

Introduction

Music has been a major part of all religions. It has powers to alter and match moods, to sustain and evoke emotion, to induce trance or ecstasy states, to express worship, and to entertain.

—John Bowker, *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*

Music magically modulates the spirit as well as the world that resounds with it. Music is the most effective sign of the human spirit and its transformative capacities.

—Lawrence E. Sullivan, *Enchanting Powers: Music in the World's Religions*

In all societies, music is found in religious ritual—it is almost everywhere a mainstay of sacred ceremonies—leading some scholars to suggest that perhaps music was actually invented for humans to have a special way of communicating with the supernatural.

—Bruno Nettl, *Excursions in World Music*

The citations above are from distinguished scholars of religious studies and musicology. While one might expect their positions to reflect a consensus in these fields, they are in fact exceptions to the general academic silence regarding the combined phenomenon of “religion and music” as a special field of study and research. Over the years, the focus areas of religion and music have remained in separate corners of the academy, seemingly operating in “compartments” rather than “departments.” Until very recently there have been minimal opportunities for presenting original research on religion and music at academic conferences, few monographs on specific

religious music, and minimal attention to music and chant in standard reference works in religion as well as teaching materials. Recognizing the vital importance of music throughout the world's religions, this book is a call for a permanent remedy to the current situation in the form of a new discipline, Musicology of Religion, which will provide an umbrella field for the growing interest and rapidly accumulating data on music in religious thought and practice.

Current Situation

Before outlining the basic parameters of Musicology of Religion, we take account of the current situation in the study of religion and music. A neglect of music in the field of religious studies has perpetuated, as has the avoidance of religion in musicology and the social sciences. Published reference works and theoretical compendiums in religious studies fail to give proper emphasis to music. The monumental *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (Hastings 1908–1921) contained a lengthy article (v. 9: 5–61) on music in ancient and living religions. Yet, excepting *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (Eliade 1987), recent works of this type have normally omitted music: *The HarperCollins Dictionary of Religion* (Smith 1995), *Merriam-Webster's Encyclopedia of World Religions* (Doniger 1999), and *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion* (Stausberg and Engler 2013). On the side of musicology, *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music* (Randel 1986), *Rethinking Music* (Cook and Everist 2001), *Systematic and Comparative Musicology: Concepts, Methods, Findings* (Schneider 2008), and *Theory and Method in Historical Ethnomusicology* (McCollum and Hebert 2014), works that continue to shape the discipline, have generally sidestepped religion. Religion is also absent from *Musicology: The Key Concepts* (Beard and Gloag 2016). And while music has also been ostensibly linked with individual social sciences, as in *The Anthropology of Music* (Merriam 1964), *Introduction to the Sociology of Music* (Adorno 1976), and *The Psychology of Music* (Deutsch 1982), in each case there is little mention of religion or reflection on the enduring presence of music in nearly all religious rituals and human cultures.

Regarding academic conferences, past annual meetings of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature have rarely touched upon music as a feature of religion. Professor Albert L. Blackwell, in *The Sacred in Music* (1999: 11), shared an anecdote from these meetings that mirrors my own experience: “More than seven thousand scholars

attended the meeting. We gathered in over seven hundred different sessions for seminars, workshops, and lectures on almost every imaginable subject relating to the academic study of religion. Of these seven hundred sessions, however, only three bore any relation to music.”

The teaching of religious studies also displays a lack of attention to music, with only passing references in textbooks and films, and few college-level courses on religion and music. For a survey of the presence or absence of music in publications on religion, including college textbooks, encyclopedias, handbooks, and other reference works, see the Introduction in Beck (2006). Briefly restated, most of the standard college textbooks in religious studies and world religions have omitted discussion of music and chant in religion: Smith (1958 [1991]), Parrinder (1971), Fenton (1993), Nielson, Jr. (1993), Hopfe and Woodward (2001), Fisher (2002), Noss (2003), Ellwood and McGraw (2005), Livingston (2005), and Young (2005). Interestingly, postcolonial critiques of “world religions,” such as Tomoko Masuzawa’s *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (2005), fail to account for the overriding presence of music in nearly all forms of religion.

Moreover, music is conspicuously absent in theoretical guides, dictionaries, and anthologies dealing with methods in the study of religion. Beginning with the omission of “music” among the vast “Index of Scholarly Concepts” in Jacques Waardenburg’s otherwise monumental work of 1971, *Classical Approaches to the Study of Religion: Aims, Methods, and Theories of Research*, this tendency has continued in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (Mark C. Taylor 1998), *Guide to the Study of Religion* (Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon 2000), and *Theory and Method in Religious Studies: A Selection of Critical Readings* (Carl Olson 2003). Most regrettably, the dictionaries of relevant terms in religious studies by Aaron W. Hughes and Russell T. McCutcheon, *Religion in 50 Words: A Critical Vocabulary* (2022) and *Religion in 50 More Words: A Critical Vocabulary* (2022), fail to include music, sound, or chant.

