
BUILDING AND MANAGING YOUR MUSIC COLLECTIONS

Robyn Holmes,
Curator of Music, National Library of Australia



As Curator of Music at the National Library of Australia, Robyn Holmes is responsible for collection development, documentation and promotion of the music collections as well as for developing national infrastructure in music.

As a musicologist, Robyn previously held academic positions in music at the University of Adelaide (1975-89), the Canberra School of Music and The Australian National University (1990-2000).

Robyn has ongoing research interests in the area of music and liturgy, specialising in the 18th century, though in recent years she has focussed more on Australian music.

She has chaired major national projects in Australian music, including the *Anthology of Australian Music on Disc*, a joint project of the Canberra School of Music, the Australian Music Centre and ScreenSound Australia.

Robyn is currently responsible for developing a new collaborative web service called *MusicAustralia*.

I. Building your collections: the musical perspective. Why music in theological libraries?

Most traditional thought systems across diverse civilisations have accorded music a central place in the cosmos, the social order and the human mind. Whilst music-making itself may be linked to everyday functions and human pleasures, its dominant place in the belief systems of many cultures gives music status as a mirror of the inner world or as a form of communication that links to the realm of the spirit, conveyed in a multitude of types, forms, styles and modes of sacred musical expression.

It is not surprising that such a significant proportion of the world's musical repertoire is religious in orientation. Equally, music is integral to the life of organised religion and spiritual practice across many cultures and faiths.

I have taken as my text for this paper the following statement from the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, Vatican II, 1963:

The musical tradition of the ...Church is a treasure of inestimable value; ...it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy...whether it adds delight to prayer, fosters oneness of spirit, or invests the rites with greater solemnity ...¹

This statement is a summation of hundreds of such tracts on music and the church, repeated in various guises, ever with subtle differences, in Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Orthodox, and other traditions over centuries.

Given that music has such a seminal, integral role in the life of the church, should we not argue that learning in music is essential across the curriculum for theological education? And what obligation does that place upon libraries, as the resource hubs for theological learning, to incorporate music into collections, services and resources?

Let me demonstrate the significance of music to key aspects of theological education based on four recorded music examples.

1. Theology

AUDIO: J.S. Bach's *Mass in b minor*. Excerpt from the Credo "Crucifixus—Et Resurrexit".

This music represents the central tenet of the Christian faith: God's self-revelation and sacrifice through the passion, death and resurrection of Christ. The musical imagery here speaks this directly to our heart and mind: at once an intellectual and emotional understanding that unites text, music and soul.

The slow descending chromatic steps of the recurring bass encapsulate the meaning of 'Crucifixus', overlaid with old style un-accompanied counterpoint, line against line, to the final descent of burial in "Sepultus est".

The spiritual joy of resurrection is immediately juxtaposed through the more contemporary musical gestures of the "Et Resurrexit": the rising melodic lines, the rushing rhythm, the exuberant counterpoint, the trumpets and drums in the triumphal key of D Major. Here we witness the core of the theology of death and resurrection, sacrifice and redemption, the mystery of Christ crucified and raised from the dead.

The music renders the mystery knowable, unifies the word and its meaning into a reenactment that lives for the moment in its very performance. It takes the past into the present; it not only depicts the image and arouses the emotions but, through its very musical language, it represents central theological concerns inherent in the Mass.

We could merely argue that Bach's musical style is wholly grounded in a particular cultural and historical context that accounts for its approach, its theology and its musical rhetoric. Knowing that context of course makes more sense of the music itself.

But there is a wider significance and implication here: music has the power to enact complex concepts, to invite us to hear and feel and understand difficult



ideas in a highly immediate way. This both feeds and nurtures our understanding of theology and reminds us of the power of music as a medium for worship and prayer.

2. Liturgy and worship

AUDIO: Byzantine Chant: Excerpt from Monday liturgy for Holy Week

Public or private worship, ritual and prayer, in synagogue, temple, chapel, monastery, desert or home: with or without singing? Almost all faith traditions – indeed most traditional societies – have a complex of sacred rites in which music plays an essential role in communal ceremony.

Across many traditions, music is fused in rites with text, gesture, action or visual imagery to heighten the solemnity, to perform the text with greater emphasis or understanding, to draw participants into the realm of contemplation of meaning, to connect with the spirit, or to cohere and overlay the action with a sense of the 'sacred'.

Understanding such roles of music is essential to its effective performance in any context. Some ability to perform the rites – or to lead those who do – with a level of artistry and aesthetic judgment appropriate to the context is an essential for any person actively seeking to minister within a faith.

The integrity of the rite and its power as worship is dependent upon its performance, whether simple or elaborate, intimate or public, informal or formal. Inappropriate or poorly performed music can mean poor liturgy; and poor liturgy weakens the expression of the inner meaning of faith.

