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Abstract

It is important when considering a position as a music educator within a non-Western society to examine the political, social and religious influences that are present in music in order to assist in alleviating the tensions and dangers that such an introduction may create within a culture. Once these issues are understood, it is clear to see that a system of intercultural exchange instead of Western globalization would benefit both teacher and student while still maintaining cultural integrity. The advantage of such an approach would break down cultural barriers, preserve the existing culture, and provide a Christian educator with a non-invasive tool that introduces their students to the character of God.

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Abstract

It is important when considering a position as a music educator within a non-Western society to examine the political, social and religious influences that are present in music in order to assist in alleviating the tensions and dangers that such an introduction may create within a culture. Once these issues are understood, it is clear to see that a system of intercultural exchange instead of Western globalization would benefit both teacher and student while still maintaining cultural integrity. The advantage of such an approach would break down cultural barriers, preserve the existing culture, and provide a Christian educator with a non-invasive tool that introduces their students to the character of God.

The idea of intercultural education is generally celebrated and encouraged within the Western mindset; however with it comes a general disregard for the potential consequences that such an exchange may produce. A brief and honest examination of the political, cultural and religious consequences that music possesses in the Western genre reveals how an intercultural exchange of music would produce far more beneficial results rather than an effort at western 'globalization' which has become a common and widely accepted practice. Furthermore, based on this same concept, a Christian music educator and missionary may discover how to create cultural relevance within their teaching in ways that would not only break down cultural barriers and preserve the existing culture, but also become a tool that influences the culture's understanding of the nature of God.

Literature Review

Political Agenda within Western Music of History

Western Classical Music a Fundamental Structure of Political Society

The answers to these concepts can only come through an understanding of the issues or dangers that are or may become present within Western Classical music education outside of its accepted and understood walls. The first of such issues is a general disregard of the presence of political ideals within the genre of Western Classical music. However, throughout history the role of politics within the arts, including Classical music, has been undeniably and unavoidably linked – a fact which many famous political leaders have known and feared. Because of this, Chairman Mao Tse-tung said, “There is no such thing as Art for Art’s sake, art that stands above classes, art that is detached from or independent of politics” (as cited in Gann, 2003). This role has altered between a controlled substance and propaganda by existing governments as well as a means of advancing the agenda of musicians and common people.

Politics Generally Disregarded in Classical Music

Unfortunately, this kind of prudence is not usually included within an introduction to music education especially among Western Christian educators who function under the idea of “separation of church and state”. It is possible that this is because when considering Classical music, very few allusions come to mind as to the political debates and elements surrounding its composition, and most blatant political references are reserved for consideration within the structure of folk and popular music. However, although not overtly political, throughout the centuries the Classical music art has been subject to political scrutiny and influence in such a way that the common person may not actually be aware of its effects upon existing culture, the formation of music, and the religious and moral consequences that arise from such ideals. The reason for this difference between the classical and folk music genres is, according to Kyle Gann (2003) that:

Rock guitarists and performance artists can challenge

the status quo without subsidy, but the composer who gets performed by orchestra or chamber ensemble usually does so by the grace of either government grants or wealthy patrons or both...Consequently, political controversies involving classical music have been few and far between, and not always attributable to radical intentions on the part of the composers. (Gann, pp. 4)

Politics at the Inception of Classical Music

Keeping this in mind, it is advantageous to observe that, in spite of the apparent disconnect between classical music and political climate, the very inception of Classical Western music possessed facets of political (as well as obvious religious) motives. It is common information in the scholarly world that Western music as we know it was developed largely by the influence of Pope Gregory the Great's chant compositions. While the elements of religion obviously play into the reasons for the development of Gregorian chant, studies often overlook the necessary political elements that caused Pope Gregory to expand and enforce his musical styles in the manner which he did. Andrew Wilson-Dickson (1992) speaks of Pope Gregory the Great as one who "... set about re-establishing Roman authority, both civil and ecclesiastical" (p. 31). He goes on to inform us that: "As part of the process of increasing the authority of the Church of Rome, Gregory strongly encouraged conformity in styles of worship" (p. 32). This led to the expansion of his music for the sole purpose of gaining a sense of political and religious stability within the control of his papal empire and as a result introduced the world to the written forms of music as Western culture understands it.

