4-2021

An Analysis of the Relationship between Catholic and Secular Music throughout the Ages

Rosalie Gagnon
Grand Valley State University

An Analysis of the Relationship between Catholic and Secular Music throughout the Ages

Rosalie Gagnon

No genre of music is ever entirely isolated from another. Composers often borrow themes and styles from other composers, genres, and ages. This trend holds true for sacred Catholic music. Prior to the Renaissance, the chief form of sacred music used in the Catholic liturgy was Gregorian chant. However, throughout the ages, as secular music began to shift, involving polyphony, orchestral accompaniment, and other distinctive styles and techniques, Catholic music often followed, adopting a variety of these innovative practices. The Catholic Church was not always open to modern, secular practices, however, and many liturgical groups, including Popes who issued official documents regarding Church music, encouraged and called for reforms in Catholic music. This study aims to analyze the progression of sacred Catholic music throughout the ages, beginning with the Renaissance and ending in current times, post-Second Vatican Council, and compare this progression to the parallel evolution of secular music, examining how the two intertwine.

Music of the Renaissance: The Chanson Mass

Although the exact dates continue to be debated, the Renaissance is often considered to span from the 15th to the 16th century. One especially notable intellectual movement that occurred during the Renaissance was the rise of humanism, which was marked by an increased interest in human beings and the study of the humanities.[1] As a result of this increased focus on the human rather than the divine, the chief focus in art, thinking, and music shifted from religion and religious themes to more secular concepts and subjects.[2] Moreover, even when religious subjects were emphasized in art and music, they were continually portrayed in a more secular

[1] J. Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music, 8th Edition* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), 150.

[2] Joseph Machlis, *The Enjoyment of Music: An Introduction to Perceptive Listening, 3rd Edition* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1970), 327.

light.[3] The result of these new movements and ideologies was the composition of music that dealt with the human or secular side of life.

For instance, in French music during the Renaissance, an important genre was the chanson: a secular, polyphonic piece that utilized courtly language and was composed chiefly for the entertainment of the aristocracy.[4] These chansons tended to deal largely with more secular themes and topics rather than on the divine or sacred, often specifically addressing themes of courtly love. This being said, chansons, as well as similar types of secular music from other nations, still directly influenced the compositions of religious music during the Renaissance.

Chansons affected religious compositions in that material from these songs was incorporated within the main themes of polyphonic settings of the Catholic Mass. In the past, musical material for polyphonic masses had been drawn from pre-existing works, so this was not a new practice, but the typical material used in the composition of these masses was ordinarily a single line of Gregorian Chant, not multiple musical parts from a secular song.[5] This new innovation resulted in what is known as the chanson mass.

In the composition of certain chanson masses, the use of a secular piece within the mass may be intentional and related to the event for which the music was composed. For instance, music composed for the celebration of a wedding ceremony might showcase themes based on a secular love song in recognition of the love shared between the couple to be married.[6]

---

[3] M. J. Bloxam, "A Cultural Context for the Chanson Mass," in *Early Musical Borrowing*, ed. Honey Meconi (New York: Routledge, 2004), 6.

[4] Machlis, *The Enjoyment of Music*, 326.

[5] Bloxam, "A Cultural Context for the Chanson Mass," 5.

[6] Bloxam, 5-6.

Alternatively, it has been postulated that these masses were composed in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary or other beloved saints, following the common trope of the time which blurred the lines between the secular and the divine, especially as pertained to love and affection.[7] Especially for secular songs that were originally about a lady of the court, it seemed that they could be "if cloaked in liturgical dress, appropriately redirected to the Queen of the heavenly court."[8]

In other cases with the borrowing of a secular tune, however, the composer may only have chosen the original tune for use in the mass in order to have a starting point from which to begin composing the music.[9] In cases such as these, the borrowed theme may not be recognizable as the original material since it was chiefly used for its musical characteristics rather than as a recognizable theme. It seems that this may have been the case with the *Missa L'homme armé*, a work by Guillaume Du Fay. While this mass was not based on a chanson, it did take a theme from a piece of secular music called *L'Homme armé*, which was a popular French song. The melody of this piece was used as the tenor line, or cantus firmus of the mass. When listening to this mass, it is very difficult, even when seeing the notes on the score as they are being sung, to distinguish the tune of the original song. This being said, it should be noted that I did not grow up listening to *L'Homme armé* nor is it currently a popular song that I would be aware of. Therefore, I might not be familiar enough with the tune to be able to pick it out by ear in the midst of a polyphonic work.

---

[7] Bloxam, 5.

[8] Bloxam, 6.

[9] David J. Rothenberg, *The Flower of Paradise: Marian Devotion and Secular Song in Medieval and Renaissance Music*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 159.