Studies in religious experience, despite the influence of William James and Rudolf Otto, have not continued this area’s emphasis on music. After the brief inclusion of music in William James’s classic text *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (1902), succeeding academic works in the field of “religious experience,” including Wayne Proudfoot’s *Religious Experience* (1985) and Ann Taves’s *Religious Experience Reconsidered: A Building Block Approach to the Study of Religion and Other Special Things* (2009), have sidestepped the presence of music. Proudfoot gives extensive

coverage of the thought of James and Schleiermacher, who also highlighted music, but avoids music in his own analysis.

One might assume that works in theology would include music, yet standard references such as *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* (Harrison 1960), and *New Dictionary of Theology: Historical and Systematic* (Davie 2016), have not mentioned it. Foundational works in systematic theology in recent times have also surprisingly left out the musical dimension of religious practice and worship, such as Geoffrey Wainwright's *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life: A Systematic Theology* (1980) and George A. Lindbeck's *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (1984). Important ecumenical works have also neglected this important dimension, including Wilfrid Cantwell Smith's *Towards a World Theology: Faith and the Comparative History of Religion* (1981), Leonard Swidler's collection *Toward a Universal Theology of Religion* (1987), and Paul F. Knitter's *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (2002). Multivolume projects by leading scholars in comparative religion and theology, such as Editor Robert Cummings Neville's three-volume effort (*The Comparative Religious Ideas Project*. Vol. I: *The Human Condition*; Vol. II: *Ultimate Realities*; Vol. III: *Religious Truth* [2000]), while holding great expectations, have failed to deliver on music.

Despite these omissions, however, prominent Christian theologians of the twentieth century have displayed their love of music and its quality of transcendence, one even aspiring to hear music in heaven. The great Swiss Protestant theologian Karl Barth (1886–1968), despite not taking note of music in his monumental work *The Epistle to the Romans* (1922), confided in his 1956 collection of essays on Mozart, *Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart* (1986: 16), that he placed the great musician above theologians in the afterlife: “I even have to confess that if I ever get to heaven, I would first of all seek out Mozart, and only then inquire after Augustine, St. Thomas, Luther, Calvin, and Schleiermacher.” Barth (1986: 38) even affirmed his own unique perspective that views beautiful music as a means of proclaiming the Word of God: “He [Mozart] just does it—precisely in that humility in which he himself is, so to speak, only the instrument with which he allows us to hear what he hears: what surges at him from God's creation, what rises in him, and must proceed from him.” The Roman Catholic theologian Hans Kung (1928–2021), though also not discussing music in his works, articulated the notion of music's capacity for transcendence in *Mozart: Traces of Transcendence* (1993: 33):

Mozart's music—seems to show in its sensual yet unsensual beauty, power and clarity, how wafer-thin is the boundary between music,

which is the most abstract of all arts, and religion, which has always had a special connection with music. For both, though they are different, direct us to what is ultimately unspeakable, to mystery. And though music cannot become a religion of art, the art of music is the most spiritual of all symbols for that “mystical sanctuary of our religion,” the divine itself . . . for me Mozart’s music has relevance for religion not only where religious and church themes or forms emerge, but precisely through the compositional technique of the non-vocal, purely instrumental music, through the way in which this music interprets the world, a way which transcends extra-musical conceptuality.

Not to be ignored by theologians, the great Lutheran composer J. S. Bach was considered a theologian himself by Yale theology professor Jaroslav Pelikan in *Bach Among the Theologians* (1986). Pelikan (1988) even likened theology to a “melody.” Yet according to Jeremy S. Begbie (2005: 719), “In modern theology, music is conspicuous by its absence. The theology and literature interface is well served and the same increasingly applies to other art forms, not least the visual arts. But music has attracted little attention.” It is thus timely that theology address music and its abiding effect on religious experience.

While the greatest amount of theological study has emerged within the Christian tradition, the rapidly growing field of comparative theology holds promise, not as a confessional exercise, but as a theoretical discipline for cross-cultural study that transcends boundaries. Oxford professor Keith Ward, in *Religion and Revelation: A Theology of Revelation in the World’s Religions* (1994: 50), was one of the first to define comparative theology: “Comparative theology is an enquiry into ideas of God and revelation, of ultimate reality and its disclosures to human minds, as such ideas arise across the full spectrum of human history and experience.” Several issues and directions in the field of comparative theology are further developed in Francis X. Clooney, S. J., *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning across Religious Borders* (2010a), and *The New Comparative Theology: Interreligious Insights from the Next Generation* (2010b). The broad approach of comparative theology has been fully stated by Catherine Cornille in *Meaning and Method in Comparative Theology* (2020: 1): “Comparative theology forms an integral part of every religious and theological tradition. Throughout history, religions have developed their beliefs, practices, and overall sense of identity through a process of borrowing, refuting, and reinterpreting elements from

other religious traditions.” Though not yet discussing music in depth, the new developments in comparative theology provide optimistic points of entry for the inclusion of music in the wider frame of theological discourse.

