('direction') alluding to religious orientation (the solemnity of the chorale singing).

EUGENE DAIRIANATHAN

Vedic metal as an alternative awareness of sacred space: a perspective from Singapore

In October 2013, a local prolific extreme metal group in Singapore, Rudra, released their sixth CD (whose name was *RTA* – translated as 'Cosmic Order') 'set to the legendary Sanskrit epic … Ramayana … beyond its origin' (Metalrules.com 2013). A synopsis of the Ramayana by Sachithanantham Singaravelu (2004: 23) reads as follows:

> Once upon a time there was a prince named Rama. He was banished by his father to the forest because of a palace intrigue instigated by Rama's stepmother. When Rama and his faithful wife Sita were living in the forest, a giant ruler of an island kingdom abducted Sita. She was later rescued by Rama after a fierce battle against the army of the giant king with the help of a group of warriors of extraordinary strength. Rama and Sita returned to their kingdom, where he reigned for many years.

RTA emerges as an "extreme metal" (Vedic Metal as an exemplar) recounting of an ancient revered Sanskrit poem, the Ramayana, considered sacred text. Moreover, two of the musical compositions contain the interjection of Javanese gamelan sounds. In his book, *The Vedic Experience*, Raimundo Pannikar (1977: 3–4) observes how the Vedantas, in predating Hinduism and Buddhism, have had a different contextual and historical understanding:

> Vedic Epiphany belongs to the heritage of mankind, and therefore its deepest function is best served […] not by scrupulously preserving it […]

> guardians of a closed and almost hidden treasure, but by sharing it […] with humanity at large. This sharing […] should be neither a profanation, nor an exploitation […] but one that is free from any […] propaganda or proselytization […] their message has transforming power.

While Pannikar's observations are that the Vedic experience (in its situated time and context) was intended as a shared human experience, the Ramayana was, in Singaravelu's scholarly observations, a revered text which in India precipitated the 'deification of Rama into an incarnation of the Hindu deity Vishnu….into a sacred book of the Hindus.' (Singaravelu 2004: 30).

Additionally, two tracks on *RTA*, 'Heartbreak', and a final untitled piece, involve co-opting the Javanese gamelan as traditional ensemble instrumentation. In the words of K. Kathirasan, bassist and vocalist for Rudra (email communication 23 May 2016):

> We wanted the gamelan to be as traditional as possible which was the theme of the album RTA about Ramayana [sic!] which also found its way to the birthplace of the Gamelan […] a study of gamelan and its sound […] we decided which parts we wanted the Gamelan to be on the album.

The use of the Javanese gamelan ensemble within an extreme metal genre and instrumentation challenges not only the identity and role of the Javanese gamelan, but also the situated sacred space the Javanese gamelan already holds within its own context of tradition and practice. According to Judith Becker (1988: 386):

> The indigenous Javanese associations of the gamelan with sacredness and power can be traced to the ideology surrounding the mining of ore and the craft of the blacksmith […] The miner and the blacksmith disturb elemental forms and ancient forces that are of the earth – by forcing metal ores from the earth and submitting them to transformation by fire, man simultaneously imitates and violates natural forces.

Becker also observes that the word for the gong (bronze metallophone) in the Javanese gamelan ensemble is a shared root word with (*gung*) (gunung, mountain, a volcano within the Indonesian Javanese context) which reinforces the shared sacred value of the mineral obtained from ore through the miner and then transformed by the blacksmith, using fire (Becker 1988: 387).

Rather than surmise if Rudra have or have not straddled boundaries of the sacred and profane, a more meaningful approach can be made – by examining the intersection of soundscapes of extreme metal, the Ramayana and Javanese gamelan – for an informed reading of *RTA* as an alternative awareness of sacredness. In this regard, several research questions emerge.

Given that Rudra have taken on, in and through *RTA*, the Ramayana narrative – a text considered sacred in the Hindu religion – in and through extreme metal, what is the veracity of their reading of a sacred text, and the extent to which their reading and rendition in performance straddles consonance and dissonance with Hindu (sacred) belief systems?