Popular music such as chansons did not only affect the mass, but also impacted the composition of sacred polyphonic motets. Some sacred motets were composed that either used imagery similar to secular songs in the portrayal of religious ideas, or that used similar musical techniques to those commonly used in such compositions.[10] Furthermore, in rare cases, the lyrics of the secular song itself were quoted and inserted into the sacred motet. An example of this can be seen in Josquin des Prez's motet *Tu solus, qui facis mirabilia* which was substituted as a movement in his *Missa D'ung aultre amer.* [11] This motet directly quotes lyrics from *D'ung aultre amer,* a chanson by Johannes Ockeghem about a secular, sensual love between a man and a woman, and even preserves the original French language, despite the majority of the motet being written in Latin. Phrases that translate from French as "To love another would be great folly and sin"[12] can be found within this work, which are addressed in this context to Christ instead of to an individual man or woman as was intended in the original work.[13]

From the point of view of the Catholic Church, there are a number of potential consequences to having the tunes of popular songs used as the basis for composition of the Ordinary of the Mass and other sacred compositions. First of all, there are connotations implied between the matter of the mass itself and the topic of the song used as a basis for mass. If members of a Catholic congregation were to hear and recognize a popular love song or military march during the mass, they might begin to associate what is being religiously celebrated with

---

[10] Edward Schaefer, *Catholic Music throughout the Ages: Balancing the Needs of a Worshipping Church*. (Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2008), 80-81.

[11] Patrice Turner, "The Sacred and the Secular: Where do we Draw the Line?" *The Journal of Religious Thought* 59, no. 1 (2007), 14.

[12] Turner, 15.

[13] Turner, 15.

these more secular themes, confusing the divine with the secular. The borrowing of certain language or musical devices from popular music and use of it in sacred music "spoke of the secular world"[14] and could be considered to detract from the sacred nature of the mass. Alternatively, even if the congregation did not draw parallels between the mass and the topic of the music being quoted, there is still a likelihood that, if the tune were recognized, then it might result in distraction from the words of the mass itself.

Over time, therefore, individuals within the Church began to believe that a reformation in Church music was needed. Furthermore, unrest about other areas in Church practice was to cause further dissension, which eventually set the stage for Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation, beginning with the posting of Luther's 95 Theses in 1517. Both of these situations resulted in a strong Catholic response at the Council of Trent beginning in 1545, which addressed reforms and changes in Catholic practices, including sacred music.

Music of the 16th Century: The Counter-Reformation and the Council of Trent

During the period leading up to the 16th century, abuses within the Catholic Church abounded, including probably the most well-known abuse of buying and selling indulgences. As a result of these numerous perceived abuses, some individuals decided to take the matter of reform into their own hands. Martin Luther did just that and lit the spark that would result in the beginning of the Protestant Reformation.

While there were a number of reformers working to change Church practice for the better, Luther was by far the most well-known and influential, especially in the area of sacred

[14] Schaefer, *Catholic Music Throughout the Ages*, 81.

music. Luther addressed a number of specifically liturgical practices in his teachings, but he was also well known for his sacred musical compositions. One specific musical technique that was frequently utilized by Luther and other composers of the Reformation was contrafacta. In the composition of songs, contrafacta refers to the use of "new texts set to old melodies."[15] Therefore, similar to the way the chanson mass utilized tunes from popular love songs as themes within the Mass, Luther and other composers of the Reformation used the tunes of popular songs that were widely known and set religious texts to them, frequently in the German vernacular. An example of this can be seen in early renditions of one of Luther's Christmas hymns called *Von Himmel Hoch*, which was originally based on a secular folk tune.[16]

The connotations that can accompany the use of contrafacta have already been addressed in the discussion regarding Church objections to the chanson mass and other instances of musical borrowing. Luther, however, did not view the use of contrafacta as negatively as the Catholic Church later stated it did. In fact, Luther intentionally sought to use pre-existing tunes partially because of the popularity of the original song.[17] He is even reported to have commented that he saw no reason why the devil should have all of the good tunes, and therefore he utilized the melodies of these popular songs for use in his hymns.[18]

---

[15] Rebecca Wagner Oettinger. *Music as Propaganda in the German Reformation.* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2001), 4.

[16] James L. Brauer, *Luther's Hymn Melodies: Style and Form for a Royal Priesthood*. (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Press, 2016), 32.

[17] Oettinger, 5.

[18] Neil Stipp. "The Music Philosophies of Martin Luther and John Calvin." *The American Organist* 41, no. 9 (2007), 70.

Another reason that Luther used contrafacta is that the individuals whom he often addressed were the common folk of Germany, who were frequently unable to read and, even if they could read, were almost definitely not able to understand musical notation.[19] Using popular songs that most of these people knew made it much easier to spread Luther's message since the only thing they had to learn was the new words; the tunes themselves were already familiar. In fact, this was a common tactic with all kinds of music intended for popular singing; "a song was considered more marketable if they sidestepped the problem of musical notation entirely by recycling an old tune."[20]

In addition to using contrafacta, Luther greatly emphasized the composition and use of hymns within the liturgy, especially vernacular hymns. These Protestant hymns were specifically known as chorales and have, since the time of their original composition, acted as sources of musical material for the composers of many other compositions, including motets and preludes.[21] While the use of vernacular hymns was not unheard of within the Catholic Church, especially for use during the Liturgy of the Hours and processions, it was rarely, if ever, incorporated into the Liturgy of the Mass itself.[22] Luther and the other reformers of the Protestant Reformation, on the other hand, pushed for vernacular hymnody to become an integral and central part of the liturgy, which further separated their position from that of the Catholic Church.[23] Because of the

---

[19] Oettinger, 28.