Conversely, the field of ethnomusicology shows a paucity of coverage of religion in both teaching and research. The teaching of ethnomusicology and world music in hundreds of institutions of higher learning in America employs a catalog of textbooks designed to expose the eager student to the sounds of foreign singing and instrument playing. In most texts, however, the emphasis is on the visual and tactile elements with colorful illustrations of natives in full attire performing their music in exotic venues. Four of the most popular world music textbooks—Alves (2012), Bakan (2007), Miller (2016), and Shelemay (2001)—make no mention of “religion” in their indices and include little to no discussion regarding the use of music in relation to the transcendent or the divine. Two other texts, May (1983) and Titon (2016), contain only fragmented references to religion, primarily in the context of magic or tribal dance. The exception is Bruno Nettl (2001: 10), whose citation in the opening is an important defense of universalism in music and one of the pillars of support for the Musicology of Religion: “In all societies, music is found in religious ritual—it is almost everywhere a mainstay of sacred ceremonies—leading some scholars to suggest that perhaps music was actually invented for humans to have a special way of communicating with the supernatural.”

Despite these anomalies, both religion and music, however defined, are claimed to be “universal human phenomena,” occurring in all forms of culture and civilization. Scholars of religion routinely discuss the concept of *homo religiosus*, “religious human,” as an indication that religiosity is embedded within human nature. Musicologists have adopted the idea of *homo musicus*, “musical human,” noting that to be fully human is to be “musical.” What behooves our attention is not simply that religion and music are universal but that religion and music have been inextricably bound together throughout history and geography. In fact, new research in ritual studies suggests that humans are also *homo ritualis*, “ritual human,” a template that graphically reveals the link between religion and music. Yet it is surprising that the widespread and consistent association of music with religion has still largely eluded the eyes and ears of scholars, both in religious studies and in musicology. And despite the plethora of ethnographic data available on music and religion collected by social scientists and ethnomusicologists, many salient aspects of music and its almost universal association with religious rituals and ceremonies around the world have not been suf-

ficiently analyzed and interpreted. Targeted research by ethnomusicologists and anthropologists has often shown how musical performances consolidate various human communities, reinforce identities, enunciate boundaries, and strengthen hierarchies. And yet for decades the overall role of music in religious practice as well as the relation between religion and music as a meaningful locus for understanding religious experience has eluded religious studies scholarship. This situation has been recognized by two prominent scholars in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (1987): Ter Ellingson, in “Music and Religion” (1987: Vol. 10, 171), “There is no integrated study of this subject on a worldwide scale”; and Alexander L. Ringer, in “Religious Music of the West” (1987: Vol. 10, 216), “The well-nigh universal interpenetration of music and religion notwithstanding, there exists no overall treatment of the subject in English.” These observations are also present in the 2005 second edition.

We note at this point that the combined expression of “religion and music” may appear “problematic” and require clarification. Christopher I. Lehrich (2014: 24) offers insights into perceptions regarding the study of “religion and music” in different fields of study:

One rarely speaks of “religion and music” in general terms. Instead, the phrase shifts to “religion in music” or “music in religion.” The direction of subordination depends on one’s home discipline: scholars of religion subordinate music, musicologists of religion. Either way, the secondary term divides: within the set of “religion,” “music” defines a subset. From this point, subdivisions accumulate rapidly: music and religion, having become music in religion, breaks into “music in religions of South Asia,” thence a chain of increasing particularity.

Despite these issues, what is lacking is a consistent methodology across disciplines that starts with the premise that religion and music are bound together in fundamental ways.

The principal conundrum underscored here is that religion and music are each deemed universal by their respective domains yet neglected in the other’s repertoire of scholarship and educational materials. This situation may be said to have morphed into an invisible elephant in the room within academic circles. One side mostly avoids discussion of the other, giving the appearance of a lacuna of information and method when it comes to the two in combination. Moreover, all of this is complicated by the current popular

interest in music, religion, and spirituality, with the attendant presumption that they are intrinsically related.

Our response in this book is to first examine the principal viewpoints on religion and music in selected disciplines in the academy, namely religious studies, the social sciences, philosophy, theology, liturgical studies, and cognitive studies, and then to make the case for the creation of a new realm of information and research with suggested methods. An example from the lore of the ancients is appropriate here. A Buddhist version of a famous parable tells how several blind men are invited by a king to his palace to describe an elephant. The blind men, after each touching a different part of the elephant, describe the elephant as a plow, a granary, and a winnowing basket. To the king's surprise, the blind men cannot agree with each other's interpretation of the elephant, and none can describe the elephant in entirety. Like the blind men and the elephant, scholars from the stated areas do not necessarily agree with each other when it comes to religion and music, and none of the disciplines alone can do the pairing of the two justice. However, due to the growing consensus of interest in the subject, both in academia and in the popular sphere, and the combined expertise of scholars from a variety of disciplines, eyes and ears appear ready to open to the new field of Musicology of Religion.

Popular Domain

Music is a holy place, a cathedral so majestic that we can sense the majesty of the universe, and also a hovel so simple and private that none of us can plumb its deepest secrets.

—Don Campbell, *The Mozart Effect: Tapping the Power of Music to Heal the Body, Strengthen the Mind, and Unlock the Creative Spirit*

Notwithstanding the apparent separation of religion and music in the academy, the opposite situation occurs in the popular domain. A spate of books over the years has comported to present a unified spirituality or religious dimension of music for either specialized audiences or for general popular consumption. One of the first for Western classical music was R.W.S. Mendl's *The Divine Quest in Music* (1957). A rising interest in the religious lives of the Western classical composers, often passed over in the standard

biographies, later resulted in Patrick Kavanaugh's *Spiritual Lives of the Great Composers* (1992).