How does one read this intersection of hitherto unexplored and separated musical practices with a text like the Ramayana epic, given Rudra's interpretation in and through *RTA*?

Methodology

In addressing the research questions, I rely on several approaches: a time-based account (by minutes and seconds) of the musical segment; the intersection of extreme metal, pitch-growl and gamelan soundscapes; the intersection of this soundscape with the lyrics and its significance; and the significance of this intersection in terms of a larger narrative. These approaches call for a more careful reading of the passages mentioned previously and rely on a combination of analytical approaches – in part, formal musical analysis, as well as multi-modal approaches – that help draw attention to the significance of the intersectional combination of musical

and instrumental soundscapes, and a larger narrative that accounts for Rudra's compositional strategies and tactics.

I focus on the track 'Heartbreak' from *RTA* since it exemplifies the intersections of sonic, historical, cultural and sacred soundscapes involving extreme metal, the Ramayana, and Javanese gamelan. The results from this analysis then enable further discussion and potential dissonance concerning that which is thought and practised as sacred alongside extreme metal practice.

A brief analytical description of two segments taken from the second *RTA* track, 'Heartbreak' (4'20"–5'03" and 6'18"–6'47" respectively) follows, based on the YouTube source (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XH97eF3mVZk).

A guitar melodic riff (A-Bb-A, A-C-D) accompanies Kaikeyi's (Rama's stepmother) first boon to Rama's father to have Rama banished from the palace (4'20"–4'33"). This first boon is delivered vocally with Sanskrit lyrics and is followed by an instrumental musical interlude (4'34"–5'03") where another guitar melodic riff is juxtaposed with a Javanese gamelan ensemble soundscape:

4'34"–4'49" melodic gestures

- lead guitar: A-G-Eb […] A-G-D / A-G-Eb […] C-Eb-D
- gamelan ensemble (melodic loops):
  - D-Eb-F in the lower voicings
  - A-Bb-D […] D-Bb-A in the upper gamelan voicings

4'50"–5'03" melodic gestures

- lead guitar: A-G-Eb […] A-G-D / A-G-Eb […] C-Eb-D
- gamelan ensemble:
  D-Eb-F in the lower voicings/
  D-Eb-F […] A-Bb-D-Eb which possibly links with Pelog (heptatonic melodic/modal profiles) with a D-centricity.

The second extract appears from 5'48"–6'47". It is prefaced first with a melodic guitar riff (A-Bb-A, A-C-D) together with the Sanskrit lyrics which are aligned with the second boon, for Rama to be donned in deer-skin as a tapasvi – ascetic – and be dispatched […] for fourteen years (5'48" till 6'03"). This melodic guitar riff is repeated (6'03"–6'17") as an instrumental segment before the coincidence of another melodic guitar riff, and Javanese gamelan melodic gestures, but now with lyrics in English:

segment One (6'18"–6'33") involves pitch-growled text with lead guitar melodic gestures and the Javanese gamelan

- lead guitar: A-G-Eb […] A-G-D / A-G-Eb […] C-Eb-D
- gamelan ensemble:
  – D-Eb-F in the lower voicings/
    A-Bb- D […] D-Bb-A in the upper gamelan voicings

The difference this time is that the electric guitar and gamelan segment are juxtaposed with pitch-growled English text: 'Dasharatha [Rama's father] shuddered and wailed as he heard the words from Kaikeyi [Rama's stepmother]'. This refers to Rama's father's responses to the consequences of both boons for Rama (6'18"–6'33"). The following segment (6'33"–6'47") is an instrumental interlude involving only the melodic gestures and Javanese gamelan melodic gestures.

- lead guitar: A-G-Eb […] A-G-D / A-G-Eb […] C-Eb-D
- gamelan ensemble:
  – D-Eb-F in the lower voicings/ A-Bb-D […] D-Eb-D-Bb-A in the upper gamelan voicings / D-Eb-F […] A-Bb-D-Eb; The Eb pitch works with the bass guitar

Soundscapes of both extracts include the *gender barung* (with its focus on the melodic profile) based on a heptatonic pelog tuning of the Javanese

gamelan ensemble (D-pitch centricity). There is a two-part interaction between the electric guitar melodic gesture – albeit more *sotto voce* dynamic – and the melodic gesture of the gamelan ensemble position modality in a heptatonic pelog scale, even though a five-note deployment is a more common practice (D-Eb-F-A-Bb).