[20] Oettinger, 28.

[21] Robert L. Marshall, "Chorale," *Grove Music Online*. 2001; Accessed 18 Apr. 2021. https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.ezproxy.gvsu.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000005652?rskey=nijILe

[22] Anthony Ruff, *Sacred Music and Liturgical Reform* (Chicago: Archdiocese of Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2007), 567-568.

[23] Ruff, 575.

popularity that the use of vernacular hymns gained within the Protestant movement, different groups within the Catholic Church tried to decide whether to reject all uses of vernacular hymns because of their "newly acquired heretical connotations, or to make use of it in order to counteract the reformers."[24]

The nature and success of Luther's teachings in combination with the liturgical abuses going on in the Catholic Church at the time caused many within it to call for a "Counter-Reformation" on Catholic terms. These reforms were chiefly intended to address liturgical issues and abuses, but also aimed to bring about reforms in Catholic sacred music. Specifically, many individuals saw sacred music being corrupted by secular influences. Such musical practices included the use of popular music or themes, such as in the already discussed chanson mass and other uses of contrafacta by Luther, as well as the use of such complex polyphony that the words of the mass themselves became lost in the music.[25] The culminating result of Luther's reformation and the call for reforms within the boundaries of official Church teaching led to the convention of the Council of Trent.

The Council of Trent was an 18-year-long council, beginning in 1545, which addressed a wide variety of Church abuses.[26] In light of the variety and severity of a number of these abuses, sacred music was not addressed until close to the end of the council.[27] Despite much debate, including discussions on whether or not to ban polyphonic music from the mass entirely,[28] the

---

[24] Ruff, 576.

[25] Ronald Prowse, "Council of Trent and the Reform of Gregorian Chant." *Sacred Music* 136, no. 3 (2009), 35.

[26] Prowse, 35.

[27] Prowse, 35.

[28] Craig A. Monson, "The Council of Trent Revisited." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 55, no. 1 (2002), 8.

final exhortation of the council on music was brief and rather unclear. The chief reference made to sacred music was that Catholic churches should ensure that all music that was "lascivious and unclean"[29] was eliminated from the mass, and only music that encouraged devotion and piety should be used. However, there is no specification made regarding what types of music were impure nor any suggestions given for types of music that were appropriate.[30] Local bishops were set in charge of sacred music and were to use their best judgments in the matter of liturgical music.[31]

Overall, therefore, the council itself did not directly condemn the chanson mass or the use of polyphony, nor does it address the matter of vernacular hymnody. Regarding the use of hymns, it is likely that rules governing their use were also to be decided by the local bishops. However, it is surprising that the council did not mention polyphony directly, especially considering that its use and abuse was a point of discussion within the council.[32] Schaefer reasons that this may have been due to the request of Ferdinand I, who was the Holy Roman Emperor at the time, to the council, asking that polyphony not be banned entirely from being used in the Church.[33] This plea may have stemmed from his own love of polyphonic music, or it may have originated from a knowledge that the enforcement of a ban on polyphony would be extremely difficult considering its widespread use in the Church at the time.[34]

---

[29] Carsten Misera, "Resolution on Church Music at the Council of Trent: An Area of Tension between Ferdinand's Declaration and the Protestant Reformation." *Theoforum* 48, no. 1-2 (2018), 104.

[30] Schaefer, *Catholic Music throughout the Ages,* 84.

[31] Misera, "Resolution on Church Music at the Council of Trent," 112.

[32] Schaefer, *Catholic Music throughout the Ages,* 84.

[33] Schaefer, 84.

[34] Schaefer, 85.

While the council may not have made as great an impact in sacred music as might have been expected, discussions of sacred music did not ultimately end with the council. Following the council itself, commissions of Catholic cardinals were charged with determining the specifics of how the mandates of the council were to be carried out.[35] After discussion by the commission in charge of liturgical music on what style of polyphonic music was most appropriate for liturgical use, it was determined that the style of the composer Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (ca. 1525-1594) was the perfect embodiment of the beautiful yet devout music for which the Church was looking.[36] Palestrina's polyphonic works were brilliant in that they stressed the intelligibility of the words, which was an issue the Catholic Church was experiencing with some of the more complex forms of polyphony, and he and his works became the emulated model of sacred polyphony in the Catholic Church for centuries.[37]

This being said, individuals were not obliged to follow the recommendations made following the council, resulting in a great deal of variation in the kinds of liturgical music that were allowed, including the continuation of the use of contrafacta and the chanson mass. Another concern that had already arisen in Church music at this point, and which was not addressed by the council, is that the traditional forms of Gregorian chant were also being influenced by secular musical styles and notions. This continued musical variation within the Church sets the stage for further papal reforms and the formation of lay and clerical movements which continued to push further for musical reform within the Catholic Church.

---

[35] Schaefer, 86.

[36] Schaefer, 87.

[37] Schaefer, 88.