In this vein a rapid rise of interest has occurred in music and spirituality, coinciding with the New Age Movement. As such, New Age books on music have imbibed the spirit of esotericism and mysticism. One early work for esoteric readers was of theosophist Cyril Scott (1879–1970), *Music and Its Secret Influence throughout the Ages* (1933), many years later followed by David Tame, *The Secret Power of Music: The Transformation of Self and Society through Musical Energy* (1984), Peter Hamel with his popular *Through Music to the Self* (1987), and R. J. Stewart, *The Spiritual Dimension of Music: Altering Consciousness for Inner Development* (1990). As part of New Age, music therapy has become a significant factor in the elevation of sound and spirituality. Spearheaded by the New Age music of pioneer Steven Halpern, the concept of 'sound healing' was established by Halpern and Louis Savary in *Sound Health: The Music and Sounds that Make us Whole* (1985). Later, Don Campbell's *The Mozart Effect: Tapping the Power of Music to Heal the Body, Strengthen the Mind, and Unlock the Creative Spirit* (1997) became a very popular work, along with his earlier anthology of articles on music therapy, *Music Physician for Times to Come* (1991), which is a useful introduction to the healing powers of sound and sacred music. Many other books as well as audiovisual media on music therapy and spirituality continue to enlarge upon similar themes.

Driven by the pursuit of esoteric interests and spiritual "harmony," the theme of Pythagoras and the harmony of the spheres has aroused popular attention. Jamie James's *The Music of the Spheres: Music, Science, and the Natural Order of the Universe* (1993) provided a useful introduction to this normally arcane subject. Blending the mathematical with the musical, James's book revealed the order of the universe as understood by scientists and composers who, in the words of the description, "perceived distances between objects in the sky mirrored (and were mirrored by) the spaces between notes forming chords and scales. The smooth operation of the cosmos created a divine harmony that composers sought to capture and express . . . and to what extent it survives today—from Pythagoras to Newton, Bach to Beethoven, and on to the twentieth century of Einstein, Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Cage and Glass."

In the mid-1990s, an unexpected surge of interest in Gregorian chant occurred following the Angel recording of *Chant* in 1994, sung by the Benedictine monks of Santo Domingo de Silos in Spain. The tranquil sounds

of the monks helped bring much-needed peace to many, though few knew anything about Gregorian chant or understood the language in which it is sung. As a companion book to the Angel CD, Katharine Le Mée, in *Chant: The Origins, Form, Practice, and Healing Power of Gregorian Chant* (1994), discussed the historical and liturgical sources of the chant and provided information on the latest research on its therapeutic qualities. As explained by the author: “The calm, measured, almost transcendent sound of the monks singing these ancient melodies seems to put us in touch with our true selves . . . The sudden popularity of this music today—after 1,300 years—is indicative of the deep spiritual hunger manifesting everywhere.” Within a few years, the chanting of diverse religious traditions gained in ascendancy, coinciding with the commercial popularity of “world music.”

Robert Gass and Kathleen Brehony, in *Chanting: Discovering Spirit in Sound* (1999), responded to the growing market for world music and religious chant with a comprehensive presentation of chant in Hindu, Christian, Buddhist, Jewish, Islamic, African, Shamanic, Goddess, and Native American traditions, including notations of twenty-five chants. Stressing the therapeutic effects of chant cross-culturally, the authors explain: “The ancient art of chanting has long been embraced by the world’s great religious traditions as a path to healing and enlightenment, but only recently has Western science begun to recognize its therapeutic effects on the body and mind. *Chanting* provides a fascinating introduction to this powerful and increasingly popular practice and shows you how to use chant in your own life as a powerful tool for relaxation, body-mind healing, and spiritual self-discovery.”

The interest in New Age forms of music was accompanied by a deep interest in Middle Eastern and Asian forms of spirituality and music. The Islamic Sufi message of the mystical spirituality of sound and music reached early audiences through Hazrat Inayat Khan’s *The Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan* (1962), complemented by the extraordinary popularity of Pakistani Qawwali singer Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, as well as the Turkish Whirling Dervishes representing the teachings of thirteenth-century mystical poet Jalalu’d-din Rumi. Regarding the Whirling Dervishes, Shems Friedlander (1992: 130) has summarized their spiritual approach to music according to Rumi, who was respectfully known as Mevlana (“our master”): “The teaching of Mevlana depends upon and is expressed in three elements: dance, music, and love. In his works, Mevlana admires music and accepts it as high art. According to him, music begins where speech ends, and it has the ability to contain and expose what words are unable to do. The language of music is universal. It is the language of lovers.”

