

# Liturgical Choral Music As Part of Anglican Worship

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Date: 27 April 2014

Preacher: Ben Ewert

[ 0 : 01 ] Well, thank you very much for having me this morning. I'm really glad to be sharing with you about my thoughts about music and the church and how it works. And I think that this talk will be probably a little bit broader than the title suggests.

I feel that to say liturgical choral music or liturgical music might make someone think of a very narrow bit of music.

But I actually would like to challenge us to think of it even in a broader way. And so in my talk this morning, I'm just going to give you a little bit of background on myself and where the idea for this choir came from.

I should say that I also direct a children's choir program on its university chapel entitled the University Community Children's Choir. And that has three choral groups in it, a young group for ages 6 to 8, 9 to 13, and then 14 to 18.

And I was going to say this afternoon, if you feel like feeding your soul in a different way, although I should be sure that you would actually be feeding your soul.

[ 1 : 09 ] I think you would. I also direct a German men's choir, and we're singing at the Alpin Club at 2 o'clock. So maybe you could come at 2 o'clock, catch a few German drinking songs, and then go over to Bethlehem Lutheran to catch the rest.

I should also say that last night I had the opportunity to go with my wife to Oxford Cambridge Society in Vancouver, and they had their annual boat race dinner.

And last night we went for a second time, and we sat at a table, unbeknownst to me, with another St. John's Vancouver member, Paul Moritz.

I hope I'm saying your last name correctly, right? Which I did not even realize until we started chatting, and I realized that he would be here this morning. So I tried not to say anything that was too incriminating or do anything that was too incriminating.

But with Bramwell Tovey there last night giving the speech, I think that he was incriminating of himself enough. So I didn't have to worry about that. Anyways, this is a broad discussion, but it's one that gets us thinking about what choral music means to us, to our church, and what the potentials are.

[ 2 : 22 ] Forming thoughts about the use of music in the body of Christ and beyond is definitely a lifelong process, one that involves its own route of mistakes, forgiveness, restoration, and, of course, joyful stewardship.

I'm speaking as a musician involved in the liturgical life of the Anglican Church, and some of what I suggest might not be appropriate for other denominations, though I believe all could benefit from exploring the wealth of choral music written in the Christian sacred tradition.

I'm speaking with a fair amount of assumptions that you are most likely aware of the regular rhythms of the liturgical year. When I speak of liturgical music, I generally mean music that is used in the service of the church, sometimes in its order, in its actual services, but also that is sometimes transplanted outside of it.

I won't venture into the realm of contemporary praise music, though using that word is somewhat, using the word contemporary is a little misleading, as whatever is contemporary is bound to change, obviously.

But I do feel that that kind of music has its place in the varied and diverse styles of singing that occur in the Anglican Church. And actually, starting next week, I'll be just filling in for Etienne Marie, who does a wonderful job in the evening service, and I'll be leading the music in the evening service

here at St. John's for a couple of months.

[ 3 : 47 ] I won't be changing it to choral Anglican music right away, but we'll see how it goes. Anyways, St. John's, from what I can tell so far, I've only been able to come to the morning service on two occasions, once a year ago and a good Friday this last time, but it seems like there's a fairly strong tradition of choral singing, and a variety as well between the services, and it does that very well.

So I am just reminded of a church in the Lower Mainland that, as one of their, I don't want to say marketing, but as part of the attraction to their services, they highlighted the difference between the services.

One was one where you would come and just sing hymns, one was one where you would come and sing contemporary praise choruses, and I actually found that to be a little disconcerting and a little sad, because I thought, I would like to think anyways, that there might be some middle ground at some point, or at least that the differences wouldn't be highlighted so much as opposed to the unity there.

Now, I grew up in a musical family. My parents worked as missionaries with Janstein Ministries, that's now Teach Beyond, and they worked in Germany and Brazil. So whenever we were back in Canada and on the road raising support, we would have this repertoire of songs that we would sing as a family in four-part harmony.

You may have heard the song, Please Don't Send Me to Africa. We sang that a lot, and needless to say, I never want to sing that again. But we ended up in Winnipeg, as I said, in the Mennonite Brethren Church, where there was quite a tradition of singing hymns and singing them in four-part harmony.

[ 5 : 30 ] And, of course, there was a big change when drums were finally allowed to be played in the church, and Shine Jesus Shine became the popular chorus of the day for many, many years.