Continued Reforms: The Monks of Solesmes and Pope Pius X

Secular music continued to evolve following the Council of Trent, and Catholic sacred music frequently evolved along with it. In the classical period, opera and symphonic compositions were becoming more popular, and, as a result, compositions for the Ordinary of the Mass began to incorporate operatic arias and solos, and sometimes even included entire symphony orchestras, which often made the mass itself seem to be merely a concert.[38] By the mid-19th and early 20th centuries, in the Romantic period, the symphonic mass was an established phenomenon, although its composition was not always intended for use within the mass, but rather was performed as a concert piece. In these cases, Catholic music affected the secular, by providing sacred texts which were used in concert-music compositions not intended for use within the Mass, as seen in Hector Berlioz's *Grande Messe de Morts*, a piece which used the sacred texts of the Requiem Mass for concert, rather than strictly religious, performance.[39]

As a result of the continued influence of secular styles on sacred music, polyphonic and symphonic masses grew more popular, causing a decline in the popularity and use of Gregorian Chant. Furthermore, the method of performing Gregorian chant had begun to shift with secular music in the 16th century, resulting in shortened forms of traditional chant which were restricted by notated rhythms and strictly measured in an attempt to conform the chant to modern musical notations and trends.[40] However, in the early to mid-19th century, after the conclusion of the French Revolution, Dom Prosper Guéranger, the abbot of the Solesmes Abbey in France, was to

[38] Schaefer, 99.

[39] Schaefer, 107.

[40] Dom Pierre Combe, *The Restoration of Gregorian Chant: Solesmes and the Vatican Edition* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 15.

begin a reform and revival in chant that was to have a large impact on the performance of Gregorian chant within the Catholic Church.[41]

Guéranger chiefly wanted to restore the practice of the Benedictine Rule to France, including the practice of singing the traditional Gregorian chant.[42] Guéranger, however, wanted the performance of chant at Solesmes to reflect the most traditional form of Gregorian chant, a difficult task considering that the earliest written forms of Gregorian chant were as yet undeciphered regarding method and phrasing.[43] Guéranger believed that the chants being used at the time by Rome were 'corrupted' due to their shortening during the Renaissance, and therefore he wished to unearth and study the earliest forms of Gregorian chant, as it would have been performed in the days of Pope Gregory the Great.[44] This was not an easy task.

Some of the inherent difficulties with Guéranger's goal included the lack of reliable, original chant editions as well as lost traditions on how to interpret the original notation.[45] Furthermore, in the days of St. Gregory, the 6th century, notation did not even exist, and chant was only passed down as an oral tradition, while thoughts of its preservation through notation did not occur until at least the later 8th century.[46] Nonetheless, beginning by using what he had, Guéranger and his monks sang using the forms of chant available to them, but Guéranger developed a style which was easier and more natural sounding and which seemed more suitable

---

[41] Schaefer, *Catholic Music Throughout the Ages,* 108.

[42] Schaefer, 108.

[43] Combe, *The Restoration of Gregorian Chant,* 13.

[44] Combe, 13-15.

[45] Schaefer, *Catholic Music Throughout the Ages,* 108.

[46] Ruff, *Sacred Music and Liturgical Reform,* 58.

to accompany the sacred prayers.[47] However, Dom Guéranger further desired a reliable, traditional edition of the earliest Gregorian chant to be compiled, studied, and ultimately deciphered for use. For this purpose, Dom Joseph Pothier and Dom Jausions were enlisted.

These two monks worked transcribing and studying ancient texts of Gregorian chant, especially the St. Gall Codex 359, a source which previously had been deemed unable to be transcribed.[48] The result of this work was the publication of the *Liber Gradualis* by Pothier in 1883, which was a reliable and usable volume of properly notated, traditional Gregorian chants accompanying the Proper of the Mass.[49] However, even within the monastery of Solesmes, there was not full agreement on chant interpretation. In the earliest musical notations for Gregorian Chant, there were no specific symbols or methods to denote rhythm or, if there were, the knowledge of how to decipher it had been lost over time. Therefore, how exactly the old notation should be interpreted was a constant matter of debate. In the end, the method of interpretation which ultimately became known as the 'Solesmes Method' was based on the work of a monk named Dom Mocquereau, who, beginning in 1883, was the chant master at the abbey, and whose interpretation focused more on the melody and the rhythmic grouping of notes rather than on the text of the chant.[50] Overall, the combined work of the monks at Solesmes drastically changed the way that Gregorian chant was interpreted and performed in the Catholic Church.

---

[47] Combe, *The Restoration of Gregorian Chant,* 16.

[48] Combe, 39.

[49] Schaefer, *Catholic Music Throughout the Ages*, 109

[50] Schaefer, 110-111.