After years of propagating Haṭha Yoga (physical and physiological Yoga) in the West, a new wave of interest also occurred in Hindu practices of Mantra chant and Yoga, as expressed by Russill Paul in *The Yoga of Sound: Healing & Enlightenment through the Sacred Practice of Mantra* (2004). A native Indian Christian by birth, Paul proclaimed that America is ready for the spirituality of the Yoga of Sound:

My hope is that yogis and spiritual seekers in America will earnestly take up the study and practice of the Yoga of Sound. I truly believe that it can contribute an essential element to the spiritual depth that people are seeking . . . I feel that it is time for American yogis and spiritual practitioners to reintroduce the yoga of sacred sound. Such a study will empower the American soul, infusing the growing practice of yoga in this country with a mystical system for reaching the highest goal of samadhi [liberation]. (2004: 237–238)

This emphasis on Indian sound had been prefigured in an earlier attempt to awaken society to the value of listening and realizing cosmic sound in the form of Nāda-Brahman by jazz producer and writer Joachim-Ernst Berendt in *Nada Brahma: The World is Sound; Music and the Landscape of Consciousness* (1987: 5): “Human beings with their disproportionate emphasis on seeing have brought on the excess of rationality, of analysis and abstraction, whose breakdown we are now witnessing . . . Living almost exclusively through the eyes has led us to almost not living at all.” Other popular works fitting into this category of Indian sound and spirituality include Cynthia Snodgrass, *The Sonic Thread: Sound as a Pathway to Spirituality* (2002), Patrick Bernard, *Music as Yoga: Discover the Healing Power of Sound* (2004), and Richard Whitehurst, *Mahamantra Yoga: Chanting to Anchor the Mind and Access the Divine* (2011). To document the rapidly growing phenomenon of collective devotional singing known as Kirtan, and to build upon the introductory work of Linda Johnsen and Maggie Jacobus in *Kirtan! Chanting as a Spiritual Path* (2007), Steven Rosen collected dozens of lively conversations with leading performers in *The Yoga of Kirtan: Conversations on the Sacred Art of Chanting* (2008). For exploration into the subtle joys of Kirtan, see Pranada Comtois’s *Prema Kirtan: Journey into Sacred Sound* (2022).

Populist authors and musicians in the West have also promulgated positive views on the enduring nature and intrinsic value of sound and music for the human species. Oliver Sacks, in *Musicophilia* (2007: x),

opines regarding the perennial human capacity for music: “This propensity to music—this musicophilia—shows itself in infancy, is manifest and central in every culture, and probably goes back to the very beginnings of the species. It may be developed or shaped by the cultures we live in, by the circumstances of life, or by the particular gifts or weaknesses we have as individuals—but it lies so deep in human nature that one is tempted to think of it as innate.” Also worthy of mention, a multivolume project by musician Justin St. Vincent, *The Spiritual Significance of Music* (2009–2012), gathered hundreds of interviews of musicians from around the world testifying to the spirituality of music in their lives. These publications amount to an ever-expanding public interest in the “spirituality” or religious dimension of music, regardless of religion, genre, or geographic location, which begs for a more intellectual or academic venue for research and scholarship.

Envisioning Musicology of Religion

I pause at this point for a personal and professional narrative on how this project on Musicology of Religion was conceived and generated. The narrative progresses through several phases, beginning in New York City where I was born, then to Upstate New York, Denver, to India and back, then on to Florida, Syracuse, and lastly to Louisiana in pursuit of an academic career in religion and music. Throughout the journey, my parents were instrumental in their support and encouragement. With roots in Minneapolis, they began their professional lives in New York City where my father, Harold Cooke, worked as a professional musician: composer, vocal arranger for Broadway shows, and pianist at the famous Blue Angel. As a close friend and colleague of fellow Minnesotan, piano legend Cy Walter, he was well connected with a coterie of popular musicians and composers in Manhattan. I was told that he opened for singer Mabel Mercer on occasion. There are faint memories of our house being filled with lively conversation and the music of George Gershwin, Cole Porter, and Benny Goodman from the Great American Songbook. My mother, Dale Hanson, worked as an interior designer at Raymond Loewy’s firm in New York. As she was also musically trained, I took piano lessons and sometimes even visited places where my dad was playing. However, things were about to change, but not without a silver lining.

When I was about age ten, my mother married again, to George A. Beck, an accomplished industrial designer working for General Elec-

tric Company in Upstate New York, and who soon partnered with her to form the successful design firm George A. Beck Associates. But while my parents would have been pleased if I had taken up design or visual arts as my two younger brothers had done, they recognized that I was becoming more passionate about music. In fact, it was my good fortune that our new home featured a grand piano and a treasure trove of classical sheet music and records. Now living in a quiet rural area, I was able to continue my music training uninterrupted, this time with an emphasis on classical piano. Listening to the symphonies and concertos of the great masters, I was drawn to the beauty and richness of the European classical tradition. As a teenager, my desire to play the piano pieces of Chopin, Brahms, and Debussy led to private lessons with Professor George Mulfinger at Syracuse University's Crouse College of Music. Simultaneously, the elegance of sacred music made its impression as I was greatly moved by the singing of the *German Requiem* of Brahms in high school chorus. During church attendance, I also noticed how the rousing hymns were enhanced by beautiful organ music and its association with priestly rituals, gestures, and the tranquility of contemplative pauses. And in my senior year, playing bass guitar in a dance band enabled me to realize the dynamic effects of rhythm on groups of my peers. Thus, due to the exposure and support of music from my parents, an entire range of experiences increased my love and attraction to this great art, both sacred and secular. Yet what was missing was a mature understanding of why music was so attractive to me, and by extension, to humanity. I suddenly needed answers to a host of new questions that kept me thinking and pondering for years to come.

