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Guy Beck has been teaching courses on religion and music at Louisiana State University, College of Charleston, and now at Tulane University. He has published a book titled Sonic Theology: Hinduism and Sacred Sound (University of South Carolina Press: 1993) and a CD recording of Indian Classical music in Sacred Raga (STR Digital, 1999). He is currently working on a project on Indic influences on world religious chant and music.

Religion is regarded as a universal phenomenon by historians of religion, and music is recognized as a universal part of culture by ethnomusicologists and anthropologists. Yet the vital and perpetual relationship between religion and music is frequently side-stepped in academia, whether in music or in religious studies teaching. While higher education in America includes the teaching of courses in Religious Studies Departments and Programs as well as the teaching of World Music courses in Music Departments, both curricula have tended to proceed in separate directions regarding methodology, topical content, and historical and sociological context. Many scholars of religion and theology do not feel well-equipped to discuss music in their classes, and instructors of Folk Music of the World or World Music classes who are trained in ethnomusicology are inclined to dodge religion, as well as theological issues or questions that are thought to be outside their area of expertise. 'Religion and Music' as a singular entity appears to have tumbled down into one of those bottomless ravines between monolithic departments on present-day college and university campuses. At best, it survives somewhere in the nebulous zone of interdisciplinary studies.

The circumstance of the academic separation of religion and music is, however, due more to misconception and lack of information than from any deliberate judgment of non-importance. Many scholars of religion are simply unaware of the work of ethnomusicologists, and vice versa. Ethnomusicology, the academic discipline that focuses on the music of non-Western cultures, is closest to the social sciences in methodology and approaches music, like language and religion, as part of ethnicity and culture. Over the past fifty years, this field has made great progress in elevating world music as well as also highlighting the role of religion in musical cultures worldwide. It has dispelled some untruths such as, for example, that one needs to be a classically trained musician or theorist in order to study music as a cultural phenomenon worldwide.

I have followed the notion that while participation in a religious ritual or the acquisition of performance skills of a type of world music are both potentially helpful and even desirable for a

specific academic pursuit, they are not 'necessary' for a preliminary understanding of a previously unfamiliar tradition, whether by students or faculty. This is the perspective that I use to approach the teaching of both world music and religious studies courses at Tulane University, especially at the introductory level. Attempting to reinforce the bridge between religious studies and world music, I will outline in this short article some important steps and aids in implementing religious chant and music into courses on religion, including textual, video, and compact disc (CD) resources.

The significance of religious chant and music for the study of religion cannot be overestimated: there is virtually no religious tradition without it. Before the Western Renaissance, all religious texts in all religious traditions of the world were sung or recited orally. Through the centuries, priests, monks, and other specialists have sung and recited the Christian masses, Jewish services, Buddhist *pujas*, Islamic calls to prayer, Confucian sacrifices, Hindu *yajnas* and *aratis*, and other ceremonies that form the basis of organized religious observances in the world religions. Overemphasis on silent textual study in modern academic religious studies is based upon Protestant notions of scripture as a written document that is read quietly to access its meaning regardless of the language of the text, as in the vernacular King James Bible. The overall importance of the oral form of scripture is cogently explained by Harold Coward in the introduction to his recently edited book, *Experiencing Scripture in World Religions*

Instrumental music is frequently a part of religious observance as well. For most religions throughout history, myths have been embodied not in written literature but in musical performance, combining vocal and instrumental music, and often dance. Acting as a bridge between myth and ritual, such sacred music is accepted as symbolizing the 'other' of religion: that which is beyond words or language. Many religious traditions stress a distinction between vocal and instrumental music, assigning a higher value to vocal music; the human body is part of the divine creation (nature) whereas a musical instrument is 'man-made' and thus a part of culture. The human voice also has the innate capacity to communicate meanings through the words of a text (song-text). As such, instruments have generally patterned their sounds after the human voice as an ideal sound, though the reverse can be found. Hence, both vocal and instrumental music have functioned together in various ways that need not be overlooked in the study of religious ritual practice and experience.

The first step in introducing music into religion courses involves explaining the great importance attached to music as part of religious practice and experience. I follow this by presenting and discussing recorded examples of chanted scriptures and sacred texts. For example, during the time allotted for each religion in a World Religions or Asian Religions course, I present a listening selection that involves the oral performance of passages from scriptures of each

tradition. Then I invite the class to hear the intonation, careful pronunciation, and emotional intensity of each selection, trying to empathize from the inside. The students may even write a short paragraph or essay describing their immediate response, both as a neutral outsider and as someone who might be attracted to the tradition based on what they are hearing. They may identify feelings of joy, peace, curiosity, and even perhaps, though hopefully not, revulsion. I follow this with more discussion drawing from the student responses, also including issues of social context, gender, and identity.

A further step is to invite representatives of living religions into the class to chant or perform on musical instruments. In this case, I have the fortunate advantage of being a trained vocalist in the North Indian music tradition, which allows for in-class demonstrations of Vedic chant and Hindu music. In addition, proficiency on the piano makes it possible for me, with the presence of a keyboard, to demonstrate scale or melody patterns used in religious music. Musical expertise by the instructor, while not necessary for teaching religion and music, is nonetheless an added bonus for the students.