3. The community of faith

AUDIO: 19th century Australian hymn, *The King's Highway* by Emma Woolley (published in Sydney 1872, dedicated by permission to the Lord Bishop of Sydney. Possibly the first hymn published by an Australian woman composer).²

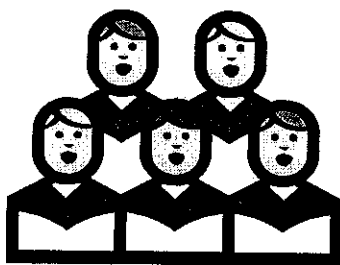
The title of the most recent Australian

ecumenical Christian book of song ...over
*Together in Song: The Australian Hymn
Book II*,³ encapsulates a third dimension
of music – the power of music to “foster
oneness of spirit” amongst a community of
faith. The editor notes:

Our prayer is that the book will be an aid to
worship now and into the new millennium,
and that those who choose to use it will be
‘filled with the Spirit’ as they ‘sing psalms
and hymns and spiritual songs’.⁴

This implies music for use by all –
refreshing that practice of communal
spiritual singing for which we have
evidence dating back to the ancient
Greeks.

The spiritual song or hymn, psalm or
response has been historically
characterised by
s i m p l i c i t y ,
intelligibility and
clarity of style.
Musical repetition,
syllabic style (that is
one note one
syllable), moving and
understandable
words that often instruct and explain
precepts, and a known relationship
between music and text all facilitate group
participation and ease of memory.



The role of participatory music-making in
all kinds of settings makes knowledge of a
broad range of spiritual songs an essential
component within any theological
education.

Where once this knowledge was generally
confined to a local musical tradition and
language group, more recently cross-
cultural, even inter-faith, borrowing and
subsequent internationalization has
enriched the repertoires of many faiths,
juxtaposed historical and contemporary
sources, and necessitated broader
understanding and knowledge of the
diversity of cultural practice.

4. Church History

Audio: “Dina Helaga Ai”, sung in the Papuan
Motu language, meaning “During Sabbath”

In those cultures with notated musical
histories, music provides a key monitor of
historical change within religious life, an
important record of changing church
practice. The reforms, for example, of
Luther affected the course of music
history just as they affected theology itself:
the two strands of church and musical
history are interwoven.

In oral traditions, the communal function
and ‘aide-memoire’ that music provides to
religious practice enables continuity to the
past, a kind of living tradition that
accommodates past customs and present
realities. Because music can be re-lived,
re-enacted and re-invented, it documents
not only past religious practices and past
thinking – broader than music itself – but
enables us to experience this or gain
insight in a dynamic, ever-present way.

- Could the significance of the elaborate
settings and rites of the Requiem Mass
in the 18th century Catholic Church be
so understandable without Mozart?
- Could the tenets of the Protestant
Reformation remain so instructive
without Luther’s hymns or the English
psalm settings?
- Could we perceive the changing needs
of our community without the range of
spiritual songs that convey meanings
and attitudes across changing
generations?
- Would the ‘missionising’ of the Pacific
be so evident without the creation of
Pacific Christian musical styles that
fuse indigenous musical practice and
language with the tradition of Western
hymns?
- Can we understand contemporary
Australian spirituality without any
knowledge of cultural diversity?

◇ ◇ ◇ ◇

My four examples have intended to
convey that music collections should form
an essential resource in all theological
libraries, that a knowledge of music is
intrinsic to the curriculum as a whole and,
at the very least, should support studies of

theology, church history and liturgy.

The provision of music for contemporary worship also supports active communities of faith in theological colleges. Moreover, cross-cultural and inter-faith understanding is more accessible when experienced through the immediacy of music, requiring access to a range of at least recorded music experiences.

This, then, provides a 'recipe' for core collection development in music in theological libraries, documented both in score and recorded sound:

- Some key musical 'treasures' that provide insight into the significant tenets and belief systems of the faith;
- Some historically representative repertoire that provides insight into past liturgical practice, changing notions of spirituality and communal worship, and the major social, structural and intellectual changes within the Church or organised religion;
- Some practical sources for music-making that will support current liturgical practice and communal worship;
- Some cross-cultural and inter-faith sources that provide broader cultural understanding, as well as a range of material that provides insight into our society.

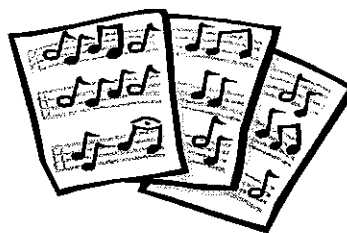
II. Building your collections: User perspectives

What to select from this range of content, however, is equally determined by the functions of your library, your institutional contexts and your community. Who are your users, what do they need, and how will you best provide resources and services?

Some obvious further questions underpin this.

- What is the philosophy of your organisation?
- What uses will the collection have?

- Are you serving denominational or ecumenical or broader interests?
- Are you training ordinands as well as supporting academic study and/or community outreach?
- What is the general scope and coverage of your collections?
- Is your library part of a larger organisation and how large is your collection budget?



- What opportunities exist for cooperative collecting and

sharing arrangements with other libraries?

I will explore these issues as they directly influence users of music collections through imagining some user scenarios:

I am a trained musician and I want some splendid music for my small choir of singers to perform during the Gradual at our college's end of year valedictory service. The theme of the day is salvation. But where can I find scores that I can use?