Rhythmically, the extreme metal and gamelan segments seem less coordinated, which might either suggest either a deliberate syncopation and/or digital coordination or manipulation. From the specific segments, these musical interludes focus on common pitches between the Javanese gamelan ensemble and electric guitar, more than a juxtaposition of the gamelan Ensemble soundscapes with the extreme metal configuration. Given that 'Heartbreak' as a whole soundtrack articulates a D-pitch focus, temperaments notwithstanding, the melodic articulations of the gamelan ensemble share an affinity with D-pitch centricity.

Coincident sounds and resonances

These two excerpts within the 'Heartbreak' soundtrack in *RTA* are coincidences of extreme metal and gamelan soundscapes coincident with the Sanskrit – and later - English texts of the two boons (Rama's banishment from the palace and being reduced to an existence of an ascetic). These coincident trajectories emphasize issues of texts and textuality that highlight how 'music and text have engendered much debate and discussion of and about music and text as separate properties…' (Dairianathan 2012: 243). Moreover, if 'the focus on music and language precipitates soundscapes through the performative' (Dairianathan 2012: 247) … '[e]ventually, songs are questioned on an understanding…as utterances of both music as musical text and music as cultural text.' (Dairianathan 2012: 243). We can now add music and text as consonant or dissonant with a text aligned with Rama the deified, in Hinduism.

The choice of Javanese gamelan instrumentation by Rudra is symbolic of the apposite royalty and contextualizes the placement of Rama within that royal setting, albeit without the deification. While the lyrics of 'Heartbreak' recount the significance of the dramatic narratives via the Sanskrit and English texts in the Ramayana, there is compelling space, vis-à-vis Becker's observations, of an aura and ambience, for the Javanese gamelan, not to mention kindred sensing of place and space of royalty, and for Rama who would have had privilege and power just before his banishment. Furthermore, according to Becker (1988: 385; original emphases):

> In Java, old impressive gamelan were also *generators* of royal power. Through homologous associations with autochthonous energies of nature, gong ensembles and their music became metaphors for natural forces and became the instruments for the control of natural forces. Fused with the Indic metaphor of female power, śakti, these interpretations endowed the gamelan ensemble with a special aura that forged the link to figures of authority.

Becker's observations render another meaning attached to the use of the Javanese ensemble instrumentation at the junctures of coincidence mentioned previously; that of Rama's humanity, rather than his divinity. Rudra's choice of a Javanese gamelan ensemble instrumentation with extreme metal instrumentation is reinforcement of a humanised Rama.

Co-opting the Javanese Gamelan as traditional ensemble instrumentation within an "extreme metal" genre and instrumentation presents challenges; not only in confirming the identity and role of the Javanese Gamelan but also in qualifying the nuance of a situated sacred space the Javanese Gamelan already holds within its own context of tradition and practice. Observations by Becker (1988: 385) of the royalty accorded the Javanese gamelan, affirm the royal placement of the Valmiki-Ramayana (also via Rudra).

Sacred and Alternative readings

On the reception of the Ramayana as a 'sacred text', given the deification of Rama in Hinduism, Singaravelu (2004: 30) informs us how this epic had a point of origin with the poet Valmiki; hence, the reference (and from Rudra) to the *Valmiki-Ramayana epic*. As a point of origin, the narratives that the hero Rama lived, and his career (hence Ramayana) were based on a *secular* poem. In the Valmiki version, Rama was a hero (human) and preceded the version where Rama was deified 'into an incarnation of the Hindu deity Vishnu […] into a sacred book of the Hindus' (Singaravelu 2004, 30). From the closer reading of the Ramayana as secular-sacred text, Singaravelu (2004, 30) clarifies and qualifies the presence of the secular Valmiki-Ramayana epic preceding the place and identity of Rama as deified in Hinduism.