But either way, this is where I really received some of my first choral training, as it were. And that's really what it was. There was no formal program for kids or youth, but we just sang.

We tried to follow those dots on the page as they moved up and down through repetition and similarity of musical style. So you could get a sense of where the music was going, where it might eventually end up.

The point is that we sang together, accompanied by piano or organ, in the service and in Sunday school. This carried on into youth group, gathered around the campfire, youth leader with guitar, and all of us singing pared-down versions of popular choruses or hymns of the day.

There was a singing culture in the Mennonite Church, and together with the piano lessons that I began under my father, band programs in high school, notes, proposed VSB cuts today, thankfully stayed off for one year.

[ 6 : 36 ] And then also the concert and audition choirs of Prairie Bible College, where I attended, I did my first Bachelor of Arts degree there, and then also at Trinity Western more recently.

I was really blessed to benefit from a long tradition of music making, but not only music making in a vacuum, music making in the context of the Christian faith. During post-secondary music studies, I was exposed to bigger works of Bach and Handel and others, and I really can't imagine a music student anywhere getting entirely through post-secondary studies without ever connecting with a work written for use in the church, or at least inspired by the forms of worship in the Christian church.

And I think that right there, there's a huge connecting point for us as Christians in the wider community. My love of conducting, my first large-scale experience conducting choir and orchestra, was as an assistant to a choral director at Prairie.

And how many of you, have you ever been to Three Hills, Alberta? Anyone here? Yeah, yeah. So, you know, it's a very small community. There's about 3,500 people there. And yet it hosts this Bible college that's been running for about 90 years now.

And as I said, it's a very small town, and yet school and community came together every year to put on a large choral work, hiring musicians from Calgary or Red Deer. And we kind of put this thing together.

[ 8 : 00 ] It was very grassroots, but it was a wonderful experience. Anyways, we were preparing Mozart's Requiem one year, and I was allowed to direct the first movement. My conducting teacher at the time had decided that as a very gracious way of getting the experience, I was to conduct the first movement here.

And I've only recently begun to appreciate what that professor did for me in giving me a gift of insight into the power of music composed for a sacred form. In this case, the Requiem, the Mass for the Dead, or Funeral Mass.

Now, you've probably heard performances of the Requiem on an apocalyptic scale, with massive orchestra and hundreds of singers. And you could say that Mozart was possibly thinking more of a concert work at this point.

But I think that it could be performed with smaller forces in a liturgical setting. And if you're familiar with the work of John Butt in Scotland and the Dunedin Consort, he does a wonderful job of paring that down to what it might have looked like in its original setting on a smaller scale.

However, myself and likely 90% of the people who were present for that performance knew very little of the structure of the Mass. And why we were singing Kyrie et liaison, Christe et liaison, Kyrie et liaison.

[ 9 : 22 ] And where it would be placed in the church service. I think if we did explore it further, especially in the context of Prairie Bible College and its conservative nature, we would find ourselves in the middle of a Catholic liturgical world that would possibly start to get a little uncomfortable for us.

But the music was glorious, and the message in this liturgical form was one we could agree on, at least for the most part. We were singing in Latin, and so many of us probably didn't go much further than the first few lines of the text.

But I use this as an example to say that as a community, as Christians singing things like this in whatever context, we do have a responsibility to know about the various forms of worship that we use, where they come from, what they're used for, and the context surrounding their creation and subsequent use.

I think that music composed for liturgical forms has often been at risk of losing a lot of its meaning and potency when it's divorced from its religious roots and sterilized, not to speak too strongly about it, but sterilized into a solely personal experience of the composer, rather than it being connected with the faith that the people of that day, or at least its context suggests.

What struck me as I stepped down from conducting that first movement, a very, well, I'm still very young, but a very young musician and conductor, what struck me as I stepped down from the podium after conducting that first movement was that there was a tremendous power resident in many voices and instruments connecting in the cry, Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy.

[ 11 : 04 ] Mozart had brought forth in this first movement, from the small beginnings of a bassoon and quiet strings, this immense sigh and wail reflecting, please for eternal rest and perpetual light to shine upon us, culminating in an exclamatory request for mercy.

My journey since that day has been a question and exploration of how I fit and how we as Christians, as musicians, as people who sing music, how we fit into the Christian church.