While Gregorian chant underwent a drastic reform and revival, other aspects of Catholic music were still under scrutiny by the Catholic Church in the early 20th century. As a result of abuses in sacred music, in 1903 Pope Pius X issued a *motu proprio* titled *Tra le sollecitudini*, in which he specifically addressed the issue of sacred music within the Catholic Church. Essentially, Pope Pius X upheld the general rulings on sacred music from the Council of Trent over 300 years earlier but was more specific. He specifically emphasized Gregorian chant as "the supreme model for sacred music," and also specifically extolled the works of Palestrina.[51] Pope Pius X also allowed that modern styles of music, so long as they are used appropriately, could be used in sacred music, but he expressed caution with regards to this trend, reiterating the ruling of the Council of Trent regarding profane and secular music.[52] The encyclical also specifically condemned the use of any instruments, such as pianos, drums, bells, and wind instruments, other than organ, which was still only to be used as accompaniment for the voice, unless specific permission was given by Church officials.[53] This specification was likely in response to the use of orchestral masses and other sacred compositions involving varied instruments within the mass at the time.

The exhortations in *Tra le Sollecitudini* were taken very seriously by sacred musicians, especially those in organized liturgical music societies. For example, the Society of St. Gregory of America in 1947 published a "White List" of approved liturgical music which closely

[51] Pius X, *Tra le Sollecitudini*, motu proprio, Adoremus, November 22, 1903, https://adoremus.org/1903/11/tra-le-sollecitudini/, sec. 7.

[52] Pius X, *Tra le Sollecitudini*, sec. 8.

[53] Pius X, *Tra le Sollecitudini*, sec. 19-20.

followed the guidelines given in *Tra le Sollecitudini*.[54] The list recommends specific works that had been deemed appropriate by the society for use in the mass, including organ accompaniments, polyphonic and chant arrangements of the Ordinary of the Mass, and different hymns and motets. In addition to this list of acceptable works, there is also a "Black List" which outlined music and composers that were inappropriate for use within the mass.[55] For instance, any masses composed by Turner, Silas, Loesch, and a number of others were condemned for use within an actual Catholic mass.[56] Furthermore, entire hymnals were condemned for use by Catholic music directors.[57]

In 1955, 52 years after *Tra le Sollecitudini*, Pope Pius XII worked to continue the reforms of his predecessor, Pius X, through his encyclical titled *Musicae Sacrae Disciplina*. Although he reaffirmed most of what Pope Pius X laid out in his *motu proprio*, Pius XII was more lenient regarding the use of instruments in the mass, especially the use of bowed string instruments.[58] Furthermore, Pius XII allowed limited use of vernacular hymns during solemn high mass, making this allowance only in areas where the practice was already established as tradition and emphasizing that the words of the liturgy itself must still be sung in Latin.[59] As mentioned previously regarding the music of the Reformation, vernacular hymns were a very common trait

---

[54] Society of St. Gregory of America. *Music Approved and Recommended by the Society of St. Gregory of America*. (New York: Society of St. Gregory of America, 1947), 28.

[55] Society of St. Gregory, 86.

[56] Society of St. Gregory, 86.

[57] Society of St. Gregory, 86.

[58] Pius XII, *Musicae Sacrae*, encyclical letter, Vatican website, December 25, 1955, https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_25121955_musicae-sacrae.html, sec. 59.

[59] Pius XII, *Musicae Sacrae*, sec. 47.

of Protestant worship. It is apparent that Catholic churches were also employing the use of vernacular hymns, without the official sanction of the Church, as evidenced by the fact that Pope Pius XII allowed these hymns during solemn high mass chiefly in areas where they were already being used. Several years later, in 1958, the Sacred Congregation for Rites, under the reign of Pius XII, compiled *De musica sacra et sacra liturgia*, which expounded upon the congregational participation at a sung, solemn, high mass as encouraged by Pius X, specifically splitting congregational involvement into three levels.

The first level of congregational participation includes the basic responses at every mass, such as "*amen*" or "*et cum spiritu tuo*."[60] The second level involved the singing of the Ordinary of the Mass, which, as at least the words of these parts always remain the same, was still learnable enough for the congregation to join in.[61] The third level consists of the Proper of the Mass, which is made up of those parts that change for every mass. This third level is reserved for trained musicians and was not typically extended to the congregation as a whole, except in circumstances such as congregations of religious.[62] It should be noted that the congregation was already permitted, only during a low mass, to sing appropriate hymns.[63]

Overall, great strides in sacred music reform were seen in the period of the 19th-20th centuries, especially aided by the monks of Solesmes and the official exhortations of the two Supreme Pontiffs mentioned. However, not all within the Catholic Church were happy with the

---

[60] Sacred Congregation for Rites, *De Musica Sacra et Sacra Liturgia*, Adoremus, September 3, 1958, https://adoremus.org/1958/09/instruction-on-sacred-music/, sec. 25a.

[61] Sacred Congregation for Rites, sec. 25b.

[62] Sacred Congregation for Rites, sec. 25c.

[63] Sacred Congregation for Rites, sec. 33.

situation of Catholic music. Specifically, a movement was beginning to arise known as the 'liturgical movement,' in which many Catholic traditions, especially regarding the sacred liturgy, were questioned. Members of this movement repeatedly called for liturgical reform but were not to receive their wish until the Second Vatican Council, which caused drastic changes in the practice of the mass, including sacred Catholic music.