There is, however, more to what Rudra have let emerge through their performance which necessitates a different way of thinking about the keyword 'sacred'. Becker offers a clue as to the placement of 'autochthonous energies of nature, gong ensembles and their music became metaphors for natural forces and became the instruments for the control of natural forces' (Becker 1988: 385). Attention is given to 'autochthonous energies of nature'. These 'autochthonous energies of nature' have resonance with Vedic conceptions of Indian music which Lewis Rowell (1992: 53) indicates meaning-seeking and meaning-making, particularly soundscapes in a cosmic and human space:

> 1. The establishment of vocal sound as the primary paradigm for music; 2. The continuous drone as a symbolic representation of the continuum of unmanifest sound; 3. Song traditions that emphasize the precise articulation of the text; 4. The atavistic roles of gesture (as in the system of tāla) and respiration as a symbolic reenactment of ancient ritual; 5. A unique concept of vocal timbre featuring a certain nasality (which seems to have arisen in part from directing the singer's awareness to the

> resonance available in the various facial cavities); 6. An emphasis upon circular and spiral melodic and rhythmic formations; and, 7. A decisive preference for organic and incremental forms (in preference to hierarchical and syntactical structures) – emphasizing […] linearity, continuity, and progressive growth. The evolution of the drone […] appears to be a case of art imitating nature […] attempts to externalize the universal continuum of unmanifest sound […] to imply that each individual performance arises from and returns to, the substratum of undifferentiated vital sound.

The continuous drone and evolution of the drone make contemporary, relevant and meaningful connections with the extreme metal guitar riffs in Rudra which have been based on power chords, notably intervallic dyads of fourths and fifths, and are evident in the song 'Heartbreak', as in many of their previous song tracks. The rhythmic pulse in 'Heartbreak' combined with the vocal articulation of pitch-growls demonstrate how this song epitomizes 'attempts to externalize the universal continuum of unmanifest sound' (Rowell 1992: 53). Rowell's observations and postulations in and through soundscapes in Vedic conceptions of Indian music resonate and reverberate with the soundscapes emergent in Rudra's Vedic (extreme metal) musical practice.

Denotative and connotative meanings attached to any keyword are, more often than not, as much about how that keyword emerges in everyday and academic parlance. The keyword 'sacred' is no less that word and no less the consequents attached to 'sacred's' otherness. Gordon Lynch (2014: 24) observed how this term is one where 'there is no inevitability as to what comes to be regarded as sacred within human societies. Anything can, in principle, acquire the status of a thing "set apart"'. He surmises that what is more critical is how sacred is emergent in the ways it is shaped 'in the contemporary world.' (2014: 24). In his view:

> It is much more accurate to think about the radically distinct phenomenon of the sacred as being experienced by people as non-contingent […] people regard forms of the sacred as not simply the product of particular cultures, or of the histories of nations or individuals, but as something essential to life itself. (Lynch 2014: 25.)

What Lynch suggests is how the phenomena attached to the keyword sacred in *lived* reality has associational currency; how it is understood as, and what meaning is, attached to it, and symbols and concrete exemplars that make something sacred or otherwise. As Lynch (2014: 26) again points out, 'The sacred is not just that which we highly value; it is the meaning of fundamental realities around which our lives are organized.'

Another point that Lynch (2014: 31) raises is how sacred comes into consciousness:

> The sacred is not simply an intellectual set of beliefs, however; its symbolic representation and cognitive meanings are simultaneously bound up with powerful emotions […] Honouring the sacred is not simply about categorizing human actions in particular ways, but more fundamentally about feeling the right kinds of emotions. These sentiments fused adherents to a particular sacred vision, inscribing definitions of the sacred and profane and the boundaries of humane society deep into their bodies and psyches. Such commonly shared symbols, cognitive categories and moral sentiments are the ground on which moral communities formed, whose sense of mutual belonging emerges from a shared sense of sacred reality. What made the fusion of thought, feeling and community possible around sacred symbols was ritual: structured activities that bound these communities to the sacred symbols through moments of collective effervescence.