Has sacred music become solely the purvey of the concert hall, or I should say, I might get in a little bit of trouble here, but excellent choral music, the pursuit of works of art in that context.

Has it become just the responsibility of the concert hall, or does the church have a role to play in curating existing works and promoting new ones within its liturgy and in connection with the wider community?

While at Trinity Western from 2005 to 2008, I had the chance to work at St. David's Anglican Church, as I believe many of you are familiar with that church. I was the music director there, and really at the heart of a clash between traditional and contemporary liturgy and music.

[ 12 : 24 ] As ever, world without end, the 8 a.m. service would never change, and it would always be from the BCP and include three hymns. The ultra-contemporary 9.30 service and the somewhat contemporary music from the 80s revival 11 a.m. service were combined to form a 10 a.m. service that followed the BAS and blended traditional hymns and praise choruses.

It was a very transitional time for St. David's, as on many levels, but the love for the liturgy of the Anglican Church and its Bible-soaked nature was really impressed upon my heart and my wife's heart as well.

We found a comfort and challenge in a tradition that stretches back through the centuries and to this day find great inspiration and solace in the words followed in the BCP. My wife often says, you don't have to think about the words to say, but rather you're thinking about what you are saying.

This time of Anglican immersion at St. David's was really formative in our transition from myself, a Mennonite background, and my wife, a Baptist background.

Even after leaving St. David's, the Anglican bug stuck with us and struck again as I considered graduate studies and choral conducting. And a few years ago, I was accepted into the choral studies program at the University of Cambridge.

[13:43] And some people ask me, you know, why Cambridge? Why not go to a Canadian university or American university? But what drew me to Cambridge was this course description, this bit of the course description in particular.

The aim of the course is to train musicians in the art of choral conducting, to instruct them in diverse aspects of the history and practice of choral music, fairly standard, but this part with particular reference to theology and liturgy, and to provide students with the experience of observing the daily workings of some of the leading Cambridge chapel choirs.

There I set about discovering an entirely new world for me, at least, of colleges, combination rooms, clotted cream and marmite, famous men and women, gowns, high table, Oliver Cromwell's head buried somewhere in Sydney Sussex College, but most especially the wonderful heritage of music that we as Christians can claim and that we should claim, I believe.

The program was set in the collegiate chapel atmosphere and intertwined with the ancient church calendar and the Anglican liturgy. The bread and butter, so to speak, of these college chapels is the service of choral evensong.

Most colleges with a chapel choir will hold regular services of evensong at least three times a week, King's and St. John's College every day, and other than King's, John's and Jesus College, whose choirs are made up of boys and men, these choirs, the other college choirs are populated by 17 to 24 year old students, not always music students, and the level of singing was very high and the expectations placed on the top rated college choirs was something you might see and not even all the time in a professional setting here in Canada.

[15:28] I hope that you all have had a chance to go to an evensong service here at St. John's. Have you all been to an evensong service before?

If you haven't, you should go for many reasons and also to experience at some point a choral evensong service and if you even wanted to add more onto your day today, you could come down at 4 p.m.

to St. James down on the east side and hear Oculus sing an evensong down there. But that would be a very full day of German choir, organ recital, and a choral evensong service.

So I might not recommend that. Anyways, there's nothing really quite like an evensong service. It's very convicting and yet in some ways it's very understated.

From the opening words, calling Christians to confess their sins to Almighty God and one of my favorite words in the service, to not dissemble or cloak them before him. The service proceeds from depth to depth as we come before God.

[16:37] We search our hearts, respond through prayer and through listening to the read and sung word of God. As I've said earlier, if you go to King's or St. John's, you'll hear this service sung every day during term and it became a wonderful opportunity for myself personally to quiet my heart regularly even as I was observing and learning in an academic context.

It's a beautiful experience to hear choirs singing with incredible skill and musicianship and praise of God and halls built with its purpose in mind. And I have to say that the choir at St. John's here did a fantastic job on Good Friday and you can't imagine how difficult it is to sing in a place that is heavily padded with carpet and filled with people.

Just think about how much reverberation a choir should have to allow the music to breathe a little bit and when there's none of that it can be very exposing for a choir.