User issues: High level of user music literacy; the wide range of musical resources needed for perusal and selection of repertoire; provision of multiple copies of scores; use as against preservation.

I have a research project to undertake on the forms and orders of Western liturgy from the 13th to the late 16th century. How can I find out what elements of the liturgy were sung and if and when this changed?

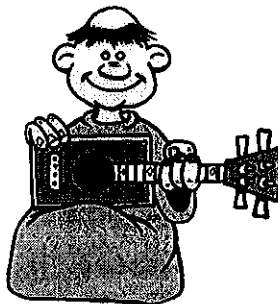
User issues: Need for research level access to a representative range of scores; music only likely to be available in expensive scholarly editions or antiquarian or facsimile editions; access to CDs reconstructing historical performance practice; access to specialist musical information, indexes, books and journals.

I am going to undertake a six week stay serving a community on Tiwi Island in the

Torres Strait. The pastor there tells me the people love to sing during worship but desperately need some new resources. The trouble is I do not know whether they read music or learn by ear. How can I find some materials to take with me that will be appropriate? If I can find some music, can I make multiple copies? ...over

User issues: Access to range of cross-cultural materials and a variety of contemporary sources, both in sound and score; web access to musical sources; information on copyright in music; some historical information on religion and culture in the Torres Strait.

My lecturer was so excited yesterday: she had discovered this musical score in the library that she said demonstrated how the English church musicians and nobility kept their Catholicism secretly alive during the period of the destruction of the monasteries. The trouble is that I can't read the music and the thesis she referred us to is so full of technical jargon that I can't understand it. But I really want to find out about it!



User issues: Lack of user music literacy; lack of information on music in church history sources; specialist technical jargon of the music history literature.

I have been attached to a local parish where the organist has just left. However, I have a small group of kids who want to form a band for our family services. I am keen to help them but I don't know how to access any music for them to play and I can't arrange it myself.

User issues: Range of contemporary sources required; web access (for contemporary music); need to access parts for performance; music unlikely to be in the specialist music library with which you have reciprocal borrowing rights; need to find music suppliers; prohibitive cost of music for the 'kids'.

I know this old hymn tune but I cannot find

the original version of it. Where could I access the original words?

User issues: need to maintain access to older out of print materials as well as contemporary sources. Need for music reference materials, including thematic indexes and on-line music resources.

◇ ◇ ◇ ◇

Music users make special demands on us – partly because they range from the trained musician through to the musically non-literate, and partly because they want to access every range of resource, from the serious research inquiry through to sources to listen to or perform, across contemporary, historical and cross-cultural styles.

III. Building your collections: the Library perspective

Each institution will need to determine its collection building policy with the following key issues in mind:

- What level of musical knowledge amongst your users are you going to support?
- Are you able to invest in a core collection or just order, hire or borrow music on demand?
- Can you invest in and manage a representative range of musical scores for research?
- Do you need to support your own community with resources for worship?
- Can you supply scores and parts for practical use; that is are you able to support music resources for performing, as well as study and research?
- Can you also supply listening and multimedia facilities and resources?
- Can you provide access to a keyboard or other sound source for people to create sound from the score?
- Do you have the knowledge to select and support specialist information on

music, and if not, how can you provide other forms of access to it?

- Given that much church music is unpublished, do you need to archive any materials and support any archival collections?

Part of the problem is that, today, non-specialist users are less likely to be able to read music than they once were and thus find it difficult to access musical information from a musical score. Mostly, they need to be able to hear as well as see! In recent decades, there has been a marked change in thinking about what kind of documents properly represent the 'music', and therefore what libraries should collect.

A score may be considered a mere artefact and not the music itself! A sound or audio-visual recording used to be considered the supplement to the musical score; now more often the score is considered the blueprint for the live realisation of the music that is documented in recording. Often the oral version is now disseminated first before being realised in notation.

Unlike the Western classical music canon, much music, including more popular contemporary music, is not notated. Sound rather than score has become the prime means of access to music for the

general user and younger musicians, yet the vast array of past musical treasures of the Church exist in complex musical scores or parts, much of it written in older styles of notation.

Thus the earlier days of the theological library focussing on a core of the Western classical church music 'canon', collecting beautifully presented scores and often rare musical editions, has long gone.

Theological libraries need not only to care for past musical treasures but must ensure that music remains a vital and relevant core collecting field, for research and study, for use in worship, for performance and for enrichment.

¹'Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy', chapter VI, Sacred Music, promulgated by Pope Paul VI, Dec.4, 1963. Published in *The Sixteen documents of Vatican II and the instruction on the Liturgy*. Vatican Council 2nd, 1962-65. St.Paul Edition, Magister Books, Boston, 1967. P.49. (Note that translations vary; 'oneness of spirit' = *unity of minds*; 'invests the rites with greater solemnity' = *confers greater solemnity upon*

(IV. Managing your collections: The Library Perspective will follow in the next issue of the Newsletter. Ed.)



Concert pianist meets on-line searcher