

*Women, Music,  
and the Church:  
An Historical  
Approach*

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**W**here do women stand in relation to the music of the church? What have been their past roles in, and contributions to, the music of the Christian church, and more specifically Adventism? How have they been constrained and enabled as music-makers within the church? In coming to terms with these questions, three points should be made at the outset.

First, the role and contributions of women to church music must be seen in the context of a mutually reinforcing inter-relationship between music, society, and religion. It is important to recognize that religious belief not only shapes sacred music but is shaped by it, society both impacts on music and is impacted by it, and religious belief and practice influence society and are also influenced by it.<sup>1</sup> Not only is music an important element of religious ritual and a central vehicle for it, without which ritual

might lose its power,<sup>2</sup> but the nature of musical symbolism demonstrates a close affinity to religious symbolism.\* Thus, music remains “a highly theological concern” and a “profoundly religious” art.<sup>3</sup>

Second, the world, as males have constituted it, is visually construed. Male metaphors are primarily of sight rather than sound. In the Western classical tradition in music, devised largely by males, music has become primarily visual. The musical score has attained a primacy that it has never been accorded in oral musical traditions that comprise the vast majority of the world’s music and in which women’s contributions have been, and remain, especially important.

That the female world is aurally rather than visually construed constitutes a major challenge to the supremacy of male hegemony.<sup>4</sup> Notice that Paul’s interdiction against women—the keynote for nearly two millennia of Christian belief and practice with respect to women’s participation in the church—is spelled out in aural terms: “Let women keep silence in the churches.” Likewise, music as an aural art constitutes a potentially subversive element to male power structures. In particular, those music that are primarily oral rather than literate traditions require the most control because they pose the greatest threat to male supremacy and undermine patriarchy. As a result, many churchmen have sought to control music strictly.<sup>† 5</sup>

Third, the story of women in the music of the church needs to be understood in its historical and global context, not only within the Christian church, but beyond, in the music of the ancient world and those comprising the plethora of sacred musical traditions today. Despite the efforts by churchmen to impede, suppress, and control

\* Some, like Philip Phenix, see art as so much like God as to be described as the “work of God.” This is not to suggest that music is the same as religion. In her study of religious symbolism, Iris Yob describes important similarities and differences between religious and artistic ways of knowing. When students of religion and the arts approach aesthetic works, she says, they want to know different things: “Religion wants to know . . . what meaning this work has for us. Art wants to know . . . how this work gains whatever meaning it has for us.”

† An ambivalence to music by Christian churchmen is expressed, for example, in the writings of Augustine. In his *Confessions* (notably, bk. 10, XXVII, XXXIII), Augustine articulates his reservations to music which moves him sensually rather than through reason, and yet also inspires him to religious devotion. As he listens to music, he senses a loss of intellectual control and fears he has sinned as a result. He becomes preoccupied with music’s beauty rather than with its spiritual significance. For him music seems to be in tension with religious belief: it wants both to enhance and subvert it.

their work, and thereby marginalize them within the church, we see illustrative examples of important contributions women have made to sacred music. Specifically, within Adventism, the present state of affairs with respect to women in sacred music can be understood in the context of the wider Christian community.

From ancient times, in various pre-industrial societies based in subsistence hunting, gathering, and agriculture, women have been active participants in religious music linked to the worship of mother-goddesses symbolized by the moon. In the words of an Orphic hymn they sing:

Here, Queen Goddess, light-bringer, divine Moon,  
Who move in a path of night, wandering in the darkness.  
Torch-bearer of the mysteries, Moon-maiden, rich in stars.  
You who gave and diminish, who are both female and male,  
All-seeing, enlightener, fruit-bearer, Mother of Time,  
Splendor of amber, soulful, illuminator, you who are Birth.  
Lover of all-night wakefulness, fountain of beautiful stars!  
Whose joy is the tranquil silence of the blissful spirit of night,  
The lustrous one, giver of charms, votive statue of night,  
You who bring fruit to perfection, visions and sacred rites!  
Queen of stars, in flowing veils, who move on a curving path,  
All-wise maiden, blessed one, keeper of the treasury of stars,  
May you come in beautiful gladness, shining in all your  
brilliance;  
And saving the youthful suppliants who turn to you, Maiden  
Moon!<sup>6</sup>

From time immemorial, in religions in which music is believed to take on magical and mystical significance, women, as life-givers and nurturers, have participated actively in the music of life rituals associated with birth, initiation, marriage, and death.<sup>7</sup> For example, at times of death-related sorrow, Kaluli women of New Guinea engage in “tuneful weeping,” and their Greek sisters in Kalohori sing laments.<sup>8</sup> Moroccan Jewish women, while barred from participation in the liturgical music of the synagogue, sing the traditional romances and wedding songs at home.<sup>9</sup> Venda women preserve the tradition of women’s songs by teaching them to the young women during their initiation into adult life.<sup>10</sup>

A panoply of goddesses in the ancient world—for example, Hathor (later Isis), Ishtar, Bharati, Sarasvati, and Artemis—symbolized feminine qualities of God as mother with a

corresponding acceptance of women as full participants in religious ritual as queens and priestesses.<sup>11</sup> In ancient Egypt, for example, there is rich evidence of women's musical participation in temple ritual. Indeed, the symbol of their power is represented by the sistrum, an instrument generally associated with high-born priestesses and dedicated to Hathor and Isis.<sup>12</sup> Musical instruments, wall paintings, papyri, figurines, shabti boxes, hypocephali, coffins, painted stellae, pottery vases, and other artifacts in the holdings of Egyptian antiquities in the British Museum, for example, depict the participation of goddesses and women in religious and musical life.