So they did a wonderful job in this place here. In some of these places that you go to and I'm sure that many of you have had a chance to be in some of these places it's almost as if time ceases to press upon you and you gain a sense of worshipping along those many who have come before you. The musical training and ability of the choirs was such that they could for the most part deliver their duty with ease and in some cases with seemingly great joy and concentration depending on who might be directing.

[18:05] I had the privilege of studying conducting with Stephen Layton the director of music at Trinity College and he demanded an incredible level of effort in music making out of his young singers.

He would often times he would rehearse and someone would make a mistake he would stop and go back rehearse again they would keep making that mistake and he would just keep on going back and rehearsing until that person finally realized that they were the ones making the mistake.

I don't know if I would advocate that as a regular practice especially if you don't have a lot of time but anyways ownership of your mistakes was the word of the day there.

Who can say where hearts are with people whether or not there was a conscious belief in what they professed as they sang but what they did they did skillfully I'd like to think that there is that there but they sang skillfully to the Lord and may it translate into the depths of their hearts as well.

There was no impediment of sloppy technique or stumbling over varying styles of music rather their singing resulted in a clarity that allowed one to meditate on the word of God and the music that breathed life into it in the best sense.

[ 19 : 19 ] So this is where the genesis of Oculus came from in some ways I began to think to myself as I came to chapel day after day sometimes listening sometimes conducting was there something like this available in Canada?

an ensemble of young singers wholly dedicated to singing sacred music at a high level drawn from the Christian tradition I did a bit of research and found that there are actually very few places in Canada where a choral even song is sung regularly.

I began to mull over in my mind what such a group might look like where it might sing where its singers would come from how I would advertise it what we might be able to achieve would we be able to get enough singers and we're still working on that would there for lack of a better term be a market for such a group what if we ended up back in Vancouver a place that sometimes seems a little resistant to any reclamation of tradition this is really where Oculus had its beginnings the name Oculus was chosen for its double reference to the eye and also to an architectural feature whereby an oval opening will be placed at the top of a dome structure to allow light to filter in and so some extra meaning there I also have to admit that I chose the name for the way that it looks I like the look of a strong O on the surface it may seem that we're about just exploring new and old sacred works of choral music taking sacred to mean works written in or having to do with a broader Christian tradition not just the Anglican church and that we're doing this through performances at concerts and also the regular singing of choral evensong but also and not I don't think everyone in the choir would subscribe to this they don't have to but for myself at the heart would be the mission to reflect the gospel through the many Christian traditions that gave and continue to give rise to good sacred choral music so the singers would be exposed to singing the music in context and then also presenting it as art on the concert stage we had a chance to sing this last November in the waterfall building I don't know if you've been there before but it's down by Granville Island it's an Arthur Erickson building and it's rather triangularly shaped made of concrete and glass and it actually provided quite a good acoustic for the music that we sang we did a concert of renaissance music and we achieved something that I want to be at the heart of the choir and that is introducing people who have no experience whatsoever with that type of music to it in a good setting and the response that we had was very very positive for some people it reminded them of growing up in the Catholic Church or any other kind of liturgical church and they came back to it after years away and they had really quite positive things to say about it which was interesting even if they weren't regularly attending somewhere at the moment on our website you will find this description which is somewhat vague in parts Oculus was formed with the purpose of drawing our eyes to the light and the sacred how Vancouver is that born out of a love for liturgical music and its power the choir's priorities are the performance and promotion of sacred choral works of all eras and the Anglican service of choral evensong there are lots of questions that can come out of that and I have left it a little vague for various reasons and you can ask me later about that but let's talk a little bit about music in the church now music can express what is difficult to express in words I think that most of us could probably agree on that and let's explore some of those possibilities

[ 23 : 09 ] I had briefly considered entitling this talk music in the church nailing jello to the wall music can be an extremely sensitive topic in any church denomination if you decided to do away with all the music in the service everyone would notice immediately and yet sometimes it's almost considered as an afterthought for example you may have heard some of these terms before or these sentences play some nice music before the service begins or add some filler while we prepare communion or my personal favorite which I've gotten can you do a bit of noodling around on the piano while we wait for such and such to happen anyways we won't dwell too much on that

but needless to say that music can be extremely powerful and yet sometimes we don't put a lot of thought into it is its power derived from some sort of inherent quality or does it only have the power that we give it the ancient