As an undergraduate student at the University of Denver in the late 1960s, I began, like some of my friends, to search for the meaning of life. Enrolling in courses like Introduction to Religion and Introduction to Philosophy, I subsequently took related courses in Sociology of Religion, Anthropology of Religion, and Psychology of Religion, which eventually led to a BA in the social sciences. My courses dealing with religion contained no discussion of religious music or ritual and music, and a required course on Western culture, "Arts & Ideas," included little or no mention of religion. And in those days there were no courses in ethnomusicology or world music. As I had already recognized the importance of sacred music in Western music history and was even beginning to appreciate non-Western sacred music, I was hoping for further guidance. Yet at the undergraduate level this was not forthcoming.

After university, some extraordinary life experiences in Asia made the connections between religion and music more vital, realizable, and worth

investigating. Disenchanted by the moral decline of American youth on college campuses in the wake of the countercultural explosion, I had begun seeking alternative lifestyles and directions. My chosen path involved the practice of devotional Yoga (Bhakti) that included studying Sanskrit and listening to Indian music. In search of deeper knowledge and experience of Indian culture and religion, I decided to spend an extended period of time in India. Initially surprised by the direction of this quest, my parents nonetheless encouraged me to see it to completion.

Arriving in early 1976, I sought out “holy places” in northern India where there was vibrant devotional music, including Rishikesh, Hardwar, Jaipur, Prayag, Mathura, and Vrindaban. To penetrate further into this element, I spent months listening attentively to music in the Hindu temples in the Braj region in Uttar Pradesh, but also at Sikh Gurdwaras in the Punjab and other remote areas of the country. In several cases, I was assisted by devotees of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), founded by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda, who, beside introducing me to the devotional music of Bengal Vaishnavism in West Bengal, guided me to other communities employing music in religious worship. However, to understand the complexities of the melodies and rhythms of the music, I realized I needed to undertake formal training in the classical music of Dhrupad and Khayal, available only in big cities like Kolkata and New Delhi. Attending weekly lessons from exponents of different schools of music in these cities over several years, I eventually rose to the standard of all-India performance, earned an academic degree in Hindustani vocal music, and appeared on Indian national television.

Although I had studied the music of several musical *gharanas* (“traditions”), I ultimately concentrated on the Agra Gharana, one of the oldest and most esteemed lineages in Hindustani music (see Vijay Kichlu 1987). In all these endeavors, I was overwhelmed by what I sensed were experiences of the divine or the sacred as manifest in music, whether classical or devotional. Thus for me religion and music often felt synonymous. The depth of insight given by my principal gurus and teachers was extraordinary: Sangitacharya Sailendranath Banerjee of Seniya Gharana (Tansen Music College, Kolkata), Shri Ashish Goswami of the Patiala Gharana (Kolkata), Dagar Brothers of the Dagar Dhrupad lineage (New Delhi), Pandit Arun Bhaduri of Kirana Gharana (Sangeet Research Academy, Kolkata), and Pandit Vijay Kichlu of the Agra Gharana (Founding Director, Sangeet Research Academy, Kolkata). In addition, I was able to hear live performances of great maestros like Pt.

Mallikarjun Mansur, Pt. Kumar Gandharva, Ustad Latafat Hussain Khan, and Smt. Hirabai Barodekar, among many others. Being blessed with a largesse of practical knowledge and experience, I was considering a professional Indian music career, yet my academic background took the upper hand as I began to contemplate the larger comparative issues and theoretical questions related to religion and music. My conviction deepened that music and religion were intimately bound together in multiple ways, not only in India but perhaps on a worldwide scale. If this were the case in Hindu and Sikh traditions, I asked, then what about other religions and cultures?

To pursue serious issues and questions regarding religion and music in an academic setting, I needed to return to America. But before departing from India in 1980, I was further blessed to have married my talented wife, Smt. Kajal Dass, in a traditional Indian ceremony. Besides directing her own art school in Kolkata, she held multiple exhibitions of her art in places like the famed Academy of Fine Arts. Continuing her work in America, she published a book on Indian decorative design (see Kajal Dass Beck 2016). After arrival, we first settled near Tampa, where my father, Harold Cooke, had retired from his career in music. He gladly pledged his assistance to my proposed plan of academic teaching and research in religion and music and helped with many arrangements. It was a wonderful reunion, as he also gave me cherished piano lessons and shared personal experiences from the good old days in New York.

For graduate studies, I enrolled in the University of South Florida in Tampa, which had just started a new MA degree program in religious studies. After acceptance into the program, I was trained in biblical literature and religion under Professors James F. Strange and William Shea, and in eastern religions and literature under Professors Daniel E. Bassuk and George Artola (visiting from University of Toronto). At USF, I was introduced to the field of ethnomusicology by Professor Patricia Waterman. As widow of Richard Waterman, one of the founders of the Society of Ethnomusicology, Patricia taught me the basics of the subject, including the most important thinkers and sources. By 1982, I was ready for doctoral studies.