In the nomadic and early Palestine period of the ancient Jews, women played an important role in sacred music. We have, for example, the record of the great songs and war shouts of Miriam, Deborah, and Judith.<sup>13</sup> Jahweh was, in the tradition of other deities at the time, both male and female; and this theology is reflected in the participation of both men and women in early Jewish religious rituals and festivals.

But Jahweh becomes Jehovah, the male deity, the fierce warrior-God. With the establishment of the temple in Jerusalem and the formalization of religious ritual, an increasingly patriarchal theology was expressed in the progressive exclusion of women from participation in sacred music in the temple. Even the women's rites such as those surrounding childbirth were taken over by men, while women now required a male priest to "purify" them.<sup>14</sup>

Present-day Lubavitcher Hasidim, an ultraconservative orthodox Jewish community in New York City, continue this tradition of gender-exclusiveness, believing that a woman's voice "is a serious distraction to the real purpose of a man's life, namely, the study of Jewish law and the fulfillment of a deep relationship to God." As a result, in orthodox Judaism, women and men do not sing and play music together, and women are physically excluded from males in a separate space in the synagogue and, as a result, exercise limited liturgical function. Interestingly, since many rabbinical prescriptions regarding time and place for worship apply only to men, Lubavitcher women regard this as an indication of their natural superiority over men in that they do not require such moral discipline.<sup>15</sup>

Christianity offered a diametrically opposed view of humankind to that of Judaism, one in which women and men were equal before God and might approach God directly. During his life, Jesus was surrounded by women whom he treated in a manner

consistent with the inclusiveness of his words. His view of the equality of women and men is expressed in one account of his statement on the subject:

Jesus saw some infants at the breast. He said to his disciples: These little ones at the breast are like those who enter into the kingdom. They said to him: If we then be children, shall we enter the kingdom? Jesus said to them: When you make the two one, and when you make the inside as the outside, and the outside as the inside, and the upper side as the lower; and when you make the male and the female into a single one, that the male be not male and the female female; . . . then shall you enter [the kingdom].<sup>16</sup>

This radically egalitarian vision is reflected in early Christian ritual, especially in music. From the first century, we have Philo's description of a vigil conducted by the Therapeutae, a Jewish community in Alexandria who had come under the influence of Christianity:

The vigil is conducted on this wise. They all stand up in a crowd, and in the midst of the symposium first of all two choirs are formed, one of men, and one of women, and for each, one most honoured and skilled in song is chosen as a leader and director. Then they sing hymns composed to the praise of God, in many metres, and to various melodies, in one singing together in unison, and in another antiphonal harmonies, moving their hands in time and dancing; and being transported with divine enthusiasm, they perform one while lyric measures, and at another tragic plainsong, strophes and antistrophes, as need requires. Then when each chorus, the men separately, and the women separately, had partaken of food by itself, as in the feasts of Bacchus, and quaffed the pure God-loving wine, they mingle together and become one choir out of two—the mimetic representation of that of yore standing on the shore of the Red Sea on account of the miracles wrought there. To this (the singing of the Song of Moses) the chorus of the male and female Therapeutae afforded a most perfect resemblance with its variant and concordant melodies; and the sharp searching tone of the women together with the baritone sound of the men effected a harmony both symphonious and altogether musical. Perfectly beautiful are their motions, perfectly beautiful their discourse; grave and solemn are these carollers; and the final aim of their motions, their discourse, and their choral dances is piety.<sup>17</sup>

By the fourth century, however, women were largely excluded from equal participation in the religious ritual and music of the Christian church. Congregational singing was abandoned, and by the latter part of the fourth century, music was performed by professional choirs of men and boys. How did this come about? In essence, Christian theology retreated from its radical view of women as equal with men. As one of Christianity's principal doctrinal architects, Paul apparently returned to Jewish rabbinical traditions as a solution to relationships between men and women within the church, and in so doing, opened the door to undermining the earlier vision of equality.<sup>18</sup> This theological retreat was accompanied by a growing institutionalization of Christianity, an increasing formalization of liturgy, and a progressive elitism in musical expression, all of which conspired to exclude women, many of whom were not in the social or economic position to challenge their exclusion. Prohibitions were issued by church fathers to suppress secular as well as sacred music-making by women, ostensibly because of its association with eroticism, licentiousness, and prostitution. The growth of asceticism and monasticism effectively separated sacred music-making by men and women together, resulting in the banishment of women to convents out of the liturgical and musical mainstream. It was a short theological step to the assertion that women are inferior to men, the cause of evil, associated with things of the flesh, and that they should therefore be precluded from full liturgical participation in the church.<sup>19</sup>

Forbidden to sing in the church, the women found that the convent provided a refuge, a measure of independence, and a place for learning. Despite the repression of, and hostility to, women by the clergy, who sometimes mocked women in their songs, even glorifying rape,<sup>20</sup> recent musicological scholarship has unearthed a growing body of evidence of the contributions of cloistered women to sacred musical composition and performance. Indeed, the convent remained of central importance in the musical education of women from the middle ages until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

During the Middle Ages, nuns were trained by cantrices to sing the various offices—matins, lauds, prime, tierce, sext, nones, vespers, compline—and they received an education sufficient for them to read theological and devotional books, often in the vernacular. In some houses they received advanced instruction from the monks.<sup>21</sup> Various convents became centers of musical performance and composition; and notable composers emerged,

including Kassia, in the Byzantine tradition, and Hildegard von Bingen, in the Roman tradition.<sup>22</sup> Hildegard left a substantial body of plainchant in a collection entitled *Symphonia harmoniae caelestium revelationum* (The Symphony of the Harmony of Heavenly Revelations) and an important and musically innovative morality play, *Ordo virtutum* (The Play of the Virtues).