Resources

There are at present no satisfactory textbooks in Music and World Religions. A current project undertaken by the Centre for the Study of Religion and Society at the University of Victoria (Canada), directed by Harold Coward, is attempting to rectify that situation with a new book and CD, edited by myself, with chapters on music in each of six world religions. Meanwhile, instructors will need to create an ideal mix of religion and music by using assorted resources, both readings and recordings. When I taught Religion and Music, a course that I developed at both LSU and at the College of Charleston, I collected readings from various sources and matched them with recorded examples from my own collection or from the library.

Regarding the Jewish and Christian traditions of music, there are several very useful readings in the book, *Sacred Sound and Social Change: Liturgical Music in Jewish and Christian Experience* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), edited by Lawrence A. Hoffman and Janet R. Walton. *Enchanting Powers: Music in the World's Religions* (Harvard University Press, 1997), edited by Lawrence E. Sullivan, contains helpful chapters on music in Hindu Tantrism, Islam, Confucianism, Judaism, African and Native American religion. *Sacred Sound: Music in Religious Thought and Practice* (Scholars Press, 1983), edited by Joyce Irwin, has excellent chapters on the topic of sacred sound and music in Protestant Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, Sufism, and Theravada Buddhism. These last two works also include a chapter or two on methodological issues in the study of religion and music. My own text, *Sonic Theology: Hinduism and Sacred Sound* (University of South Carolina Press, 1993) explores the theoretical basis of religious chant and

music in Hinduism.

Excursions in *World Music* 3rd edition, by Bruno Nettl, et al (Prentice-Hall, 2001), with accompanying two-CD packet, is one of the best comprehensive textbooks for courses in World Music. There are helpful references to religious music, not in the general context of a world religion, but rather in association with folk rituals and sectarian or regional varieties. This work includes a sound introduction to world music that is advantageous to instructors in religion and music. The bibliography and discography at the end of each unit is helpful in building a collection for personal or library use. Some of the selections on the accompanying CD are directly related to religious practice or ritual, while others include folk and work songs, ballads, theatrical songs, and blues. Other survey texts include Jeff Tilton, *Worlds of Music* (Schirmer Books, 1992), and David Reck, *Music of the Whole Earth* (Scribner's, 1977). The definitive reference work for world music is the new *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music* (Garland Publishing, 2000) to be complete in ten volumes. The one-volume *World Music: The Rough Guide* (The Rough Guides, 1994) is very useful for instructors in world music and religion, with many in-depth articles.

There are good video resources available to teachers of world music. For religious studies courses, however, the religious themes and issues need to be highlighted by the instructors within what are often solely musical presentations. The *JVC Video Anthology of World Music and Dance* is available through the World Music Institute (49 West 27th Street, New York, NY 10001-6936, 212-545-7536, <http://www.heartheworld.org/>), and contains thirty video cassettes, each of sixty-minute duration, along with nine booklets that are distributed over eight areas: East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Middle East and Africa, Europe, Soviet Union, The Americas, and Oceania. The quality of the production is very good, and each selection is accurately timed and briefly described. There are also many other singular performances of concerts by world music artists which are useful, e.g., Festival of India Concerts, Reggae concerts, Tibetan Monks in Concert. In terms of instant replay or location of selected footage, DVD format is preferable to VHS though many titles are still unavailable in it.

Among the enormous variety of world music titles, several established record labels contain a distinct world music series which can be ordered by your library. Some examples, with websites, are [Smithsonian/Folkways](#) ; [Nonesuch Explorer Series](#) ; [EMI Hemisphere](#) ; [Rounder Records](#) ;

[ARC Records](#)

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[UNESCO Collection](#)

;

[Music of the Earth Collection](#)

from Multicultural Media;

[Rough Guide to World Music](#)

;

[Lyrichord](#)

;

[Shanachie/Yazoo](#)

; and

[Putumayo World Music](#)

. The quality of the recording on these is generally superior, with informative liner notes and commentary regarding the history and context of the music, the types of instruments used, and information about the performers and music styles. The music also tends to be more authentic in most cases, as traditional instruments and styles are used. I am wary of budget CD's or random compilations without notes or descriptive inserts, and, unless specifically sought, global pop, world beat, or so-called 'fusion' music does not fit into the study of traditional religions.

Below are some basic selections of religious chant or musical performances related to the major world religions easily available on compact disc for class presentation, either from internet stores, World Music Institute, or Barnes and Nobles, Borders Books, or Tower Records retail outlets.

Judaism

The traditional music of King Solomon's temple is inaccessible from the descriptions found in the Hebrew Bible. However, the recent *La Musique de la Bible revelee/The Music of the Bible* (Harmonia Mundi, 2000), based on a recently discovered ancient notation, vocal and instrumental reconstructive settings include seven of the Psalms, along with passages from Deuteronomy, Numbers, Exodus, Lamentations, and II Samuel. The traditional art of the Jewish Cantor is marvelously preserved in

Mysteries of the Sabbath: Classical Cantorial Recordings 1907–1947

(Yazoo/Shanachie, 1994) from old 78 RPM recordings. More recent renditions are found in

Kol Nidre: Sacred Music of the Synagogue

(EMI Classics, 1995). For traditional songs of Jewish festivals, there is

The Jewish Experience: Passover, and The Jewish Experience: Chanukkah

, both from Delta Music, 1994.