Political Opera of the 19th Century

After the initial inception of music by Gregory the Great, although the affairs of state were continuously present among composers, the exaggerated political uprisings of the 19th and 20th centuries made political presence among compositions and more specifically, operatic genres distinct and extreme. One such example within Italian 19th century opera is the prominent composer within the political field: Giuseppe Verdi. Many scholastic studies speak of how his politically charged operas were met with great enthusiasm by the Italian people who were struggling to regain control of their land from Austrian domination: a movement known as the Risorgimento. His status is unique be-

cause this was one of the first times in history that we see a classical composer embraced for his political ideals with such fervor, to the point that (history informs us) even the name "Verdi" became an acronym for a patriotic symbol to hail the true Italian king.

Wagnerian Nationalism

In addition to Verdi, another composer within the classical operatic genre, who is perhaps the most famous for his political ideals and influence in the world today, is Richard Wagner. Again, scholastic studies agree that Wagner was an avid German nationalist and used German folklore and legend as moral and symbolic figures throughout his music. Such was the fervor of his devotion to German ideals that Grout and Palisca (2001) inform us:

Wagner's involvement in the political unrest in Germany during 1848-49 obliged him to emigrate to Switzerland which became his home for the next ten years. Here he found the leisure to formulate his theories about opera and to publish them in a series of essays... at the same time he was writing the poems of a cycle of four dramas with the collective title *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (The Ring of the Nibelungs)...the entire cycle was completed...and the first complete performance took place...in a theater built in Bayreuth according to Wagner's specifications. (p. 624)

His dedication to the advancement of specifically "German" music led him to dramatic and expensive productions riddled with German nationalism and anti-Semitism.

Wagner and Hitler

These works of Wagner and particularly the anti-Semitic views expressed in his operas are commonly linked with the influence they incurred upon the tyranny of Adolf Hitler, who was a great admirer of Wagner's nationalistic ideals. Grout and Palisca (2001) say of this enthusiasm:

The National Socialist (Nazi) movement in Germany appropriated Wagner's music as a symbol of the best of Aryan and German culture. This and the anti-semitism expressed in his *Das judentum in der Musik* (Judaism in Music)...has alienated some listeners and musicians from his music dramas. (p. 621)

Consequentially a good deal of study has been done on Wagnerian influence upon Adolf Hitler, with much controversy as to the validity of the subject. However, Hans Rudolf Vaegt (2003) says of these studies:

There are at least three statements by Hitler that point to the centrality of Wagner in his mind and therefore demand the attention of the historian. 1) Hitler frequently professed admiration for Bismarck and for Frederick II of Prussia, but it was Wagner for whom he felt the deepest affinity of an altogether different quality... 2) As an impressionable youth... Hitler saw a performance of Wagner's early grand opera, *Rienzi*, that apparently marked him for life. Much later, in 1939, he said, 'In that hour it began'... 3) In a letter to Siegfried Wagner, dated 5 May 1924, Hitler wrote that 'the spiritual sword which we are wielding today was forged in Bayreuth, first by the Master himself and later by [Houston Stewart] Chamberlain. (p. 15)

In this way, in spite of the controversy, we can see the influence upon classical music upon one of the most monumental characters and events of political history – an event which should be a key point of interest to the Christian worldview of the value of life and the government's role to protect the innocent.

Nazi Dictation upon Classical Arts

During the reign of Hitler, music was of central importance to German culture, and the Nazi patronage took special care that this classical art form continued to be successful and grow under the regime's watchful eye. Although it was a successful effort overall, this time in history revealed dramatic control of the arts that had not previously been portrayed within music. In reference to the Berlin Philharmonic under Nazi regime, Pamela M. Potter (2003) describes this control:

The Propaganda Ministry had the authority to appoint the artistic and business managers and the members of the board, and to determine how the capital of the orchestra was to be used. The orchestra had to report regularly to the chairman of the board and consulted him on questions of tours, guest conductors, musician's contracts and a variety of business matters... but there is little evidence that Goebbels or any of his functionaries regularly interfered in purely artistic matters. (p. 95)

It is perhaps fortunate for the success of classical music within Germany that artistic integrity was permitted to be dictated by the artists, in spite of this political oppression.