During the Renaissance and afterwards, convents fostered musical composition and performance.<sup>23</sup> For example, the Ferrarese convent of St. Vito was foremost among the Italian convents in the late sixteenth century and featured an instrumental and vocal ensemble led by the composer Raffeala Aleotti. Other composers, such as Caterina Assandra from the convent of St. Agata in Lomello near Milan, and Lucrezia Orsina from the Bolognese convent of St. Christina, published significant sacred works.<sup>24</sup>

This tradition of convent support for women's musical composition and performance continued in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. One of the prominent composers of this period was Isabella Leonarda from the convent of St. Orsola in Novara, who published over 200 sacred works, mostly settings of nonliturgical texts, but also including mass settings and instrumental music.<sup>25</sup> Four Venetian conservatories—L'Ospedale dei Mendicanti, L'Ospedale degli Incurabili, L'Ospedaletto, and L'Ospedale della Pieta—achieved prominence for the high quality of their musical performances and as places where girls and young women received an outstanding musical education from a staff of professional musicians. Large crowds attended their performances on feast days. Indeed, by the early eighteenth century, the Pieta, notable for Vivaldi's presence as a music master and for the performance of much of his music, was known as one of the finest music schools in Europe.<sup>26</sup>

Yet even in the convents, churchmen sought to control women's lives and worship. They accomplished this by edict and control of principal aspects of the liturgy. Importantly, they assumed functions that had previously been performed by women, especially liturgical plays and funeral laments.

In the early Christian church, women had reenacted in plays the experiences of Mary, the mother of Jesus, the women who were his friends, the visit to the sepulchre by the women, and other gospel stories in which women featured prominently. Now, monks, replete with falsetto voices, appropriated these plays for themselves,

even to assuming the roles of the pregnant Mary, the pregnant Elizabeth, the wise and foolish virgins, and the participants in the Christmas story.\* Moreover, rather than officiating at the death of one of their sisters as they had earlier done, nuns now had to send for priests to lead in the funeral services for one of their own.<sup>27</sup>

Controlling cloistered musicians was not always easy. Sometimes the attempts of the churchmen were successful. During the fourth century, Gregory of Nyssa tells how he repressed the lamenting of the nuns over his sister Macrina's death:

But when I recalled my soul from the depths, gazing intently at the holy head, and, as if I were rebuked for the disorderly conduct of the women, I said: "Look at her," shouting at the maidens in a loud voice, "and be mindful of the instructions she gave you for order and graciousness in everything. Her divine soul sanctioned one moment of tears for us, commanding us to weep at the moment of prayer. This command we can obey by changing the wailing of our lamentation into a united singing of psalms." I said this in a loud voice to drown out the noise of the wailing. Then I bade them withdraw to their quarters nearby and to leave behind a few of those whose services she accepted during her lifetime.<sup>28</sup>

Others were not so easy to control. In the twelfth century, Hildegard von Bingen defied the prelates of Mainz by refusing their order to exhume the body of an excommunicated youth who lay buried in her convent grounds.<sup>29</sup> In response, they imposed an interdict on the community and banned the celebration of the Office Hours. This, of course, was a powerful weapon. Feeling her authority questioned, the nearly eighty-year-old abbess reprimanded the prelates of Mainz in a letter written c. 1178 with the following warning:

Therefore, those of the Church who have imposed silence on the singing of the chants for the praise of God without well-

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\* While the performance of medieval liturgical plays did occur at some convents, the priests attached to these convents sang the male roles. Such was the emphasis on males singing female roles that the church, while officially threatening to excommunicate offenders, turned a blind eye while boys were castrated to preserve the beauty of the unchanged voices so that they might take the musical parts that would naturally be sung by women and girls. During the eighteenth century, castrati were to be widely found on the musical staffs of Italian churches, including the Pope's private chapel.



considered weight of reason so that they have unjustly stripped God of the grace and comeliness of his own praise, unless they will have freed themselves from their errors here on earth, will be without the company of the angelic songs of praise in heaven.<sup>30</sup>

Moreover, Hildegard's attitude to the male church hierarchy, with whom she conversed, is exemplified in her morality play, *Ordo Virtutum* (The Play of the Virtues). In this play, she represents the plight of a soul who, when tempted by the devil, appeals to sixteen virtues to help her resist him and, due to their help, is eventually triumphant. Hildegard assigns the roles of *anima* and the virtues to her nuns, and that of the devil to the monk assigned to her convent. Interestingly, the roles of *anima* and the virtues are all sung with instrumental accompaniment, while that of the devil is spoken. She refuses to allow him to sing.