Christianity

As in rabbinic Judaism, the early Church forbade musical instruments in favor of vocal hymns and psalms. For our purposes, Christian religious music begins with Gregorian Chant or Plainsong, Latin settings of the Hebrew Psalter from the Vulgate. Students may even be familiar with the recent best-selling recording of *Chant*, by the Benedictine Monks of Santo Domingo De Silos (Angel, 1994). Furthermore, I recommend

G

regorian Chant

Vols. 1 and 2, by Schola Cantorum (SONY Classics, 1995) as well as Russian and Greek Orthodox chant available from Nonesuch Explorer series. The Protestant Reformation translated the Psalter into vernacular, and Calvinist psalmody is well represented in

Psaumes de la Reforme/Psalms of the French Reformation

(Naxos, 1994). In addition, there are innumerable Latin polyphonic settings of the Roman Catholic Mass (i.e., Palestrina), Lutheran chorales in German (i.e., J.S. Bach), Messiah in English by G.F. Handel, and several famous versions of the Requiem Mass by Mozart, Berlioz, Verdi, Brahms (non-traditional), Dvorak, and Faure, that illustrate the role of music in expressing the relationship of the living with the deceased in Purgatory. There is, of course, a plethora of modern Christian hymns and gospel singing available.

Islam

Although technically not classified as music, the recitation of the Holy Qur'an in Islam is nonetheless religious chant at its finest, and its audible presentation to students conveys the depth and beauty of this sacred tradition. There are not many recordings, however I recommend *Qur'an Recitation*, Volume 10 in series *The Music of Islam* (Celestial Harmonies, 1998). The other volumes in this seventeen-CD set contain various types of music within the vast geographic expanse of Islam, which are valuable in courses on Islam.

Music of the Whirling Dervishes

(Atlantic, 1987) is a genuine rendering of the devotional music of the Mevlevi Sufis that also contains a short Qur'an recitation. For Islamic Qawwali music,

Pakistan: The Music of Qawal

(UNESCO, 1999) is authentic. Also, the recordings of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, a world famous Qawwali singer, are good and may even be known to some students.

Hinduism

Authentic Vedic chant is rarely available on modern recorded media. However, *Ravi Shankar: Chants of India*, produced by George Harrison (Angel, 1997), has examples of traditional Vedic chant, Bhagavad-Gita recitation, and mantra chanting all in one CD. There is also *Religious Chants from India — Sikh, Buddhist, Hindu* (ARC Records, 1999), which has some interesting items from three Indic traditions. *Ramnad Krishnan: Vidwan, Music of South India, Songs of the Carnatic Tradition* (Electra/Nonesuch Explorer Series, 1988), contains devotional songs from the Carnatic (South) music tradition. *Sacred Raga* (STR Digital Records, 1999) contains classical compositions and bhajans of the Hindustani (North) tradition sung and performed on authentic instruments by myself. (I trained in India for six years under traditional circumstances.) Devotional prayers from ISKCON (Hare Krishna Movement), including the famous "Hare Krishna" chant are often effective in classes. I use, *Hare Krishna Mahamantra*, by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1994).

Sikhism

This is the only world religion in which the founder was a musician who preached his message primarily through song and music, and thus is a prime example of the combination of religion and music. There are some excellent recordings of Guru Nanak's songs or *Shabads* as well as other verses from the *Sikh Adi Granth*, or Holy Scripture, set to music. I use *Asa Di War*, 2 CD set (New Delhi, T Series, 1997), morning prayers from the *Adi Granth* sung by Bhai Ravinder Singh Ji of the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Punjab.

Buddhism

Chants and Music from Buddhist Temples (ARC Records, 2000), contains good examples of chanting of the Pali canon (similar to Vedic chant) and Buddhist music in Taiwan, China, India, Thailand, and Tibet. *Buddhist Music of Tianjin*

(Nimbus, 1994), contains Chinese Buddhist ensemble music that is similar in style to older forms of imperial court music (Confucian and Taoist).

Buddhist Drums, Bell and Chants, and Drums

(Lyrichord, 1994) contains music recorded at actual services in the temples of Kyoto, Japan. For Noh drama and other music, there is

Japanese Noh Music

(Lyrichord, 1993), and

Japanese Temple Music: Zen, Nembutsu, and Yamabushi Chants

(Lyrichord, 1980). Also recommended is

Japan: Kabuki and Other Traditional Music

(Nonesuch, 1980).

Shinto

Japanese Shinto Ritual Music (Legacy, no date) contains traditional Shinto kagura music, difficult to find, as well as Norito prayers to Amaterasu sung by a Shinto priest.

References

Coward, Harold. Ed. *Experiencing Scripture in World Religions*. Orbis Books: 2000.