Sacred and extreme metal

An emergent keyword in Lynch's observations is 'symbol' and what seems to have gained consensus as a symbol and symbolic in structured activities. In his estimation, '[m]uch attention has been given to the ways in which religious symbols and discourses are produced in the context of entertainment, media, including film, television, *popular music* and video games.' (Lynch 2012: 92; emphasis added).

One such aspect of popular music with which the word sacred has experienced some problems of association involves the genre of extreme metal. Keith Kahn-Harris notes how genres within the larger ambit of extreme metal, such as thrash, death, black and doom, have garnered sufficient subscription to be part of a collective known as extreme metal (Harris 2000: 14). The practice of extreme metal has 'produced through practices that cross over or (more usually) straddle the principal boundaries that structure our social reality; death/life, good/evil and pure/impure' (Kahn-Harris 2004: 110). As a choice of genre for expression, extreme metal has raised the notion of its transgressive nature (read also transgressing the perception of that which is sacred) given choice of musical form, text and narrative. Kennet Granholm raises the issue of extreme metal within the wider ambit of popular music in its association with the occult (Granholm 2017: 198–199). Rather than focus on the judgmental aspects of extreme metal and occult associational value, Ronald Bogue (2004: 89–93) prefers his observations of the sounds associated with death metal as a:

> complex of […] timbral variations, a complex shared with characteristics of heavy metal in general [with a response to] modification of a sonic material that answers to a complex of sociohistorical forces [where] dynamic vocabulary, is deliberately impoverished, a limited set of permutations extracted from the range of possibilities […] carried to their extreme.

Discussions of extreme metal include sonic characteristics, by which death metal among thrash, black and doom metal genres, 'eschewed melody and clear singing in favour of speed, downtuned guitars and growled or screamed vocals' (Harris 2000: 4). This is accompanied by an understanding of the textual content where:

> vocal articulation of the lyrics augments guitar with wails or screams, sometimes as short phrases spat or shouted out, and growls of varying textural density and depth of resonance […] *ametrical* structures not dissimilar to forms of recitation found in the performance of religious texts. Comprehensibility and coherence of text is only possible with lyric sheet […] lyrical content ranges from angst-filled and abusive to the deeply social, political and philosophical presented in a variety of forms, from poetic through to aphoristic 'blog-texts'. (Dairianathan 2007: 82.)

Through their original compositions, Rudra's choice of form, Vedic metal, has been summarized in the online *Encyclopaedia Metallum* as a practice whose lyrical themes focus on Vedic, Hindu philosophy and mythology (https://www.metal-archives.com/bands/Rudra/4958). Rudra's songs involve a combination of extreme metal soundscapes with English and Sanskrit lyrics. Their songs act as commentaries on ancient Sanskrit texts; from their experimentation with the *Advaita Vedantas* in Rudra's eponymous album in 1998 through to the Upanishads, Brahma Sutra and more recently, the Ramayana in *RTA;* (email correspondence with K. Kathirasan of Rudra, 14 November 2015).

Two postulations emerge from the readings based on the analysis of the two segments in the 'Heartbreak' soundtrack in *RTA* by Rudra. The first is a situated contextualization and understanding, through a Vedic experience of what can be argued as 'sacred' (Lynch 2014: 24); however, it is not inevitable in the Vedic experience and is reliant on functions of time and context, yet emergent in specific moments in time to be 'set apart' and consequently, has evolved, and is evolving, the meaning of the ways

'sacred' is shaped 'in the contemporary world.'

The second postulation follows the understanding that the *secular* Valmiki-Ramayana text later made sacred in Hinduism become relevant points of difference and deference for any rendition and interpretation of the Ramayana. This echoes Pannikar's (1977: 3–4) observations of a Vedic experience as a shared human experience (of both the human and divine or sacred). This is also the case and in the present context, through past migration of this epic to diverse forms and practices in Indonesia (Singaravelu 2004: 103), with evolving interpretations and readings of traditions surrounding the Ramayana. Rudra's readings of the originary *secular* Valmiki-Ramayana text are equally valid as a revered text of Man-God Rama, as well as the deified interpretation of Rama God-Man (Singaravelu 2004: 30).