The Liturgical Movement and the Second Vatican Council

While many within the Catholic Church were satisfied with the reforms and revival of traditional practices, such as Gregorian Chant, others felt that additional reform and change within the Church was needed. These individuals formed the Catholic liturgical movement. During the early 1900s, this movement rooted itself in America, being based on a similar movement occurring in Europe at the time.[64] The main tenets of this movement stress the importance of congregational participation within the mass, specifically stressing that all Catholics are participants within the Mystical Body of Christ and therefore should more actively participate in the prayers and sacrifice of the mass.[65] As a result of this stress on active participation of all members within the mass, liturgical music became considered a responsibility of the people, not just the choir, with an emphasis on cooperation between choir and congregation.[66]

[64] Thomas Buffer, "The American Liturgical Movement, Social Justice, and Architectural Change," *Antiphon* 20, no. 3 (2016), 243.

[65] Buffer, 244-245.

[66] Ruff, *Sacred Music and Liturgical Reform*, 233.

As the liturgical movement began to grow, it came into conflict with many traditionalist musicians.[67] Ruff details five chief tenets upon which liturgists and traditionalist musicians disagreed.[68] The first of these is the importance and value of the High Mass. While liturgists were more likely to favor a Low or Recited Mass, where the congregation had the most opportunity to participate, musicians were partial to the Missa Cantata, or sung mass, in which the choir dominated the music scene.[69] The role of the choir and the exact meaning of 'active participation' were two other areas of conflict, considering that liturgists pushed for the congregation to become ever more involved with the music of the mass. Liturgists were also more likely to advocate the use of vernacular hymns during mass, since congregational singing of chant seemed to be an unsuccessful venture, while the traditionalist musicians still preferred the use of Gregorian chant.[70] Finally, arguments regarding the language of the liturgy were also plentiful. Liturgists pushed for a shift to the vernacular, which would improve the understanding and participation of the congregation in the mass. [71] Traditionalist musicians, however, held that Latin should remain the language of the liturgy, both in order to preserve the Latin repertoire already accumulated as well as to uphold the official teachings of the Catholic Church.[72]

The wishes of the liturgical movement for liturgical reform did not go unheard in Rome and, in 1959, Pope John XXIII announced the intentions of the Catholic Church to hold the

[67] Ruff, 249.

[68] Ruff, 250.

[69] Ruff, 250-251.

[70] Ruff, 258-260.

[71] Ruff, 261.

[72] Ruff, 262-263.

Second Vatican Council (Vatican II).[73] According to this announcement, the council would be convened to address "the growth of the Catholic faith, the restoration of sound morals among the Christian flock, and appropriate adaptation of Church discipline to the needs and conditions of our times."[74] What the Pope may not have known was that Vatican II was going to change just about everything about the liturgy, which had a number of consequences for Catholic music.

It was not until 1962 that Vatican II was actually convened, and the chief document regarding sacred music and the liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, was not completed until 1963 under the reign of Pope Paul VI. This document contains a great many general changes that were to be implemented in the new practice of the mass, two of which especially impacted the performance and composition of sacred Catholic music. The first of these is the approved use of the vernacular within the liturgy for the first time.[75] Up until this point, almost all of the sacred compositions used within the mass, with the exception of vernacular hymns for low masses, were in Latin. This new development opened the way for new compositions and arrangements of the mass as translated into the vernacular. The other change was that the liturgy and sacred music were opened up for adaptation to the varying cultures and traditions of the Catholic peoples.[76] This had a number of dramatic effects in forming new Catholic music which will be discussed below.

---

[73] John XXIII. *Ad Petri Cathedram*, encyclical letter, Vatican website, June 29, 1959. http://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_29061959_ad-petri.html, sec. 3.

[74] John XXIII, sec. 61.

[75] Second Vatican Council. "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, December 4, 1963." In Vatican website. https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html, sec. 2 (hereafter cited as *SC*).

[76] *SC*, sec. 37.

Up until this point, the mass had been viewed as a fairly unchanging and stable tradition. After Vatican II, however, the mass was seen as open to any and all kinds of changes, resulting in interpretations of the Vatican II documents that seemed to encourage an 'anything goes' attitude, resulting in extra liberties being taken with the liturgy and interpretations.[77] Other interpretations of the documents were more conservative, making allowances for the vernacular shift and the reforms made to the texts of the liturgy, but otherwise holding fast to the old traditional musical style of the Catholic Church.[78]

Catholic music following Vatican II went in just about every direction as experimentation with previously forbidden or discouraged musical styles occurred. In the first place, there were those who, as already mentioned, favored a more conservative interpretation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, in which they attempted to continue previous efforts to increase congregational participation within the boundaries of traditional Gregorian chant.[79] This was one of the less popular trends of the time, however, as more progressive music was favored over this traditional approach. Another trend was to compose or adapt service music and chants that would be sung in the vernacular. While arrangements of service music, especially the Ordinary of the Mass, in the vernacular was a successful venture, resulting in such compositions as the "People's Mass," vernacular chanting never gained very much traction and remained an uncommon occurrence.[80]

---

[77] Schaefer, *Catholic Music Throughout the Ages*, 148.