Greeks attached emotive properties to different modes of music something we might relate to scales or keys today I should say one mode might arouse feelings of pleasure while another might cause a person to feel great courage think of the hymn Onward Christian Soldiers you can easily consider some of those parallels today to put it very simply a hymn in a major key may generally convey positive feelings something like praise to the lord the almighty da da da da da while one in a minor key sounds more mournful possibly lamenting oh sacred heads so wounded you don't have to go very far to start considering these things do we consider why we sing what we sing what kind of context it's in let's take for example just do a little experiment here and let's take for example the hymn text go to dark get seminy and there are various tunes but for example do you know the one go to dark get seminy that feel the tender's power now do you know the rock of rock of ages rock of ages clap for me you know that tune yeah why don't we try to sing go to dark get seminy with the rock of ages tune do you think you can do that do we need to warm up first go to dark get seminy ye that feel the tempter's power your redeemer's conflict see watch with him one bitter hour doesn't really sound too right does it yes you have these things that are made to fit together now there's lots of argument whether it's inherent certain qualities of music or whether we give it that meaning but needless to say it's there and you think of the original tune go to dark get seminy ye that feel the tempter's power there's almost this and then this break in the middle to a bit of a major passage turn not from his cares away generating of power right to the end of the hymn of conviction and commitment to actually go to dark gethsemane so our music choices impact the way we sing and that's the way we worship in many ways it's it bears thinking about how do we give congregations the tools to think about what we were singing and why we are singing it music is never created in a vacuum music has a long and complex history of development but we know that the Hebrew people sang especially at moments of great need and importance in personal and national life we know that the psalms are filled with exhortations to sing to the Lord to sing a new song and N.T. Wright has just written a book a wonderful little book called The Case for the Psalms which highlights the importance of singing the psalms exploring the psalms I believe you also had a learners exchange a while back on praying through the psalms as well and how do we use those psalms in our worship do we say them do we sing them do we pray them or do these vast repositories of human interaction with the creator of the universe do they only get a few lines of our time every Sunday morning how does that work into our liturgical choral music and how can we use that can we be seen can we be seen by the world finding restoration in God as the psalmist did of course in Ephesians Paul encourages addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart in music God has gifted us with a unique multifaceted and ever shifting language and as in the other delights of his creation he calls us to a good stewardship of it to be able to take care and to foster growth in something however you need to know it first you need to know it very deeply then you can creatively explore it and the process can reflect God's glory and the Lordship of Christ this is the calling I believe of every Christian musician of whatever skill level and through that also the wider body of Christ making music gives us the opportunity and this is I think this is key when thinking about liturgical choral music the integral part that it has to play music it's about making music together and making music gives us the opportunity to express what may not be readily expressible in words it can very definitely reflect the story of the fall the redemption our human story our world story one way in particular a very central way is through an inherent theme of conflict and resolution any music student could tell you that in the 19th century and exemplified in part in Wagner's music there's a shift away from conflict then resolution to prolonged conflict and in the 20th century in particular the breakdown of tonality and extension of really unending conflict and that's an interesting topic to get into you could have an entire seminar or series of seminars on that but how do we deal with that as Christians and music do we advocate a never-ending breakdown of tonality or not tonality but do we advocate a never-ending conflict I don't think we do obviously I think that at some point there is some resolution but as Christians we can't just be about only telling the resolution part we also need to be about telling the conflict part as well music is a medium of expression and a response like no other it alludes to and interacts with the physical and unseen world in a multi-layered way that to me

is expressed by using the word resonance if you ever have a chance to listen to Jeremy Begby speak and he's doing a course at Regent coming up very shortly here on theology and the arts he often speaks about the way that music can convey various aspects of the Christian faith various doctrines of the Christian faith such as the Trinity and he uses a major triad as an example three notes together when you play it on the piano it sounds together there is no space within the room where it's not heard it resonates with each other the different notes and it rings throughout that space