Not only did the church impose controls on cloistered women, but it also hindered women outside the convents from participating in secular music. It did this directly, by the issuance of edicts, and indirectly, through its moral authority, by impugning the motives and reputations of those women who chose to compose and perform. One such edict in Bologna, Italy, while unsuccessful in achieving its purpose, illustrates the attitude of some churchmen toward musical education for women:

In May 1686 the Cardinal Legate obtained from Rome an edict which was to put an end to the "offences due to the immoderate application of women to the study of music." Music, it said, was inconsistent with the modesty becoming to the female sex, distracting them from their appropriate occupations and duties, besides exposing to grave danger both themselves, those who teach them, and those who listen to them. It was therefore ordered that no woman, be she virgin, wife, or widow, of whatsoever rank or station, not even those who were living in convents or orphanages for their education or for any other reason, notably that of learning music in order to practice it in the said convents, should learn to sing or play upon any musical instrument from any man, whether layman, ecclesiastic, or member of a religious order, even if he were in any degree related to her. Severe penalties were threatened to any heads of families who dared to admit into their houses any music-masters or musicians to teach their daughters or any of their womenkind.<sup>31</sup>

Notwithstanding an increasing secularization and disregard of clerical edicts, the church's moral authority and persuasive power were considerable. Its suggestion that women involved in composition and performance, especially theatrical singers, were of doubtful reputation, or were not fulfilling their God-appointed roles in life, was sufficient to keep most women from participating in Italian opera until well into the eighteenth century. Vittoria Archilei (1550-c.1618), who served in the Medici court, is one of the earliest opera singers we know of.<sup>32</sup> While women were admitted to opera quite early (in Mantua in 1608), Italian opera remained almost synonymous with castrati until the late eighteenth century.<sup>33</sup>

Protestants were equally guilty of the suppression of women in the music of the church. Luther's principle of congregational singing embodied in the chorale notwithstanding, the Lutheran church continued the tradition of all-male choirs educated in choir schools such as the Leipzig Thomasschule, in which Bach served as cantor.<sup>34</sup> Also, the Church of England provided for the education of boy choristers in King's College School, St. John's College School, York Minster Song School, Wells Cathedral School, and other prominent English choir schools. As recently as 1981, while girls could attend Church of England choir schools, they were still excluded from elite membership in ecclesiastical choirs.<sup>35</sup>

This exclusion is explained when we remember that the participation of women in musical performance within religious ritual reflects underlying theological positions about their place in the church. Where they are excluded from ordination as priestesses, they must also perforce be excluded from liturgical music. Writing in the mid-twentieth century Sophie Drinker observes:

Women did not sing in the liturgical choir from the fourth century on, and they do not do so to this day, either in Catholic churches or in Protestant churches *that have real liturgical singers, who are properly speaking the attendants of the priest and priestess.*<sup>36</sup>

It is tempting to see the Puritan tradition as an homogenous or unified strand of Protestant Christianity. We sometimes speak of the Puritans *en masse* rather than as the variety of distinct groups and separate traditions which they eventually comprised. Theologically, they can be described as "members of the Church of England who wanted a purer life and stricter Church discipline," were "influenced by Calvinistic theology and principles of life," and were "moving in

those directions which were soon to lead to separation from the Church of England, and to an eventual sub-classification as Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists."<sup>37</sup> Musically, they are characterized as a group who rejected liturgical music proper in favor of congregational singing and responses which served a social or functional rather than mystical purpose. Within the Roman Catholic Mass, for example, the Kyrie serves as part of a mystical *act* of worship of which the elevation of the host constitutes the climax. By contrast, in Calvinist theology and practice, the Roman Mass is rejected, and the singing of psalms and, later, hymns serves a didactic, spiritual, and even social function, in exhorting the congregation to certain beliefs and actions, and in binding them together in corporate worship.<sup>38</sup>

Contrary to popular myth,<sup>39</sup> many Puritans were lovers of music and especially devoted to the composition and performance of secular music. Within the church, however, Puritans believed that the Psalms constituted the only appropriate worship songs. English metrical settings of the Psalms, such as the Sternhold and Hopkins (or "Old Version" in distinction to the subsequent Tate and Brady, or "New Version") and Ainsworth psalters, were followed in the Massachusetts colony by a psalter generally known as the *Bay Psalm Book*, and subsequent psalters. The singing of these psalters was generally unaccompanied, with tunes handed down by oral tradition.

There was considerable theological dispute among the Puritans and their successors about whether women should be allowed to participate in Psalm singing.<sup>40</sup> Conservatives believed that women should not participate because of Paul's admonition that they keep silent in the churches. Like other liberally-minded people, John Cotton opposed this view, suggesting, rather, that women should sing the Psalms. In his treatise, *Singing of Psalmes, a Gospel-Ordinance*,<sup>41</sup> Cotton rebuts two interrelated arguments: If women are not permitted to speak in the church, they should not be permitted to sing either; as the singing of psalms is a form of prophesying from which women are precluded, they cannot be permitted to sing the Psalms. Central to his rebuttal is Cotton's distinction between what he sees as biblical prohibitions against women speaking in church as

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\* Their approach to sacred music seems typical of what Tillich describes as "prophetic-protesting" religious experience.

teachers or propounders of questions (because in asking questions they may teach their teachers), and scriptural support for their singing and speaking when called to account for their actions. He cites Miriam's song at the Red Sea, Saphyra's defense before Peter, and early Christian church practice as evidence to support the participation of women in congregational singing.