In 1983, we moved to Syracuse to be near my mother who had retired from her career in interior design. Applying to the Department of Religion at Syracuse University (1983–1990) upon the recommendation of Prof. George Artola, I studied several years (1983–1990) for the PhD in Religion, South Asia, under Professors H. Daniel Smith, Agehananda Bharati, and Richard Pilgrim. During this time, foundations were provided in history of religions by Professor Charles H. Long, along with training in theology and

philosophy of religion by Professors James Wiggins and David L. Miller. At SU, I also earned an MA in musicology in 1986, which included training in world music from ethnomusicologist Professor Ellen Koskoff (visiting from Eastman School of Music), and courses in the European classical tradition from Professors Howard Boatwright, George Nugent, Eric Jensen, and English musicologist Wilfrid Mellers (visiting from University of York). In preparation for my dissertation on sacred sound in Hinduism, I spent the summer of 1988 in India, conducting university-sponsored research and study under several renowned scholars, primarily Professor Gaurināth Śāstri and Professor Govinda Gopāl Mukhopādhyāya. My research and study at Syracuse University culminated in the publication of two monographs: *Sonic Theology: Hinduism and Sacred Sound* (1993), and *Sonic Liturgy: Ritual and Music in Hindu Tradition* (2012). For interested students and scholars, the basic themes and ideas from these books have become accessible in an online course, “Hindu Devotional Music and Chant,” offered by the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies, Oxford, UK.

In 1990, I began my teaching career in Religious Studies, and was in turn invited to create courses in religion and music at several institutions, including Louisiana State University, College of Charleston, Tulane University, University of North Carolina–Wilmington, and Loyola University New Orleans. But as time passed, a persistent issue kept emerging—if religion is approached from the different methods in the social sciences, why is there not a separate field where religion is approached purely through the lens of sound, music, and music-making? And therefore, just as one encounters sociology of religion, anthropology of religion, psychology of religion, and archaeology of religion, I came to envision “Musicology of Religion.” Yet more steps needed to be taken on the journey before this vision could be realized.

A close precedent for this book was the preparation of an anthology on music in world religions. Professor Harold Coward of the University of Victoria (British Columbia) kindly invited me to serve as editor for the volume, soliciting other authors who were also performers. The outcome was *Sacred Sound: Experiencing Music in World Religions* (Beck 2006), which has since become a popular textbook for courses in world religions and music, covering Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Buddhism. Although preceded by the anthologies of Joyce Irwin (1983) and Lawrence E. Sullivan (1997), the 2006 volume for the first time included recorded examples by the authors themselves, enabling students to listen to sacred

music and learn simultaneously. But I also soon recognized a growing need for an accompanying text that outlined the study of religion and music as a special field of research and publication. Hence, *Musicology of Religion* may serve as a useful companion to the 2006 book.

As I continued in my teaching, I was surprised, and glad, to discover that colleagues and mentors in Asian studies shared my predilection for the combined study of religion and music. During a 1992–1993 Fulbright Research Grant, I had the opportunity to record and document a large body of the Hindu temple music that had earlier attracted my attention to the close relation between religion and music. In his foreword to the published song archive, South Asian studies scholar John S. Hawley offered these kind words:

The strong relationship between music and religion is well known to millions of the world's citizens—people who belong to a host of contrasting religious traditions. Some of these religions go so far as to take a stand *against* the power of the tie between religion and music, so as to rescue the holy word from the vanities, distractions, and deformities that might pollute it if allowed a musical manifestation. When a religion embarks on a sonoclastic campaign of this sort, however, that effort only serves to underscore the strength of the connection that is sought to be dismantled. One of the ongoing embarrassments of the field of Religious Studies is that we represent this bond so feebly in the classroom. All too few Religion departments have a course called “Religion and Music” or some variant of that title. Yet every department should, and Guy Beck, taking a single religious tradition as his example, shows us why. (Hawley 2011: xxi)

Taking these words to heart, and recalling the generous assistance of my professors, gurus, music teachers, and especially my parents, I made the final decision to take up this project of *Musicology of Religion* when I received the invitation by religious studies scholar Robert A. Segal of the University of Aberdeen to contribute an article on Music for the second edition of *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion* (2021). This was a vital stimulant, and incidentally may also serve as a thumbnail introduction to *Musicology of Religion*.

Theories and Methods

Academic interest in religion and music, while currently on the rise, has been late on arrival. Awareness of neglect was acknowledged over fifty years ago in *A Dictionary of Comparative Religion* (1970: 457), edited by S.G.F. Brandon: “The connection between music and religion is so generally recognized that it is surprising to find how little work has been done, particularly from the side of comparative religion, in relating the phenomenology of the two.” The avoidance by anthropologists, musicologists, and ethnomusicologists of the religious significance of music was also noted by Brandon (1970: 457): “Musicologists, ethnomusicologists and anthropologists have assembled details of instruments, scales, rhythm, harmony (if any) and performance from many ethnic and religious areas. But, although so much is known about the practical function of music in various contexts, little attention has been paid to its significance as an aspect of religious action.” Brandon also took notice that historians who have examined the development of music have sidestepped the enormous importance of religion in music-making: “Histories of music, which normally cover more or less the same ground, beginning with “primitive” music and proceeding, via the ancient civilizations, music in the Orient and the West, frequently tend to overlook the religious significance of their material” (457). Moreover, music was minimal in ritual studies, as noted by Sharpe (1971: 57): “The study of ritual, and its means of expression in art, music, and drama, has been seriously neglected by scholarship for far too long, with a consequent distortion of perspective. This whole area needs to be considered afresh.”

