

45 Daniel Zager, editorial, in *Cross Accent*, vol., 9 no. 3 (fall 2001), p. 26.

46 Colin Podmore, p. 121.

48 Ralph R. Van Loon, ed., *Encountering God: the Legacy of the Lutheran Book of Worship for the 21st Century* (Minneapolis, Kirk House Publishers, 1998), p. 8.

49 Adapted from Just, pp. 12-15.

50 Just, p. 13.

51 As Brother Crews observed a few years ago, “we most certainly need to keep asking probing questions about our identity as the Moravian Church. Indeed, if the Moravian Church ever quits questioning the nature of its identity, that is probably a sure sign that it has lost it.” C. Daniel Crews, “Questions of Moravian identity,” *TMDK* 9 (July 1996), English edition, p. 32.

52 Brown, p. 174.

53 Westermeyer, “Music: Poured Out for the World”, in *Inside Out: Worship in an Age of Mission*, ed. Thomas H. Schattauer (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1999), p. 139.

54 Charles B. Adams, findings in 1934 hold true today; see *Contemporary Hymnological Practice in the Moravian Church in the United States* (B. D. thesis, Moravian Theological Seminary, 1934), p. 14.

55 Westermeyer, “Church Music in the Seminary Curriculum,” p. 14-16.

56 Westermeyer, “Church Music in the Seminary Curriculum,” *Cross Accent* 9 (2001):14-16, here p. 16.

Responses

Brad Bennett

I have this picture hanging up in my music room at home that says; “Music must take rank as the highest of the fine arts - as the one which, more than any other, ministers to human welfare.” To many of us, music matters. To some, music matters a lot. Add worship to the mix and we are speaking of one of the most profound, basic and effective mediums for all things God — and us for that matters. For Moravians this is even more true. It’s no wonder that we are passionate about music in worship. And it’s no surprise that current conflicts about music in worship are nothing new.

I found Nola’s article informative, detailed and thorough. She raises many issues that are at the heart of music and worship, placing them firmly in the Moravian context. She makes a convincing case, lifting up quality, simplicity, distinctiveness, competence and integrity when it comes to music in Moravian worship without falling into the tired contemporary vs. traditional conflict. She seeks to balance the objective with the subjective when dealing with the medium and the message inherent in worship music.

Her expansion of others’ perspectives on the principles and culture of worship into the environment of music is helpful in clarifying the content and expression of worship music. I especially liked the suggestion that in whatever musical style or styles we embrace as Moravians in worship, we make them our own (with integrity and quality), and not just mimic a popular trend or someone else’s success story. I didn’t find anything in her article that I felt the need to jump on a pedestal to refute or argue over!

My comments in response to Nola’s article, then, reflect further on some of the issues she raises that are inherent in determining what is acceptable worship music, and how that music is played. In no particular order, the first would be the use of amateur vs. professional musician, or the volunteer as opposed to the paid. Closely related to this issue is the primary instrument (or instruments) played in leading worship. The primary instrument that has led worship for many years is the organ, which calls for extensive training, education and practice in order to play effectively. In recent decades other instruments have become increasingly utilized in worship - most notably, the keyboard and the guitar (electric or acoustic).

Worship music training is most often associated with the professional organist. Guitars and keyboards, when used in worship, are often played, not by professionals, but amateurs or unpaid volunteers. I wonder if these instrumentalists were trained in worship music as stringently as organists, would they be more easily accepted in worship. It seems to me that Nola's comments on quality and competence in worship leadership apply as much to the usage of these instruments as to the organ. Guitars and keyboards (or any instruments), played well and with attention to the worship context fit as well and meaningfully as the organ. I am not an advocate for replacing the organ as the primary instrument for worship music leadership, but I do feel that other instruments can also be used to great benefit. That would positively fit into the perspectives and principles of worship mentioned in Nola's article.

I do sense reluctance in many established Moravian churches to accept nontraditional instruments and musical styles in worship, which I find curious, considering that Moravians have traditionally been very musically innovative. If quality and competence are issues, there seems to be a lot more tolerance of brass instruments and organs poorly played than other instruments. Perhaps that is because organs and brass are the instruments most closely associated with Moravian worship and what many are more used to hearing.

I am not sure how one moves from the amateur to the professional in music leadership without ample experience. At some point a great organist had to be mediocre! How can one become a better worship music leader without actually playing in worship? Larger churches have the means and opportunity to offer music instruction and amateur musical organizations that can give such experience (in the traditional instruments, brass and organ), but I don't always find the openness to using other instruments or musical styles in those church that one might expect.