[78] Schaefer, 148.

[79] Joncas, Jan M, "Catholic Branchings: Congregational Song and the Legacy of Vatican II," *The Hymn* 64, no. 4 (2013), 15.

[80] Joncas, 16.

Another more popular trend was the adaptation of folk hymns, which were already popular for use in devotions or events other than the mass, for use in the sacred liturgy.[81]

One dramatic shift in the practice of Catholic sacred music was the incorporation of Protestant hymnody into the Catholic mass.[82] It has already been discussed how the Protestant movement from very early on placed a large emphasis on vernacular hymns within their liturgy while the presence of these hymns at a Catholic mass was negligible and discouraged. After Vatican II, however, the freedom of Catholic music directors to include hymns within the mass led to many taking advantage of the wealth of pre-existing Protestant hymns.[83] For example, in the *Worship* hymnal by GIA Publications, there are a number of hymns in which the lyrics were written by Protestant composers, including "Joy to the World" and "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," by Isaac Watts, "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" and "Love Divine all Loves Excelling," by Charles Wesley, and even the popular hymn "A Mighty Fortress is our God," written by Martin Luther himself.[84] One specific trend that arose with the use of hymns in general is that they were permitted for use in place of the introit, offertorium, and communion, which were all parts of the Mass Propers that would have originally been chanted.[85] This practice of replacing these chants with hymns led to the further decline of Gregorian chant.

---

[81] Joncas, 17.

[82] Joncas, 17.

[83] Ruff, Anthony, "After Vatican II: Are we all Protestants Now? Or are we all Catholics Now?" *The Hymn – A Journal of Congregational Song* 64, no. 1 (2013), 7.

[84] Dobbs-Mickus, Kelly, ed. *Worship*, 4th ed. (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2011), no page numbers.

[85] Ruff, 7.

Another musical trend post-Vatican II was the incorporation of musical styles in recognition of diverse cultures and traditions among the people of the Catholic Church. It was previously mentioned that the rulings of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* allowed the liturgy and sacred music of the mass and other sacraments to be adjusted to allow for local customs and traditions. As a result, a wide variety of musical styles that were previously considered inappropriate for use within the mass suddenly became popular and permissible in the eyes of the Church. An example of this can be seen in the compositions of Mary Lou Williams.

Mary Lou Williams was a jazz pianist who converted to the Catholic faith in the 1950s. Following her conversion and the initial sessions of Vatican II, Williams was encouraged by a number of priests and by her own initiative to compose sacred Catholic jazz compositions.[86] However, even after Vatican II opened the way for the use of indigenous musical traditions, which could arguably include jazz, in the liturgy, the connotations of jazz as a profane and secular genre of music were not easily dismissed.[87] However, in 1962, Williams composed her first sacred jazz composition, in honor of St. Martin de Porres, titled "Black Christ (Hymn in Honor of St. Martin de Porres)".[88] However, this hymn was not actually performed during mass, but was merely performed as a hymn in honor of this saint following the close of the liturgy or outside of any church entirely.[89] Nonetheless, this did not deter Williams, who eventually received a commission from Rome to compose an entire jazz mass, which she called "Mass for

[86] Murchison, Gayle, "Mary Lou Williams's Hymn 'Black Christ of the Andes (St. Martin de Porres):' Vatican II, Civil Rights, and Jazz as Sacred Music," *The Musical Quarterly* 86, no. 4 (2002): 600.

[87] Murchison, 621.

[88] Murchison, 601.

[89] Murchison, 601-602.

Peace" or, as it is better known as "Mary Lou's Mass."[90] After many difficulties and rejections, Williams finally heard her mass performed in a Catholic Church, St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York, in February of 1975.[91]

As a result of Vatican II, the music of the Catholic Church in this day and age is greatly varied and incorporates many different genres and styles of music. However, depending on the nature of a given church community, many styles, such as the jazz of Mary Lou Williams, are still largely unaccepted as sacred music. Nevertheless, the small place that jazz and other forms of popular or secular music have found within the sacred liturgy would have been impossible without the rulings of Vatican II.

Conclusion

Overall, the nature of Catholic music has changed greatly over the centuries. However, throughout the ages, common themes can be seen in the nature of changes and reforms in this form of sacred music. First and foremost, the chief focus of all official Catholic reforms and documents regarding music has almost always been to eliminate secular aspects from sacred music. In the Renaissance, this took the form of condemnation of the chanson mass and contrafacta hymns. In later ages, the use of secular techniques or genres such as the incorporation of operatic arias or entire orchestras into the mass was addressed. However, despite these efforts by the Church to separate the secular and the sacred, the progression of these two genres has

[90] Corbin, Ian Marcus, "A Jazz Mass? The Vexing Legacy of Mary Lou Williams," *Commonweal* 139, no. 21 (2012): 13.

[91] Corbin, 13.

continued to be intertwined, resulting in the evolution of sacred music from the strict regulations of the Renaissance to the more relaxed guidelines of Vatican II.