Interestingly, Sophie Drinker attributes Cotton's support of women's right to participate in congregational singing in the Boston Congregational Church in 1637, and his subsequent published defense of women's participation in psalm singing in 1647, to a woman's persuasion. She reminds us that it was Anne Hutchinson who persuaded John Cotton to include women in congregational singing, and before other colonies took the same bold step, she was "expelled from her community for her theological and political dissent."<sup>42</sup>

This debate continued into the eighteenth century, with a gradual theological acceptance of women's participation in congregational singing. For example, as Stephen Marini notes, in their *Cases of Conscience*, Peter Thacher, John Danforth, and Samuel Danforth posited that the Pauline injunction applied only to women assuming leadership over men, and that women can and should participate in congregational singing.<sup>43</sup>

Throughout the eighteenth century, various social and musical developments brought mounting pressure on the church to open up congregational singing to women. One such development was an important musical change in the tradition of psalm singing. The old method of "customary" or "usual" singing usually involved the "lining-out" of psalms, whereby the deacon intoned each line, followed, in turn, by the congregation singing in unison. As a result of the efforts of clergy and musicians, this method was gradually replaced by a new method of "regular" singing by "rule," in which the entire psalm was sung at sight and in parts without the intervention of the deacon.<sup>44</sup>

As a result of their attendance at singing schools conducted by musicians and itinerant singing masters (run both independently and under the auspices of churches), women became more

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\* The introduction of this change was strongly resisted by more conservative churchpeople, illustrated by the controversy at South Braintree, Massachusetts over "regular" singing.

knowledgeable about singing and reading music, capable of "regular" singing, and therefore eager to participate musically in their churches. The singing schools eventually flowered into choral societies in which women came to participate, some of the earliest being the St. Cecilia Society of Charleston, South Carolina (1762), and the Stoughton (Massachusetts) Musical Society (1786), both of which admitted women as singers, if not as full members.<sup>45</sup>

There were also significant changes in part singing. At first, women did not carry the melody, it being thought inappropriate for them to lead men. Instead, the tenor carried the melody and the sopranos sang a descant. This gave the choral sound an open, almost hollow quality.<sup>46</sup> Gradually, women began to take over the soprano lead melody and assume the inner alto voice (previously sung by men and boys), and the tenor (sung by men) assumed its present inner-voice role. This change was later accompanied, during the nineteenth century and on both sides of the Atlantic, by a dramatic change in the ratio of men and women in choirs (both church choirs and choral societies) from a majority of men and few women to a majority of women.<sup>47</sup>

Moreover, instrumental keyboard instruction became a popular aspect of female education. During the seventeenth century, Puritan women were encouraged to study music. Percy Scholes cites the case of an English woman, Susanna Perwich, who had a veritable staff of music instructors, including her personal lyra viol, viol, lute, harpsichord, singing, and dancing instructors.<sup>48</sup> Later, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, women were especially encouraged to take up the piano as "an accomplishment" in order to show off their prowess.<sup>49</sup> Even though we know that the numbers of such keyboard players were comparatively small in New England (if John S. Dwight is correct, in 1800 fewer than fifty of Boston's six thousand families owned a piano), it was only natural that women privileged to learn a keyboard or other instrument, and by virtue of their ability to read music, should not only wish to participate in congregational singing and church choirs, but would be called upon to perform as organists and pianists. Indeed, one of the first American women to serve as a prominent organist was Sophia Hewitt, organist to the Boston Handel and Haydn Choral Society, and organist at two prominent churches in Boston—Chauncy Place Church and Catholic Cathedral.<sup>50</sup>

During the nineteenth century, women began to exert an important influence on the music of the church. Their newly-found

voices were especially important in fostering higher standards of musical education. In England, Maria Hackett urged Bishop Porteus of London to improve standards in the education of cathedral choristers, and Sarah Glover established a school in Norwich with the objective of improving the quality of church music by teaching children sight-singing and voice production. Her work was later popularized in an amended form by a Congregational minister, John Curwen, whose efforts led to an enormous growth in choral singing in England.<sup>51</sup> In the United States, women entered musical conservatories in increasing numbers and became private teachers (particularly of children) performers and composers.<sup>52</sup> Their growing prominence in secular music along with their participation in church music, provided a wealth of talent and put pressure on the church to include them on an equal basis with men in the music of the church.

More than any other factor, the First and Second Great Awakenings in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, respectively, were responsible for opening up participation in church music to women, especially among those churches that inherited the Puritan tradition. The First Great Awakening that swept the American colonies from 1734-1745, under the influence of itinerant preachers such as George Whitefield, Gilbert Tennant, and James Davenport (also singing evangelists), brought an evangelical fervor to religious worship and led to the abandonment of psalm singing in favor of hymns and spiritual songs and a new emphasis on emotionalism in religious experience expressed in musical terms.<sup>53</sup> Hymn texts by Isaac Watts predominated, exemplified by such hymns as "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross."

These changes brought about bitter inter- and intra-denominational conflicts, including those over attitudes toward music. Some of the Evangelical Calvinists, such as the New Light Congregationalists and the New Side Presbyterians, wholeheartedly endorsed Watts' hymnody, especially suited to "regular" singing, while other anti-revival Presbyterians and Baptists stuck to their traditional psalm texts and tunes sung in "customary" or "usual" fashion, and most churches adopted a position between these two extremes.<sup>54</sup>

The First Great Awakening led to a redefinition of the theology of church song. In his articulation of the doctrine of "religious affections," Samuel Blair posited an intimate connection between sound and feeling, which in sacred music becomes a "real,

effective, and profitable sentiment" enabling the individual to inwardly sense "the moral operations of external harmony."<sup>55</sup> This feeling is not conveyed through sound alone, but primarily through text. Religious texts enable a reborn person to grasp their meaning and to be moved to religious ardor, devotion, and duty—an idea expressed, for example, in the religious song and dance of the Shakers, led by their founding mother and visionary Ann Lee.<sup>56</sup>