[ 31 : 21 ] I think that's part of our responsibility as curators of a wonderful music tradition and I use that word because I do believe that we should be taking care of what's coming behind us and using it as we go forward all of this these principles the resonating the conflict the resolution it can be drawn out of the heritage that we have stretching back to the English Reformation beginning with the very resilient Catholic and back again composers William Byrd and Thomas Tallis and Henry Purcell John Stainer Edward Elgar a Catholic composer but still drawn into that tradition as well Charles Villiers Stanford Herbert Howells Vaughan Williams let's not stop there but let's think of other composers who wrote music for the church or out of the broader Christian tradition Bach Beethoven Mozart Brahms Briton Barber Macmillan Tavener also just recently a whole host of Baltic composers writing out of a singing tradition that has come out of the communist regime there the time under communism a very resilient and brilliant choral tradition forged in that time also not to speak of the many other western composers who've taken on the forms of

Christian worship such as the mass or written for other traditional Christian texts now you might ask well should we be taking these really any type of Christian sacred music and using it in our worship services it definitely bears research into the context and into what that music was written for but I believe what I'm trying to say in general is that there's a huge wealth of sacred music being written out there still there's also a huge wealth that we have from centuries past and I think that the church is really missing an opportunity to find that connecting point with the wider world and also to enhance our own response in creation if we are just to leave those types of music aside because they're written from a by a perhaps an atheist composer that has no interest in the church but for some reason has chosen to write this beautiful music on a sacred theme and I'm just going to play one example here this is a piece entitled when David heard it comes from the passage when David heard that Absalom was dead he went up into his chamber and wept and this piece was composed by a composer named Eric Whitaker and he is if you first saw him you'd probably think that he was a surfer from California but he's somewhat of a rock star in the choral world of this time but he definitely would say he has no he does not believe in terms of the Christian belief system he believes that there's some sort of higher power out there and that seems to be the extent of his commitment along those lines however he does take a biblical text and he says it quite beautifully okay so we're just going we're skipping right to the very end he comes to this portion through writing in these gasps and sighs my son my son my son my son obviously a heart-rending part of scripture and he comes to the very end and repeats when David heard that

Absalom was dead he went up into his chamber and wept and I think of the whole backstory to that one scripture passage anyone who hears that that has not grown up in the church would have no idea of what that context can actually mean and you think about how Absalom acted how he what his life was like the rebellion the absolute heartache that really began years before in terms of his own father's sin and everything that progressed into that point when Absalom he finally learns that Absalom is dead and he still weeps for his own son even though his commander-in-chief is saying eventually you need to get over that and go down to your people and tell them and celebrate the victory that you finally won but there's still all those layers of complexity there in emotion and I think this is where we can have a role as the church in bringing this out as the Ms Mat période Zh spare an Dhvu Phath Sh Tamam Chambique Thank you.

[ 37 : 19 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Just very, very, very powerful. Now, I've taken way too much time setting all of this up, but I'd like to quickly run through the service of choral evensong and just highlight some examples of some of the choral music that are out there that I believe can have quite a huge impact in terms of using this music in our services.

The first line to be sung in a service of choral evensong is, Oh, Lord, open thou our lips. And I think that that's such a beautiful plea.

Now, you can think about what is it like, what does it sound like when someone just says it? Oh, Lord, open thou our lips. Oh, Lord, open thou our lips. Oh, Lord, open thou our lips.

[ 39 : 07 ] Is there any difference there between saying it and singing it? I think there is. But is one necessarily better than the other?

I wouldn't say so, but I think that there is a difference. And that can be extrapolated as well and looked into in terms of how music helps us to draw meaning out of things.

Oh, Lord, open thou our lips. And you could just have someone sing. And our mouth shall show forth thy praise. Or, and our mouth shall show forth thy praise.

So it's important to think about how we sing things and how clear they are and where the emphasis is and where we're generating to and all that kind of thing. And it works together. I think it works together in terms of that resonance with God's creation as well.

As you go on through the Evensong service, I'd just like to highlight a couple of things. There is a wonderful opportunity to explore the height and the breadth of the history of choral music, particularly in two sung portions, the Magnificat and the Nunc Dimitius.

[ 40 : 19 ] And the Magnificat, of course, Mary's song, My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit doth rejoice in God my Savior. And I'd like to take a look at, really quickly, two examples.

One is Herbert Howell's, a very standard piece that you might hear in a cathedral or a collegiate chapel. And it's from his Gloucester service.

Again, it's from his Gloucester.

Although it is not that it was a constant day O God's." This is the choir at Trinity College, Cambridge.

For behold, all generations shall call me blessed. We have this statement ascending into the air.

[ 41 : 47 ] Holy is his name. Amen. Let's skip forward a little bit here.