Stalin's Dictation within Classical Music in Russia

Germany was not the only country in which the arts were influenced by a political regime however, and although the situation in Germany helped to advance the rise and forms of classical music, the political oppression on the arts of Russia manifested itself with very different results. This oppression and the overall political state of the world gave inspiration to one of classical music's most beloved Russian composers: Dmitri Shostakovich. While Germany did not interfere in the artistic matters of musical expression, Shostakovich rather lived under a regime that oppressed his creativity, but ultimately won him great fame for his endurance of such domination. More than any other Russian composer of classical music, Shostakovich adhered to his musical ideals while remaining in his homeland under the Soviet system. Russell Bova (2003) says of this regime that:

It was the custom of the Communist Party to place on display, both at home and abroad, a few heroes in every field from cosmonauts to composers, and Shostakovich became such a "hero"... Therefore on several occasions, Shostakovich was officially rebuked for his music, and he was made to offer formal retractions and apologies for it. (p. 234)

Although a composer under scrutiny, Shostakovich continued to express his ideas of the human condition within the genre of instrumental music, especially within his string quartets and symphonies, in subtle defiance to party demands. John Simon (2002) speaks of the presence of these ideas within Shostakovich's compositions:

Anyone acquainted with Shostakovich's compositions will note their contradictory, paradoxical, ever-shifting nature... The composer seems to have been shuttling between works that, covertly or not, defied the Party's demands, and others that, out of prudence or coercion, conformed to them, at least enough to get by the commissars. (Simon, 2002)

Such political statements within the music are now

heroic in the minds of democratic western worldviews and have made Shostakovich a timeless hero applauded and studied by both scholars and common people.

Potential Political Consequences Should be a Concern for Music Educators

Although the examples of Shostakovich and others mentioned have been extreme, all composers within Western Classical Music have always been overtly aware of their obligations to their patrons, although perhaps not in the extreme forms of Communism and Nazism. It is possible that this political bias within Classical music has simply not revealed itself in such a dramatic form until the 19th and 20th centuries, or it may just appear to be more dramatic because the effects of them are still apparent in our historical memory. However, not only could other examples possibly be given of the political troubles of noted composers such as Josquin Des Prez, Johann Sebastian Bach, Franz Josef Haydn, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, one could also observe the political ideals that have led to more recent and modern “Classical” compositions, such as George Crumb’s *Black Angels* (A Vietnam War Protest) or Steve Reich’s *Come Out* (written as a response to the 1964 Harlem riot re-trials). Both of these works reflected the current state of affairs of the world – not necessarily confined to the composer’s personal feelings, but that the atmosphere of the political tension in the world contributed to the sounds that they created. Of *Black Angels*, George Crumb said the work

...will probably be forever known as the Vietnam Quartet. I didn’t approach it that way. It was very late in the compositional process that I became aware of associations with that period...I came to recognize that there was something of the feeling of that strange time. That’s when I called it music in tempore belli, in time of war. (as cited by Peter Burwasser, 2004)

Therefore it is clear that although not blatantly political, these driving forces of social and economic opinion upon the state of the world have always, and will continue to be a prominent force driving the development of Western classical music, and as a result the potential consequences of studying such music should be a present concern within music education. The resulting impact upon the people of different nations should be of further concern to a Christian educator and cause them to question whether leadership in

this music will affect the politics of their country in a manner that will lead to the protection of life and well-being of the people, in both short term and long term affects, especially since these political influences are both cause and effect of social and humanitarian concerns.