The Second Great Awakening was associated with the advent of the gospel song. This movement, during the first three decades of the nineteenth century, was a primarily rural revival that began in the large campmeetings of Kentucky and Tennessee. Charles Finney was among the early revivalists. Later, from the 1870s, evangelists such as Dwight L. Moody in Chicago continued the movement's spread into urban centers. Along with the central ideas of God's love for humankind, and salvation as a free gift, revivalists stressed emotional spontaneity in religious worship, the involvement of laypersons in church life, and issues of social concern.<sup>57</sup>

In particular, the movement enlisted women as active participants and sparked such hymn writers as Fanny Crosby (with whom Pheobe Knapp collaborated as a composer and who contributed more than five hundred gospel hymns), Eliza Hewitt, Clara Scott, and many others who composed hymn texts and tunes.\* The concerns of this evangelical revival, focused as they were on the individual's religious experience, the needs of humankind, the importance of education and self-improvement, and the necessity of individual and collective actions towards redressing evils within society, touched the hearts and minds of women and released a flood of creative contributions to gospel hymnody and sacred music more generally.

Gospel music, as it developed during the twentieth century, also drew from the music of Americans whose roots lay in Africa, and was emblematic of a "rediscovered 'matriarchy'" in apposition to a predominantly white and patriarchal world. In composing and performing gospel music, women were unconsciously combating

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\* This is not to suggest that women were inactive as hymn writers and composers before the nineteenth century. Gene Claghorn's *Women Composers and Hymnists: A Concise Biographical Dictionary* includes 155 women composers and 600 hymnists from the twelfth to twentieth centuries. Nevertheless, from the nineteenth century, the number of women hymnists and composers dramatically increased.

patriarchy, bringing a maternal view to bear on, and softening the paternal emphasis of, the church.<sup>58</sup>

Indeed, the extraordinarily large output of gospel songs composed by women during the nineteenth and earlier part of the twentieth century demonstrates the special affinity women had with gospel music. Doubtless, their lives as homemakers (particularly in the case of women hymnists and composers in the nineteenth century) and their musical and literary training affected the quality of their writing and their choice of texts. One sees in these texts a preoccupation with personal religious experience; practical responses to the world's challenges; care for children, the suffering, the needy; and home relationships. While they clearly predominated as composers of gospel songs in the early days of gospel music, their numbers declined as commercialism in gospel music spread during the middle and latter part of the twentieth century; and an international industry developed around gospel music, spearheaded mainly by men.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is heir to the American Puritan tradition and to the First and Second Great Awakenings. Indeed, born as it was out of the Second Great Awakening, and initially a primarily rural movement, Adventism borrowed the revivalist songs of the Methodists, in particular, and an implicit theology of "religious affections." Music was believed to engender emotional response in the participants and listeners, and arouse them to action. Also, like their Puritan forbearers, Adventists centered on the "word." Music provided a functional, social, spiritual, and didactic role as secondary to, and supportive of, the preaching of the Word.\*

As music does not play a strictly liturgical role in Adventist church services, and because it is secondary to such functions as preaching, baptizing, and conducting communion services, women have been organists, pianists, instrumentalists, singers, choristers, conductors, and composers, from the church's inception. While ordination to the ministry has been denied them, it is still considered appropriate for women to be active in the music of the church. Notwithstanding that all the other participants in the church service (the primary weekly worship service) may be men—the preacher,

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\* Even today, presentations of sacred music within Adventist religious services are often described as "messages in song."



elders, and deacons—a sole woman can with perfect propriety walk onto the rostrum and, for the duration of her solo, hold the full attention of congregation and clergy alike. Likewise, a woman organist may set the atmosphere for a worship service, lead the congregation in hymn singing, perform the various responses, lead the choir, and generally impact on almost every facet of that service. If these women are fine musicians, they may command the respect and admiration of women and men alike, and do what Paul seemingly wished them not to do: exercise control and leadership within the church.

This incongruity between the church's official position on the role of women in the church and the participation of women as leaders in church music may be explained as follows: Many Adventist church leaders do not understand the power and leadership exerted by the musician within the religious service. They see music in a supporting role in the service and think that as the female musician is not ordained she is not threatening the doctrine of male "headship" over women or violating the spirit of the Pauline injunction that women should accept a subordinate status in the Christian community. Moreover, music is not fully accepted as a form of ministry. Had it been so, in order to be theologically consistent, the church fathers should either have ordained women as ministers of music or barred them from leading roles in the music of the church.

The prevailing patriarchy within Adventism is reinforced by the hymn texts used; and these contribute, in turn, to the alienation of women within its community. In the latest (1985) edition of the *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, rather than adopt a consistent policy of inclusive language usage as the Methodists and Presbyterians have done in their recent and ongoing revisions, respectively, even at the risk of opposition from conservatives within their communities, the compilers have retained sexist language in some of the hymns.<sup>59</sup> Relatively few women composers of hymn tunes are included (fewer than a tenth of attributable tunes), and while women hymn writers are better represented (but still by fewer than a quarter of the attributable hymn texts), women's experiences and voices are largely omitted. Adventist congregations are socialized into the prevailing patriarchal world view these texts and tunes exemplify. As a result, the church is in danger of becoming progressively more irrelevant to its women.