Smaller churches (which most Moravian churches are) sometimes seem more willing to use other instruments, but musical abilities vary greatly. When the quality of music or the musicianship (on a nontraditional

instrument) is experienced as "bad", it seems to hurt the chances of using the style or instrument again, even when the quality and competence could be improved. The use of any kind of instrument or musical style needs to be developed over time. What may seem poorly played and inadequate once could become well-done and meaningful with proper practice, training and opportunity.

Musical taste is another issue that is quite multifaceted and complicated. I don't think the "traditional vs. contemporary" tag comes close to speaking for all the angles and perspectives that are out there. I suspect those terms often get used for basic umbrellas under which all kinds of points of views get placed.

For example, using a guitar in worship does not automatically mean that the music played will be contemporary, though for many, the use of a guitar equals contemporary! After all, what does "contemporary" really mean? It seems now to be mostly applied to a popular musical genre, "contemporary Christian music," which seems to have as much to do with marketing a product as it does any of the principles of worship that Nola sites. A fascinating wrinkle from a Moravian perspective (in the South anyways!) is that often any guitar music is considered "camp music" no matter where or when it's played!

In the same vein, what is "traditional?" For many it has more to do with what they are used to hearing in their church setting than a particular style. That has more to do with what is customary than traditional. We live in an increasingly cafeteria-styled culture (the same is true in church) so whatever kind of music someone likes is used in worship somewhere. The old joke is really true: I consider what I like, good taste in music! What I don't like is bad taste!

Nola's comments on musical education are right on target, but I'm not sure our society or our churches are interested in such education. It's too easy to find one's particular taste if one looks hard enough. And it's too easy to promote one's own preference over and above anything else. There is nothing wrong with

enjoying and wanting a particular style of music in worship or searching for it. But when a style is seen as THE standard or the ONLY one that is truly spiritual/biblical, then it is no longer a matter of responding to God, but a matter of personal preference that has more to do with personal taste or familiarity than corporate worship. I know of churches that are just as rigid about “contemporary” music usage as others are with “traditional.”

Performance as opposed to participation is another complicated issue. Nola’s citing of Otto Dreydoppel’s work on worship speaks to this distinction, but there is still a wide gray area in the middle. When does worship music leadership slip over into performance? When does a worship music leader’s enthusiasm and inspiration move a song (be it instrumental, solo, praise chorus or hymn) from being offered/led to being performed? I generally look for where the attention is. The greater visual attention given or drawn to the music leader, the more likely it is to be performance oriented. And in the same vein, while a fine rendition of a song should be appreciated by the listeners and/or the singers, the desire or need for applause at its conclusion moves it closer to a performance.

In our visual, big screened, TV oriented age; it seems to me that we have moved MUCH closer to the performance/spectator end of the spectrum in worship that in my view puts the attention away from God. In fact, some modern worship services appear to me to be mechanically the same as secular rock concerts, the main difference being the use of religious language.

Being a guitar player and an advocate of the use of modern instruments and music in worship, I am very conscious of and strive hard to make sure that when I lead music, the focus is on worshipping God, and not on me, my guitar or the type of music. That doesn’t mean I always succeed, and it can be difficult to achieve when the instruments or the songs are not what the worshippers are used to. I am not trying to pick on modern music and instruments, because traditional can also be performance oriented. A spirited organ prelude, anthem solo or violin piece can just as easily become a performance instead of an offering.

As Nola indicates, these discussions only scratch the surface of all the issues involved in music and worship. There are many ways of looking at them, and few are truly cut and dried. Music for many is like life-blood; it isn’t a disposable commodity in worship or anywhere else! Like most other areas in church life we cannot wall ourselves up around whatever our particular perspectives are if we want to be effective followers of Christ. And we must do everything we can to offer music in worship that is real, meaningful and true to the good news of Christ that speaks to those who hear it, sing it, as well as play it, whatever the style or instruments used. With openness, dialogue, education, practice and attention, I believe we can. I’m still waiting on guitars to make it into the Easter band.

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It is indeed an honor and a privilege to be invited to write one of the responses to Nola’s excellent lead article concerning Music at the Heart of Moravian Faith and Life. Since I am in essential agreement with the main points of her thesis, I want to expand on several of her remarks and raise a few questions of my own.

If singing our faith is one of the primary mechanisms which bind us together as a worshipping community (and I fully believe that it is), then it is incumbent upon us to ask how the maximum possible number of the gathered congregation can be invited into joyful and willing participation. There is, in my opinion, no one foolproof answer to this question. Rather, a number of sometimes competing considerations must be addressed.

It might seem that staying with the familiar is the best way to encourage participation in worship. This is true only to an extent; then the boredom factor takes over. The congregation that hears only the same two or three-dozen hymns soon finds its worship stagnating. Praise, awe, and wonder are lost in a sense of the “same old, same old.”