Another theme that recurred throughout Catholic history was the question of who should be able to provide the sacred music for the mass. For ages, this role was the job of the choir, who would chant or sing the Proper and Ordinary of the Mass while the congregation sat, listened, and prayed. However, in the early 20th century, beginning with Pope Pius X, increased congregational participation was encouraged until finally, in Vatican II, the congregational and choir seemed to be on almost equal terms regarding the sacred music of the mass.

Unfortunately, this research is by no means a comprehensive study of all of the trends which secular and sacred music followed over the ages. Future research could focus more on individual countries or ages, going more in depth and analyzing specific case studies from different time periods or nations. Furthermore, this study chiefly focuses on Catholic music as used within the Mass, with a few minor exceptions. Other uses of Catholic music, for example in devotions or the administration of the other sacraments, may have been impacted by secular music differently. This topic could also be examined in further research. Overall, however, this study gives a general overview of major trends within Catholic music as compared with parallel trends in secular traditions.

Bibliography

Bloxam, M. J. "A Cultural Context for the Chanson Mass," in *Early Musical Borrowing*, ed. Honey Meconi, 7-35. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Brauer, James L. *Luther's Hymn Melodies: Style and Form for a Royal Priesthood*. St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Press, 2016.

Buffer, Thomas. "The American Liturgical Movement, Social Justice, and Architectural Change." *Antiphon* 20, no. 3 (2016): 241-267.

Burkholder, J. Peter, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca. *A History of Western Music, 8th Edition*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010.

Combe, Dom Pierre. *The Restoration of Gregorian Chant: Solesmes and the Vatican Edition*. Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003.

Corbin, Ian Marcus. "A Jazz Mass? The Vexing Legacy of Mary Lou Williams." *Commonweal* 139, no 21 (2012): 13-15.

Dobbs-Mickus, Kelly, ed. *Worship*. 4th ed. Chicago: GIA Publications, 2011.

John XXIII. *Ad Petri Cathedram*. Encyclical Letter. Vatican website. June 29th, 1959. http://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_29061959_ad-petri.html.

Joncas, Jan M. "Catholic Branchings: Congregational Song and the Legacy of Vatican II." *The Hymn* 64, no. 4 (2013): 13-20.

Machlis, Joseph. *The Enjoyment of Music: An Introduction to Perceptive Listening, 3rd Edition*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1970.

Marshall, Robert L. "Chorale." *Grove Music Online*. 2001; Accessed 18 Apr. 2021. https://www-oxfordmusiconline-

com.ezproxy.gvsu.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000005652?rskey=nijILe.

Misera, Carsten. "Resolution on Church Music at the Council of Trent: An Area of Tension between Ferdinand's Declaration and the Protestant Reformation." *Theoforum* 48, no. 1-2 (2018): 103-113.

Monson, Craig A. "The Council of Trent Revisited." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 55, no. 1 (2002): 1-37.

Murchison, Gayle. "Mary Lou Williams's Hymn 'Black Christ of the Andes (St. Martin de Porres):' Vatican II, Civil Rights, and Jazz as Sacred Music." *The Musical Quarterly* 86, no. 4 (2002): 591-629.

Oettinger, Rebecca Wagner. *Music as Propaganda in the German Reformation*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2001.

Pius X. *Tra le Sollecitudini*. Motu Proprio. Adoremus. November 22, 1903. https://adoremus.org/1903/11/tra-le-sollecitudini/.

Pius XII. *Musicae Sacrae*. Encyclical Letter. Vatican website. December 25, 1955. https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_25121955_musicae-sacrae.html.

Prowse, Ronald. "Council of Trent and the Reform of Gregorian Chant." *Sacred Music* 136, no. 3 (2009): 35-46.

Rothenberg, David J. *The Flower of Paradise: Marian Devotion and Secular Song in Medieval and Renaissance Music*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Ruff, Anthony. "After Vatican II: Are we all Protestants Now? Or are we all Catholics Now?" *The Hymn – A Journal of Congregational Song* 64, no. 1 (2013): 6-12.

Ruff, Anthony. *Sacred Music and Liturgical Reform*. Chicago: Archdiocese of Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2007.

Sacred Congregation for Rites. *De Musica Sacra et Sacra Liturgia*. Adoremus. September 3, 1958. https://adoremus.org/1958/09/instruction-on-sacred-music/.

Schaefer, Edward. *Catholic Music throughout the Ages: Balancing the Needs of a Worshipping Church*. Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2008.

Second Vatican Council. "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, December 4, 1963." In Vatican website. https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html.

Society of St. Gregory of America. *Music Approved and Recommended by the Society of St. Gregory of America*. New York: Society of St. Gregory of America, 1947.

Stipp, Neil. "The Music Philosophies of Martin Luther and John Calvin." *The American Organist* 41, no. 9 (2007): 68-72.

Turner, Patrice. "The Sacred and the Secular: Where do we Draw the Line?" *The Journal of Religious Thought* 59, no. 1 (2007): 13-27.

Wilkin, Nigel, David Fallows, Howard Mayer Brown, and Richard Freedman. "Chanson." *Grove Music Online*. 2001; Accessed 24 Mar. 2021. https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.ezproxy.gvsu.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000040032?rskey=hYQvo6