Adventist women continue to make important contributions to the music of the Adventist Church. They are outstanding composers, performers of instrumental and vocal music, conductors, and music teachers. Some Adventist women have found their way into nontraditional careers in performance, onto the opera stage, and into the concert hall as choral and symphonic conductors and soloists. Others teach at leading universities, colleges, and music schools internationally. Still others teach at Adventist schools and colleges. Many of these women are unrecognized by the Adventist Church for their contributions to music and the church. I think, for example, of Adventist composer Blythe Owen, with numerous compositions and honors spanning over a half-century, and yet largely ignored by the church.<sup>60</sup> Her one hymn included in the *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, "For Your Holy Book We Thank You," contrasts with numerous settings by her male contemporaries (including four hymn settings by James Bingham, eighteen settings by Wayne Hooper, and thirty-one settings by Melvin West), despite the fact that in the world of music outside the Adventist Church, she is probably one of Adventism's leading twentieth-century composers. Indeed, the number of settings by these three men total more than all the settings attributed to women across all times in the hymnal.

Notwithstanding these inequities, and their marginalization within the church, Adventist women, along with women from other religious communities, are finding their voice. They are reclaiming their heritage and their church. Like other Christian women, they are revisiting the roots of their faith, writing their own theology, and composing and performing their own music. They are arising with their sisters from other faiths and times to give musical voice to their vision of God.

## Notes

1 The interface of religion and music is noted in Sophie Drinker, *Music and Women: The Story of Women in their Relation to Music* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1949); Wilfrid Dunwell, *Music and the European Mind* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1962); Joyce Irwin, ed., "Sacred Sound: Music in Religious Thought and Practice," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion Thematic Studies* 50 (1) (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), and that between religion and the arts generally is seen in Pie-Raymond Regamey, *Religious Art in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963); David Baily Harned, *Theology and the Arts* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966); Roger Hazelton, *A Theological Approach to Art* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1967); Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); Margaret R. Miles, *Image*

as *Insight: Visual Understanding in Western Christianity and Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985); Langdon B. Gilkey, "Can Art Fill the Vacuum?" and Paul Tillich, "Art and Ultimate Reality," in *Art, Creativity, and the Sacred: An Anthology in Religion and Art*, Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, ed. (New York: Crossroad, 1986); Mircea Eliade, *Symbolism, the Sacred, and the Arts*, Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, ed. (New York: Crossroad, 1988); Frank Burda Brown, "Religious Aesthetics: A Theological Study of Making and Meaning" (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); James Alfred Markin, Jr., *Beauty and Holiness: The Dialogue Between Aesthetics and Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990). The connection between society and music is discussed in John Blacking, *How Musical Is Man?* (London: Faber and Faber, 1976); and the intersection of gender in music and society is explored in Ellen Koskoff, ed., *Women and Music in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (New York: Westport, 1987). The interrelationship between religion and society is exemplified, for instance, in Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), and *The Feast of Fools: A Theological Essay on Festivity and Fantasy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969).

2 See Edward Foley, *Music and Ritual: A Pre-Theological Investigation* (Washington, DC: Pastoral Press, 1984).

3 Oskar Söhngen, "Music and Theology: A Systematic Approach," in Irwin, *Sacred Sound*, 1; Drinker, *Music and Women*, 265. The latter claims it is the most profoundly religious of the arts.

4 See John Shepherd, "Music and Male Hegemony," in *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance, and Reception*, Richard Leppert and Susan McClary, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 151-72.

5 Augustine, *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, trans. F. J. Sheed (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1943), 236, 242-44.

6 Drinker, *Music and Women*, 298.

7 See *Ibid.*, chap. 2.

8 See Steven Feld, *Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics, and Song in Kaluli Expression* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2nd ed., 1990); Susan Auerbach, "From Singing to Lamenting: Women's Musical Role in a Greek Village," in Koskoff, *Women and Music*, 25-43.

9 See Judith R. Cohen, "'Ya Salió de la Mar': Judeo-Spanish Wedding Songs Among Moroccan Jews in Canada," in Koskoff, *Women and Music*, 55-67.

10 See Blacking, *How Musical is Man*, 40-41.

11 See Drinker, *Music and Women*, chaps. 5, 6, 8.

12 See R. D. Anderson, "Musical Instruments," vol. 3 of *Catalogue of Egyptian Antiquities in the British Museum* (London: British Museum Publications, 1976); Henry George Farmer, "The Music of Ancient Egypt," in *Ancient and Oriental Music*, vol. 1 of *The New Oxford History of Music*, ed., Egon Wellecz (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 255-82.

13 See Exod. 15:21; Judg. 5:3, 12, 27; Judith 15:12, 13; 16:1, 2.

14 See Drinker, *Music and Women*, 134.

15 Ellen Koskoff, "The Sound of a Woman's Voice: Gender and Music in a New York Hasidic Community," in Koskoff, *Women and Music*, 218, 216.

16 Edgar Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, Wilhelm Schneemelcher, ed. (English trans., R. McL. Wilson, ed.), vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), Appendix 1, "The Gospel of Thomas" (22), 513-14.

17 See Carol Neuls-Bates, ed., *Women and Music: An Anthology of Source Readings from the Middle Ages to the Present* (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), 3, 4.