The Necessary Worldview of a Counter-Cultural Christian Music Educator

How a Pragmatic Worldview Affects the View of Relevance

Analysis of the outcome of historical missionaries have revealed that because of these political, social and religious questions that are present, it is important for the Christian educator and missionary to identify the relevance of how teaching “secular” material within certain societies pertains to their faith – that is, why and how such material is significant to the message and purpose of their presence within that country. This may be a question that is difficult for a Western Christian to accept, especially if he is a teacher within a secular environment, based on the common understanding that secular work does not relate to faith. However, in analysis of the issues presented, the concerns of the relevance of “secular” western classical music is truly only an issue when the Christian musician is convinced of the pragmatic worldview that their faith must somehow be separate from their art. R.C. Sproul (2005) claims that this outlook affects Christians on a broader level and says that:

Our viewpoint comes from the melting pot. We get mixed up. Our pot has a dash of faith and a dash of skepticism. We are at once religious and secular... We are inconsistent and confused because we fail to understand where Christianity ends and paganism begins. We do not know where the boundary lines are. Consequently we traffic back and forth across the lines, making forays between darkness and light. (p. 25)

Certainly this kind of confusion applies to the Christian musician – There is a conflict that arises for the Christian classical musician concerning the purposes and importance of our art as opposed to strict adherence to “Christian” worship music such as classical hymns and songs with sacred text. For this reason, teaching “secular” art in the form of Western Classical music is sometimes set aside, especially in function of

missions even though music has already been proven to be a valuable tool in shaping the political, cultural and religious climate of a society. Classical music is not embraced as something that can assist the “musician-ary” in pointing the people to God, and they are forced instead to rely on modern “Christian” worship music as the sole function of music within missionary work. For this reason, the missionary posing as a Western Christian music educator may not feel that he has as much influence or as many tools as a conventional missionary to reach a nation for Christ. This distinction is not necessary though and the goal of sharing even “secular” music must in fact be a tool to bear witness to the truth of God in the lives of the people.

The Beauty of “Secular” Classical Music Reflects God’s Character

For this reason, the ultimate answer of whether it is right or moral to share Western music with a culture rich in their own personal heritage primarily has to do with the relevance of western classical music within the life of the believer. But is this a question that can be answered satisfactorily? In his book “The Good Life”, Charles Colson (2005) addresses this question of the role of classical art and why it is essential in the lives of believers as expressions of beauty that reflect the nature of God. Of this, he says:

The Christian view of beauty has its basis in its theory of origins – how the world came to be. God made a world that reflects His identity, not only His unimaginable genius but also His majesty – His beauty...The beauty of the world communicates God’s love for us. (p. 66)

As an example of how classical composers have used this concept in their music, Colson uses Olivier Messiaen who formed and premiered his greatest work Quartet for the End of Time within the confines of a Nazi concentration camp, changing the lives of those who both heard and performed it. Colson sums the significance of such a production as:

Because Olivier Messiaen believed that beauty is a sign of God’s care, he paid tribute in his music to a loving Creator...Messiaen’s music communicated to his fellow prisoners that the world was ultimately God’s, not the Nazis’, and that every human hope has a legitimate basis in God’s rule. He wasn’t selling cheap comfort or

“expressing himself”. Who among his fellow prisoners could possibly have cared about that? He was translating truth that they needed to hear – truth essential to the good life — into music. (Colson, 267)

It is clear that in Colson’s mind, this truth could be translated even into music that existed in an instrumental form, without text and manifested the character and power of God simply through its form, and therefore exists as a tool to lead others to the Creator.

The Good, the True, and the Beautiful

R.C. Sproul (2005) furthers this same encouragement of the Christian value classical art by saying:

As Christians, we are to be concerned about three qualities: the good, the true, and the beautiful. These three are virtues that touch the very heart of Christianity. It is a triad of values, each of which points beyond itself to the character of God. We are concerned about goodness because God is Good. We care about truth because God is Truth. We care about beauty because God is Beautiful...If we look at the virtues of the good, the true, and the beautiful from a biblical perspective, certain principles leap from the Bible, which directly or indirectly deal with the concepts of beauty and art.

The beginning of art is found in the act of creation itself. The ultimate foundation and basis for aesthetics is the work of creation. (Sproul, 174)

However, in spite of its obvious beauty, because most classical “art” does not bear the label “Christian” the modern church does not employ its obvious witness to the character of God. While there are some classic hymns and sacred texts that do so, the instrumental music of the great composers and artists are generally disengaged from use. However, Sproul – like Colson – feels that blatant religious themes are not necessary within the use of aesthetics as witnesses to God:

If art is good art, if it is true art, if it is beautiful art, then it is bearing witness to the Author of the good, the true, and the beautiful...If we cut off the aesthetic element from our triad of virtues we are left with a truncated Christianity and a God who at best is dull, and at worst, is ugly.