When it comes to the study of religion and music, there are multiple perspectives. To clarify the process of understanding throughout, I have chosen to apply a typology of two theories of religion originally posited by historian of religions Eric J. Sharpe, in *Understanding Religion* (1983). The first position is the “Window Theory” of religion that considers the world, as reflected in religion or religious experience, as a “window” or opening to a possible transcendent or supernatural realm: “[A]ll things in the world and in human experience are evidence of the divine.” This position is characteristic of the areas of history of religions, phenomenology of religion, and theology. Though traceable to ancient thinkers and to the influence of Kant, one finds its modern expression in terms of religion in the thought of Friedrich Schleiermacher, Wilhelm Dilthey, Max Muller, Rudolf Otto, Gerardus van der Leeuw, Mircea Eliade, and others. For music, these thinkers favor aesthetics and endorse the notion that music itself is much more

than an art or skill, in fact a veritable “window” into a higher realm of reality. By contrast, the second position, the “Mirror Theory,” views religion as a human projection, a social construction, or a product of historical and cultural processes. This position has dominated the social sciences and many of the humanities. Although the influences of Hume and Comte are evident here, the more accurate point of origin is Ludwig Feuerbach, a student of theology who rejected traditional Christian teachings and is the founder of the modern secular view of religion. The critiques offered by Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, and Emile Durkheim are examples of the Mirror Theory, as each is indebted to Feuerbach in varying degrees. Regarding the role of music, it is conspicuous by its absence in works reflecting the Mirror Theory.

This book comprises eight chapters that trace the course of the Window and Mirror approaches since the nineteenth century in religion studies, social sciences (especially anthropology), musicology, ethnomusicology, philosophy, theology, liturgical studies, and cognitive studies of musical perception, religious experience, and brain function. In each of these fields, there is a reprisal of theoretical and methodological development from early twentieth-century interest in universals to the current postmodernist focus on particularity and back again to the contemporary revival of universalistic concepts and methods. The general argument is the cumulatively historical one that posits that this pattern obtains in each of the constitutive fields of religion studies and musicology, thereby justifying the coalescence of universalistic and particularistic music and religion theories and methods into a new discipline. Although some critics aim to pit one side against the other as rivals, the endgame is not to supplant relativism with universalism, or universalism with relativism, as the extreme in either direction is disadvantageous. What we are seeking here is a balance, or “creative tension,” that allows for free inquiry and a diversity of options in the study of religion and music.

Providing context, I will now introduce the Window Theory and its association with the development of religious studies in its early phases when religion was considered as a universal or near universal element in human experience. Early pioneers in the phenomenology of religion also viewed music as forming an integral part of religious experience and in the dimension of the sacred or holy. A lesser-known fact is the direct influence of sound and music on the lives and works of thinkers instrumental in establishing religious studies and the phenomenology of religion. The foundations were laid in the early nineteenth century by liberal theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), who single-handedly refashioned

theology for the modern world. And while Schleiermacher is also credited with establishing the groundwork for the academic study of religion, with its stress on religious experience, recent studies have noted that he was also deeply engaged with music in his life, and that he made major contributions to aesthetics.

In the early twentieth century, Edmund Husserl, the founder of the philosophical school of phenomenology, became a major influence on multiple areas of academia, not the least of which was the phenomenology of religion. Interestingly, Husserl learned from German musicologists and their analyses of tonal experience. Moreover, he was influenced by Schleiermacher, who was himself impacted by Spinoza. In fact, a continuous line of understanding of the importance of self-consciousness and the world of human experience can be traced from Spinoza to Schleiermacher through Wilhelm Dilthey, and to Husserl and Otto.

As a pivotal figure in religious studies and a thinker influenced by Schleiermacher and Husserl, Rudolf Otto displayed a profound interest in sacred sound and music. He established his famous theory of the numinous, the inner core of religion as “the Holy,” in the landmark study *The Idea of the Holy* (1958 [German 1917, English 1923]). The numinous experience was universal and *a priori* in authentic religious experience and could be a basis for comparative study across cultures. As a signature element in his theory of the holy, Rudolf Otto (1958: 190) recognized the importance of sound and its connection to the primordial experience of the numinous: “Feelings and emotions, as states of mental tension, find their natural relaxation in uttered sounds. It is evident that the numinous feeling also, in its first outbreak in consciousness, must have found sounds for its expression, and at first inarticulate sounds rather than words.” Furthermore, Otto (49) highlighted musical experience as synonymous with the numinous, or “wholly other.” “Musical feeling is rather (like numinous feeling) something ‘wholly other.’”

Accordingly, Dutch phenomenologist of religion Gerardus van der Leeuw, in *Religion in Essence and Manifestation* (1938), recognized the ubiquitous nature of music and its importance for the study of religious worship. And in *Sacred and Profane Beauty: The Holy in Art* (1963: 225), he stated that “Almost all worship uses music . . . Religion can no more do without singing than it can without the word.”

After Otto and van der Leeuw, however, scholars in the phenomenology of religion and history of religions appear to have lessened their interest in music, as it is conspicuously absent in the work of Joachim Wach, Mircea Eliade, Joseph M. Kitagawa, Geo Widengren, Raffaele Pettazzoni, and