Composers will often take the varying sections and set them to different types of music. So here we have, he has showed strength with his arm. He has so strength with his arm.

He has gathered the prouder imagination of their arm. So Herbert Howells, who composed that piece, has a very distinct style of writing, combining the distances, the harmonies together, and the resolution as well.

But here you see he uses the text. He has showed strength with his arm. It's pretty obvious what he's doing there. The men are singing it. They're singing it very, he has showed strength with his arm.

And he gets to the part where it says, he has scattered the proud. And it goes from a, he, da, da, da, da, da, he has showed strength. He has scattered the proud in one, da, da, da, da, da, da, the scattering of rhythm at that point.

[ 43 : 21 ] Let's take a look at another example of the Magnificat. This one in Latin by a composer who's still alive, Giles Swain. We're going to skip that example.

Technologically not very adept this morning. Anyways, Giles Swain takes some, he spent some time in Africa. He took some rhythms from African music that he heard, and he applied it to his setting of the Magnificat.

And so it starts out with what some people call a rugby chant. But the men come in. Wa-a-a-m. Ma-ni-fi-ca.

Ma-ni-fi-ca. And then the various sections start coming in, just adding their little, their bits here.

Ma-ni-fi-ca. Different sections. And it all works together into this marching rhythm and this offsetting rhythm that's then balanced by another set of rhythms.

And just a wonderful exploration of the creativity that's there in music. Let's take a little look at the next song that appears in the Evensong service.

[ 44 : 48 ] The Muc de Munitis, or Simeon's song. Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people, to be a light, to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of thy people Israel.

And of course, both of the canticles end with glory be to the Father, to the Son, to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen. This particular setting of the New Dimitris is actually in Russian.

It's by a Russian composer entitled, his name is Grachaninov. And this is another thing that I think is a tool that's available for us that other churches do quite well.

Just specifically thinking of college chapels in Cambridge and Oxford, cathedrals as well. They'll bring in music from other traditions. And you, of course, have done that on a Good Friday service. Many different styles of music. This is a Russian composer and his new Dimitris. A Courtney scene shows a lot of has stayed within once.

[ 45 : 55 ] Clara Saldana, university tree, ζ■■■ animals. racks PM, ihr vertanils on the but one is in a Rocket phase. A GEM, eu V dues My eyes have seen thy salvation.

That's what they're saying right now. Which thou hast declared before the face of all people. You can sense that declaration coming.

Right to a culmination in a light to lighten the Gentiles. Right here. I'll stop it there.

So that high moment where the choir just bursts forth, that's where they declare, which thou hast created to be a light to be a light to the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel.

And I think that we need to think also about how we can use our music. In particular, choral music, I think, is a great bridge to that.

[ 47 : 54 ] How do we use our music to proclaim the gospel? Do we just come on Sunday mornings to be contained within our own services? Or does that inspire us to go out into the community to be that light to the Gentiles, to proclaim the gospel as well?

So the Evensong service, a series of prayers, a series of readings as well, a beautiful service designed for reflection, repentance and praise.

And, of course, the very famous line in the BCP, there comes the anthem. In choirs and places where they sing, here followeth the anthem. And this is an example of something that could very well be used in this section and to highlight music from another part of the world again.

A Baltic composer, Yudhis Pralins, who's quite active now. He used to be a progressive rock musician, actually. And he's turned his hand to choral composition. And this piece in particular is entitled *Laudibus in Sanctis Dominum*.

A traditional Christian text. Celebrate the Lord most high in holy praises. Let the firmament echo the glorious deeds of God. *Laudibus in Sanctis Dominum*.

[ 49 : 20 ] *Laudibus in Sanctis Dominum*. Celebrate the Lord. Celebrate the Lord.

*Laudibus in Sanctis Dominum*.

So here we've had *Laudibus in Sanctis Dominum*. Celebrate the Lord most high. Celebrate the Lord most high. Celebrate, celebrate, celebrate, celebrate. All over the place. And now we get into let the firmament echo the glorious deeds of God.

And see if you can think about how that's reflected in this next passage here. *Firmamenta sonnet in clita facta dei*. *Firmamenta sonnet in clita facta dei*.

*Firmamenta sonnet in clita facta dei*. *Firmamenta sonnet in clita facta dei*.