If this is indeed true, then it the dilemma of “rightness” in teaching this music is no longer an issue and the Christian music educator in fact has an essential role to play in leading cultures to Christ through such music.

Christianity Is Not Supposed to Be a Cultural Religion

This realization of culture as an extraneous factor to the advancement of Christianity may be difficult for a modern Christian to accept due to the current bonds of Christian ideals within Western culture. Dr. Gene Edward Veith addresses this struggle by saying:

Most of the world’s faiths are cultural religions... Christianity, on the other hand, is not supposed to be merely a cultural religion. To be sure, sociology’s laws and the tendencies of our fallen nature give us a penchant for human-made or culture-made faiths that often hijack the church. The Bible, though, outlines a much more complex approach to culture, one that offers a radical critique of culture while encouraging believers to engage their culture in positive ways. (Veith, 1997)

Missionary Don Richardson (1974) understood this concept. While still engaging in a culture with the single purpose of sharing and turning an ethnic group to the Christian worldview, he realized the only possibilities of its success and significance would be within a cultural exchange rather than cultural dominance. He shares:

The key God gave us to the heart of the Sawi people was the principle of redemptive analogy – the application to the local custom of spiritual truth. The principle we discerned was that God had already provided for the evangelization of these people by means of redemptive analogies in their own culture. These analogies were our stepping-stones, the secret entryway by which the gospel came into the Sawi culture and started both a spiritual and a social revolution from within. (Richardson, 10)

If then a missionary’s “job” is to teach music to a cultural people group, rejection of Christianity as a culture will enable him to see God within indigenous music which may perhaps double his toolbox of effective witness to the presence and power of Christ.

Response

How a Christian Music Educator Should Function

Based on this research, the role of the music educator is first transformed into primarily being a learner of the culture that he is seeking to influence. This does not mean that one who receives a position teaching Western music in a foreign country must wait to accept the position until he knows all the details of the specific culture. It is rather important that they approach the position with awareness that the story of salvation and of Christ is most likely already present within the music of those that they are trying to reach and as a result make every effort possible to find it within the music of the culture while at the same time sharing their own.

Therefore, if a Christian were hired or motivated to teach Western music within a culture other than his own, it may be beneficial for there to be mutual exchange at every point. This will help both the teacher and student to learn about each other, and form a bond of understanding between them both. It will also serve to make Western music much more relevant and valuable to the culture presented with it. If one can see how something relates to what they already know, it only increases its already existing value.

These concepts are relevant outside of the faith so the real question is how the Christian models a different worldview and how that reveals itself within music education. Christian and non-Christian may function in the same actions, but they must be with very different goals and mindsets. The answer for this question lies within an understanding of the Christian concept of the purpose of beauty and creativity. If the Christian adheres to God as Creator and a Beauty, and as a musician they apply this concept within their teaching, breaking down cultural barriers not only opens the door for an understanding of music, but also presents the opportunity to deliver the message of God’s truth and beauty to the recipients.

Conclusion

It would appear through the study of various music genres that it might be seemingly easy to find the similarities and differences resulting in this celebration of universal ideals. However, it may be more difficult

to find such cultural relevance and I would stress again that it is impossible to understand cultural elements without personal experience with these customs. With these thoughts in mind, it is easy to realize that understanding the struggles that face an inter-cultural classical music educator is only the first step for the Christian within music education. It is impossible for them to ignore the counter-religions, political statements and social relevance of music within the culture that they are trying to reach in the same way that a secular educator would. However, through a deep understanding of their greater mission – to find the cultural relevance which points to Christ – the Christian music educator has a completely unique tool and responsibility that may actually assist them in bringing relevance and understanding to the people they are trying to reach. In promoting exchange rather than ‘globalization’, they will create a mutual sharing of beauty and truth present in both cultures that will enhance and preserve the existing culture and bring enlightenment to both teacher and student as to the character of God.

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