In the light of clues provided by Becker (1985), Rowell (1992) and Singaravelu (2004), extreme metal soundscapes have different and differing readings of their place not only in contemporary Vedic readings of what is thought sacred (natural and cosmic) and placement of the Ramayana, but also in the place of their blend with the Javanese gamelan setting and contemporary contexts.

That the Ramayana acquired sacred currency in Hindu belief systems is not to suggest how the sacred space seems to have been contradicted when the Ramayana narratives travelled to the Southeast Asian region, but rather perceptions and perspectives based on how the narratives of this epic travelled and in what form, sacred or secular. That the Rama story 'also forms part of the basic repertoire for some of the most ancient and popular forms of Indonesian *wayang* […] and also dance-drama […]' (Singaravelu 2004: 103) is more telling of how in the Javanese tradition, Rama is a human hero; an alternative reading to the 'deification of Rama into an incarnation of the Hindu deity Vishnu […] into a sacred book of the Hindus.' (Singaravelu 2004: 30). Rudra's choice of the Javanese gamelan as instrumentation, therefore, was a choice not only of royalty but also of the

humanity that Rudra's textual interpretations of Rama advocate in *RTA* rather than his divinity, and which, in 'Heartbreak' (as with the original secular epic), rendered him vulnerable to the manipulations of his stepmother.

By reverting to the Valmiki-Ramayana text, Rudra has arguably preferred an originary *secular* text, much in keeping with their focus on Vedic philosophy which predates Hinduism. *RTA* is, therefore, less about transgressive interpretations and more about alternative readings of 'sacred as not inevitable' (Lynch 2014: 24), and chronologically informed interpretative creative responses. Given Rudra's Vedic metal practice whose lyrical themes focus on Vedic, Hindu philosophy and mythology, shouldn't there now be an alternative reading of a Vedic (extreme metal) soundscape with royal Javanese gamelan and a God-Man dialectic? What emerges from an analysis of the two excerpts from the song 'Heartbreak' is the propitious use of the Javanese (not Balinese-Hindu) gamelan ensemble with the extreme metal soundscapes (which involve pitch-growling as vocal articulation) with Sanskrit text and Rudra's commentary in English. The juxtaposition represents and re-presents narratives of Rama-Human-Royal-Hero with Javanese gamelan (symbolic of royalty) with texts from the secular Valmiki-Ramayana poem. It is in these two musical excerpts that Rama's fate – as a royal human in the Valmiki-Ramayana epic – is sealed at a critical phase in the narrative.

Conceptions of Sound in the Vedanta and Consequences

From a performative standpoint, Rudra's extreme metal rendition (aside from the gamelan ensemble) of the Valmiki-Ramayana text resonates with Rowell's (1992: 53) observation of Vedic notions of sound in Indian Music. Rudra's thematic and lyrical texts reveal their predilection for philosophical discourses based on the Vedanta:

> Over the years […] there has been a conscious attempt to […] redefine our existence in terms of Vedic metal or Vedanta […] our style of Vedic metal will reflect the opposites of nature […] both the profane (growls and loud guitars) and the sublime (Vedic chants/philosophy). The oscillations which are very much in all our albums reflect the nature of reality we perceive, both unpleasant and pleasant. (Dairianathan 2009: 606.)

Given that the lyrics of their songs are commentaries on texts available in the Advaita Vedanta, Upanishads and now the Ramayana, Rudra's practice, Vedic metal, is arguably Vedic philosophy *through* extreme (melodic death) metal soundscapes; also, it is lyrical and narrative text *through* soundscapes. Songs, therefore, become 'phenomenological agglomerations of sound and text which point towards hitherto unexplored dimensions of differing and different perspectives' (Dairianathan 2012: 243–244).