[ 50 : 35 ] *Firmamenta sonnet in clita facta dei*. So there's some fairly obvious conclusions you can draw there, but let the firmament echo the glorious deeds of God.

First of all, firmament. *Firmamenta*. *Firmamenta*. The firmament. The world that God has established. *Sonnet in clitifacta dei*.

Let the firmament echo the glorious deeds of God. And one section sings it, another section echoes it again and keeps going back and forth. Just a wonderful creativity there and a different Christian tradition that I think that, or a different part of the world anyways, a cultural tradition that I think that we should and have the opportunity to draw from as well.

And so that, in a sense, it's very, I feel like I've jumped all over the place, but just to say that all that kind of music, I feel, is open for us to use as Christians in the choral tradition and being in the church.

I think this is one of our opportunities, not only to explore as a congregation and to revel in that, but, I mean, in a worship service, as we worship, as we go through the Eucharist, as we go through Evensong, but also as a bridge to the wider community as well.

[ 52 : 00 ] For some reason, if you go downtown and you say, my soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, that would be somewhat shocking to some people, probably, at least on some level.

But if you invite someone to a concert and they pay \$20 to come and hear a choir sing that, then, you know, it's acceptable. And I feel like, in some ways, that actually works in our favor, because we...

Why let that tradition of music making pass us by? Why not keep pursuing it, as we do on Sunday mornings, but even further, to develop it in our children, to develop it in our youth, and to really encourage composers to write in that style, to keep promoting it, and to keep reveling in the creativity that's out there.

It's my hope that Oculus would embody the pursuit of a lot of the aspects that we have just spoken of this morning. The resonance of music and Christian worship, the exploration of the vast repository of sacred choral music available, and that's still being written, and that also it could be a bridge between the church and the, for lack of a better term, the secular world, or a reflection of the kingdom of God to the world, and also the pursuit of excellence that is needed to do this.

We're definitely not, I think, where I'd like to be in terms of our final sound, in terms of being able to sing with a lot of freedom.

[ 53 : 39 ] We've gathered young choral singers from all over the area, some from UBC, some from SFU, and other areas not in school. I have four organists in my choir, which makes it difficult to do anything around Holy Days.

But we're working together to develop a sound and to develop ourselves so that we can present this type of music in even song, and also in concert, in a way that is inspiring to people, and also can draw that attention to that heritage that a lot of it comes from the Anglican Church, but also elsewhere, and also to promote that type of music as well.

We sing choral evensong at St. James at the last Sunday of every month, and we have one today at 4 o'clock. And we're also holding a concert at Bethlehem Lutheran on June 13th, and also out in Aldergrove the very next day.

And we're looking to not only sing in services, not only do concerts, but also possibly to do some things larger in the future. This is way off, but the possibilities are out there, Bach, Matthew Passions, and various things like that that are, I think, doable for a group that has enough time to spend on it and doesn't have to just stay in the concert hall.

It could be done in the church more often, or it could be done even as... I saw one time, actually my master's final paper was on performance of the St. Matthew Passion as a play, as an opera or a performed work where they put together some various parts of acting or operatic work and staging as well, and presented the Matthew Passion that way.

[ 55 : 32 ] Some did better than others, but there's definitely that possibility out there. And so finally, when I think of Oculus in terms of... If I could pick a scripture passage that would reflect what I would like to do, it would be Psalm 19.

The heavens declare the glory of God. The sky above proclaims his handiwork. Lots of choral handiwork out there. Day to day pours out speech. Night to night reveals knowledge.

There is no speech, nor are there words whose voice is not heard. Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and like a strong man runs its course with joy. Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat. And I think of that image of a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and that's what I want for Oculus.

I wanted singers to be so comfortable that they emerge from wherever we're emerging from, but they emerge to sing. They emerge to perform, or they emerge to sing in service with this confidence, and with this joy to be singing music in this context, the sacred choral music, and in the context of the service, and in concerts, and to share that with people, that joy that I believe is there, and to proclaim the gospel through that, even though if not all of them maybe even believe what it is, but that is what Oculus is designed to reflect.

[ 57 : 01 ] So thank you very much for allowing me to share this morning. I've spoken a lot, and there might not be time for questions. Oh, no, we'll have at you. Believe me. Okay, good, good.

First, I'd like to ask you to thank Ben. Thank you. Thank you.