- 18 See Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, (New York: Crossroad, 1984), chap. 6.
- 19 See Drinker, *Music and Women*, 178-79, chap. 10.
- 20 See Anne Howland Schotter, "Woman's Song in Medieval Latin" in *Vox Feminae: Studies in Medieval Woman's Song*, John F. Plummer, ed. *Studies in Medieval Culture*, no. 15 (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1981), 19-33.
- 21 See Anne Bagnall Yardley, "'Ful weel she soong the service dyvyne': The Cloistered Musician in the Middle Ages," in *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150-1950*, Jane Bowers and Judith Tick, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 15-38.
- 22 For example, see James R. Briscoe, ed., *Historical Anthology of Music by Women* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987).
- 23 Jane Bowers ("The Emergence of Women Composers in Italy, 1566-1700," in Bowers and Tick, *Women Making Music*, 126) suggests that over half of the women whose works were published over the period 1566-1700 were nuns.
- 24 See Bowers and Tick, *Women Making Music*, 125-26; Susan Cook and Thomasin K. La May, *Virtuose in Italy, 1600-1640: A Reference Guide* (New York: Garland, 1984), 18-25.
- 25 See Briscoe, *Historical Anthology*.
- 26 See Denis Arnold, "Orphans and Ladies: The Venetian Conservatories (1680-1790)," *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 89 (1962/63): 31-47, and "Instruments and Instrumental Teaching in the Early Italian Conservatories," *Galpin Society Journal* 18 (1965): 72-81.
- 27 See Drinker, *Music and Women*, 194-98.
- 28 Neuls-Bates, *Women in Music*, 8-9.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 17.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 20.
- 31 Eduard J. Dent, *Historical Introduction to the Violin-makers of the Guarneri Family (1626-1762): Their Life and Work*, William Henry Hill, Arthur F. Hill, and Alfred Ebsworth Hill, eds. (London: W. E. Hill and Sons, 1931), xx, xxi.
- 32 See Rupert Christiansen, *Prima Donna: A History* (New York: Viking, 1985), 16.
- 33 See Heriot, *The Castrati*, 35.
- 34 See Christoph Wolff, Walter Emery, Richard Jones, Eugene Helm, Ernest Warburton, Ellwood S. Derr, eds., *The New Grove, Bach Family* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1983).
- 35 See Cynthia Hawkins, "Aspects of the Musical Education of Choristers in Church of England Choir Schools," M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1985, 165.
- 36 Drinker, *Music and Women*, 267.
- 37 Percy A. Scholes, *The Puritans and Music in England and New England: A Contribution to the Cultural History of Two Nations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934), 4.
- 38 Tillich, "Art and Ultimate Reality," 228-29.
- 39 See Scholes, *The Puritans and Music*, passim.
- 40 See Stephen Marini, "Rehearsal for Revival: Sacred Singing and the Great Awakening in America," in Irwin, *Sacred Sound*, 76.
- 41 John Cotton, *Singing of Psalmes, A Gospel-Ordinance Or A Treatise Wherein Are Handled These Foure Particulars: 1. Touching the duty it selfe. 2. Touching the matter to be sung. 3. Touching the singers. 4. Touching the manner of singing* (London: Printed for M. S. for Hannah Allen at the

Crowne in Popes-Head-Alley, and John Rothwell at the Sunne and Fountaine in Pauls-Church-Yard, 1647), 42-43.

42 Drinker, *Music and Women*, 268. Also, see Dorothy Oslin, "The Risk of Dissent: The Story of Anne Hutchinson," *Daughters of Sarah* 14 (2) (1988), 16-18.

43 See Marini, 75-77; Peter Thacher, Samuel Danforth, and John Danforth, *An Essay Preached by Several Ministers of the Gospel for the Satisfaction of their Pious and Conscientious Brethren, as to Sundry Questions and Cases of Conscience, Concerning the Singing of Psalms, in the Publick Worship of God . . .* (Boston: Printed by S. Kneeland for S. Gerrish, 1723).

44 See Henry Wilder Foote, *Three Centuries of American Hymnody* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940), Appendix B, 383-86.

45 See Christine Ammer, *Unsung: A History of Women in American Music* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 6; James A Keene, *A History of Music Education in the United States* (Hanover, NH: University of New England Press, 1982), chap. 2.

46 This tradition still persists. See B. F. White and E. J. King, *Sacred Harp: A Collection of Psalm and Hymn Tunes, Odes, and Anthems . . .* (Philadelphia: T. K. and P. G. Collins, 1844).

47 See Estelle R. Jorgensen, "Developmental Phases in Selected British Choirs," *Canadian University Music Review*, no. 7 (1986), 139-56.

48 See Scholes, *The Puritans and Music*, 160-61.

49 Arthur Loesser, *Men, Women, and Pianos: A Social History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), 268.

50 See Ammer, *Unsung*, 7.

51 See Derek Hyde, *New-Found Voices: Women in Nineteenth-Century English Music* (Liskeard, Cornwall: Belvedere Press, 1984).

52 See Ammer, *Unsung*, chap. 11.

53 Tillich ("Art and Ultimate Reality," 231-32) describes this as the ecstatic-spiritual religious experience.

54 See Marini, "Rehearsal for Revival," 84.

55 Samuel Blair, *A Discourse on Psalmody* (Philadelphia: John McCulloch, 1789), quoted in *ibid.*, 86.

56 See Daniel W. Patterson, *The Shaker Spiritual* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979).

57 See Esther Rothenbusch, "The Joyful Sound: Women in the Nineteenth-Century United States Hymnody Tradition," in Koskoff, *Women and Music*, 178.

58 See Wilfrid Mellers, *Angels of the Night: Popular Female Singers of our Time* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 95.

59 Iris M. Yob (*The Church and Feminism* [Denver, CO: Winsen Publications, 1988], 36-38) has noted the prevailing masculine emphasis in texts in the *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1985).

60 See Owen's listing in Aaron Cohen, *International Encyclopedia of Women Composers* (New York: R. R. Bowker, 1981), 347-48.