Such an understanding of soundscapes, in particular recounting the Ramayana, on the one hand, repositions an enactment involving sanctifying a human entity and personhood. That Rudra have made their own readership by recounting the Valmiki-Ramayana version opens the prospect of understanding creative endeavour as sacrosanct text. Rudra's argument of relying on a secular text provides alternative readings, interpretations and understandings of a sacred-sonic universe which would include the Ramayana (albeit as later *sacralized* text in Hinduism), Javanese gamelan and extreme (Vedic) metal soundscapes.

Rudra's choice of the Javanese gamelan raises two points for consideration, the first as the connection to ancient Sanskrit/Vedic endowment. Singaravelu's point mentioned earlier is the influence of, and proliferation of, the Ramayana throughout the Southeast Asian region, as well as adaptations, to form 'part of the basic repertoire for some of the most ancient and popular forms of Indonesian *wayang*.' (Singaravelu 2004: 103). Here is where a much-revered text like the Ramayana epic (debate on sacred/secular notwithstanding) becomes aurally and orally available 'through

both textual and oral sources from the various parts of India as assumed distinctive forms in relief sculptures, theatrical arts, literature and *popular legends*' (Singaravelu 2004: 106; emphasis added). What is critical is how a revered secular text such as the Ramayana which was then sacralised, was and continues to be, accessible to and assessable by any community.

The second point concerns that of the sacred/secular, not so much as polarized identities – Rama as Deity or Rama as human – but as *prior and prioritized* identities. Singaravelu (2004: 30) informs us how the Valmiki-Ramayana epic was, at its point of origin, a *secular* poem recounting the hero Rama and his career (hence Ramayana). This would render Rama a human - heroic, legendary and regal, nonetheless.

Singaravelu also notes how this epic precipitated 'deification of Rama into an incarnation of the Hindu deity Vishnu [transforming] the originally secular poem into a sacred book of the Hindus' (Singaravelu 2004: 30). What Lynch suggests is how the phenomena attached to the keyword sacred in *lived* reality has adopted and adapted currency: 'The sacred is not just that which we highly value; it is the meaning of fundamental realities around which our lives are organized.' (2014: 26). Given the long-established and solidified convention of the Hindu belief system, Rama would have emerged in the present as a prior established deity identity. By reverting to the Valmiki version and use of Javanese gamelan via extreme metal, Rudra articulate their *repositioning* of Rama's narrative as an originary human, heroic prince, imbued with authority and power nonetheless, and not without commensurate challenges.

Rudra's choice of the Valmiki-Ramayana epic, in and through *RTA*, becomes their decided commentary and interpretation of Rama's humanity more than his deification. Beginning with the Ramayana as sacred text since it began as a secular poem, rendering a protagonist deification has ramifications for the Ramayana as sacralised text. Rudra's choice of musical instrumentation, the Javanese gamelan, adds commentary to, of and on Rama's incarnation as a Hindu deity. If that commentary differs from a

sacralised text and personae, then Rudra has made their views and readings both explicit and implicit through 'Heartbreak' in *RTA*.

Conclusion

Returning to the research questions articulated earlier, *RTA* marks Rudra's signature identities and textualities. On the one hand, *RTA*, Rudra's soundscape association – Vedic metal – has potential ramifications for dissonance to be *misread* as dissidence, if not a profanation of the Ramayana. On the other hand, Rowell's descriptions of sound in the world of the Vedanta as *'nāda* […] derived from *nad* (to sound, thunder, roar, or bellow), spreading sound with powerful reverberations' (Rowell 1992: 44), provide an alternative perspective of soundscapes that identify with sacred as *becoming* rather than *bespoke*. Moreover, an association with the Javanese gamelan metallophone instrumental ensemble precipitates 'homologous associations with autochthonous energies of nature, gong ensembles and their music became metaphors for natural forces and became the instruments for the control of natural forces.' (Becker 1988: 385).

Rudra's choice of the Valmiki-Ramayana poem, with the Javanese gamelan, acts as a commentary on the authenticity of Rama as a *human* legendary hero. This is consistent with Rudra's Vedic philosophical musings through extreme metal soundscapes affirming their *placement* of and with pre-Hindu rituals and practices. As Dairianathan recalls 'If there was criticism, Vedic metal may have garnered impressions of music with religious (although 'spiritual' is *Rudra's* preferred term) connotations […]' (Dairianathan 2009: 603). Since 'spiritual' is *Rudra*'s preferred term, any view of Vedic metal soundscapes as profane, anti-religious or pagan-ritual practice, invites alternative readings as well as an understanding of the recounting of the Ramayana.

Secondly, sound, as expressed through Sanskrit in the ancient Vedic world, is aligned with the notion of roar and thunder as well as cosmic vi-

bration. Rudra's choice of form, extreme metal, and choice of lyrical texts from the Vedantas offers an alternative and more nuanced understanding of the 'sacred'. *Nāda* (Rowell 1992: 44) resonates as much in the Vedic world as it did in the past, and as it does in systems around the world in the present context that rely on the spirituality that Rudra advocates.

Through *RTA*, Rudra's use of the Ramayana as a secular text-setting to song in their Vedic (Extreme) metal soundscapes articulates different and deferent thinking concerning 'sacred' as sounds which are *timely*, *timeless* and most importantly relevant to ubiquitous participants in their own culturally-specific and situated context. What about Rudra's validity concerning their commentary on the Valmiki-Ramayana poem, and of the validity of Rudra's compositional response to a text so revered it was later made sacred?

In the overall context of *RTA*, the seven soundtracks correspond, numerically at least, with the seven *kanda* [chapter] narrative; despite the view of an originary five-*kanda* narrative (Singaravelu 2004: 24). K. Kathirasan explains Rudra's interpretation of this seven-*kanda* structure which led to the seventh track remaining untitled in the *RTA* release: 'While recording the group, we felt that we never got enough of it [Javanese gamelan sounds] and we decided to record a traditional piece which became "untitled" on *RTA*. Partly because the 7th chapter of the Ramayana has been considered an interpolation […] we left the 7th song "untitled"'; (email communication with K. Kathirasan, 23 May 2016).

Potter (1981: 4) notes how 'the Vedanta literature is composed following the tradition…and commentary that reflects the oral tradition in which it was born.' The resultant exegesis of texts in Vedanta literature then engenders 'commentaries … and then subcommentaries and further commentaries on this' (Potter 1981: 4).

Rudra's choice of, and commentary on, the Valmiki-Ramayana account, in and through *RTA*, becomes their commentary and therefore their interpretation of Rama's humanity, much in keeping with the Vedic tradition

and practice. Secondly, their seven soundtrack *RTA* release is a further commentary of the way Rudra members read this secular human view of Rama in the Ramayana, not through Indian deification perspectives, but a Javanese gamelan-Rudra human-hero less deified reading of Rama in the Ramayana. Moreover, a reliance on the Javanese gamelan instrumentation on selected *RTA* tracks adds a connotative interpretation of the narratives of the Ramayana, not only as ancient Indian traditional text but also textual transformations *through* Javanese gamelan perspectives.

Rudra's reading of the Ramayana (tracing it to the Valmiki-tradition, co-opting the Javanese gamelan via migration of the epic from India and expressed through extreme Vedic metal), expresses their spiritual commentary and ownership rather than a scripturally compliant rendition of the Ramayana. Potter (1981: 4) observes that this view is authentic to the spirit of 'commentaries…and then subcommentaries and further commentaries on this.'

In summary, any study of phenomena – sacred, profane, Ramayana, 'Heartbreak', *RTA*, and Rudra being exemplars – may cause interrelatedness to surface in asymmetrical discursive actions and behaviours. The challenge in studying those phenomena is to think differently about such actions and behaviours and enable analytical inquiry to engage with the quality of the connectivities. This study of sound-excerpts in 'Heartbreak' by Rudra in their *RTA* release helps to clarify questions about how an understanding of the keyword 'sacred' – meeting originary sources – meets an experiential provenance, so that one is cognizant of how to recognize a meaningful contribution towards a context-dependent and situated rumination of 'sacred' with considered alternative emplacements in *lived* human experience.

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