The *Logoi* of Song: Chant as Embodiment of Theology in Orthodox Christian Prayer and Worship

By Sydney Walker Freedman

For the award of PhD

Supervisors: Dr Helen Phelan and Very Rev Ivan Moody

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Sydney Nicoletta Walker Freedman  

Abstract  

This practice-based study explores how chant of the Eastern Orthodox Church embodies theology and how it helps worshippers to do the same. It consists of a theological investigation and three case studies, which include two live performances: hymnography of the services of bridegroom matins from Great and Holy Week; chant and ritual song in the life and folk practices of Lakhushdi Village, Upper Svaneti, Republic of Georgia; and a particular vespers service, which included the participation of my ensemble, several colleagues, and the wider community. These contexts also engage other liturgical art forms, such as iconography, with which the chanted hymnography interacts. My approach is practice-based and cross-disciplinary, including historical and ethnomusicology, theology, and performance. The methodology includes liturgical and musicological analysis; theological inquiry; autoethnographic fieldwork in Georgia and Ireland; creative, reflective writing; and performance. The performances demonstrate and shed light on aspects of embodiment and on chant as a palpable, performative agent, and the fieldwork surrounding them shows how theology can be an important tool in chant pedagogy. The writing of this dissertation is also understood as a performative activity and element of the research. The performances, however, are not simply objects for autoethnographic research; they also show aspects of my work that are best communicated through practice and embodiment rather than through written explanations. This research is significant within Orthodox Christian studies as it synthesises and makes accessible a variety of significant theological, cultural, and musicological information. More widely, it is of interest not only to clergy and church musicians but to ethnomusicologists, anthropologists, philosophers, educators, and singers.
Declaration

I hereby declare that this is my own work and has not been submitted for the award of any Degree in any other University or Third Level Institution.

Sydney Nicoletta Walker Freedman

Signed: ___________________________ Date: ________________

Supervisors: Dr. Helen Phelan / Very Rev. Ivan Moody, PhD

Signed: ___________________________ Date: ________________

Signed: ___________________________ Date: ________________
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Introduction

This study is an exploration of the role of chant in Eastern Orthodox Christian prayer and worship, with specific emphasis on its embodied nature and its work in theologising. Though much of this study applies to all Orthodox chant traditions, there is a strong focus on Western Georgian polyphonic chant and religious folk song. These traditions have received little scholarly analysis and interpretation, and they are of interest due to their particular musical characteristics and cultural contexts. However, other chant traditions are represented, especially in Chapters II and III and in the performances that accompany this text. Following the methodological chapter, this work takes the form of a theological survey, followed by three case studies, each of which employs specific research methods and focuses on a particular context or tradition. The first is an exploration of the interaction of chant and iconography in the bridegroom matins services of Holy Week and also includes a related case study of chant in a concert setting; the second is an ethnographic and theological study of Georgian folk religious song from the Svaneti region; and the third is a short field study of a vespers service in which my ensemble participated. These cases are on a kind of spectrum, with church services and religious rituals on one end and concerts on the other, and that in Chapter V is a meeting point, joining the performance of a university ensemble with the service of small vespers. Though it may seem that the concert and vespers service were merely contrived for this research, they are not entirely unique situations. My ensemble carried out a number of other performances, which I could have studied, and I have participated in many services that included a variety of chant traditions and the work of many singers. All of the case studies in this work are not simply interesting themselves but lead to ideas and show phenomena that have a much wider scope. Many aspects, including musical structures and theological imagery, occur across all contexts. Of particular note is the theology of St Maximus the Confessor, whose teachings had great influence on later Byzantine theology and who was exiled and buried in Georgia, some of whose works survive only in Georgian, and whose person and teachings are behind Georgian philosophical and folk cultural elements.¹ This study is practice-based, emphasising fieldwork around situations in which I am a full participant, and the two primarily

¹ See Tamila Mgaloblishvili and Khoperia, Lela, Eds., St Maximus the Confessor and Georgia (London: Bennett and Bloom, 2009).
academic chapters are informed by my work as an Orthodox Church member, teacher, and singer. I will fully explain the research methods in the following chapter and will end this introduction with a brief note on the term ‘logoi’ as I am using it in this study.

As I will mention in Chapter I, I have taken the idea of ‘logoi’ from the writings of St Maximus the Confessor, though it occurs in the work of earlier authors, such as Evagrius the Solitary, as well as later theologians and philosophers, including the Georgian Ioane Petritsi. A thing’s ‘logos’ is understood to be its ‘inner essence,’ ‘principle,’ or ‘reason for existence,’ what God’s will is for that given created being. The work of Christ, the Logos incarnate, is also understood to be manifest in created things through their logoi as they co-operate with and participate in Him. ‘Logoi,’ then, have to do with purpose, effect, meaning, and expression, especially as these are integral to theology and well-being, to spiritual life and human existence and interaction within creation. It is these aspects of chant that I will explore in this study.

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4 For a short explanation, see the introduction in Vladimir Lossky, The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997).

5 Note that I am not primarily discussing musical aesthetics, which differ among cultures and individuals.
Chapter I

Contemplating the *Logoi* of Things: Foundations and Methodology

Introduction

In many ritual and sacred contexts, vocal music has a profound and essential role. Like images, textiles, space, utensils, and other material objects, it is a key and often symbolic ritual aspect. Because it may seem ephemeral, however, it has not been studied to the same degree by ritual studies scholars as other elements. I am a chanter and choir member in several Orthodox church communities, and this role drives research of the nature and function of the repertoire that I so often sing; my own work and experience becomes part of the data and affects how I look at other data. Ethnomusicologists and anthropologists have begun to explore the function, value, and meaning of music within ritual communities, including within an Eastern Orthodox Christian church or folk milieu, and ritual singers and other members are important informants. However, fruitful research can be carried out in a unique and thorough way by ritualists, questioning themselves as informants and using their own cases for study. Thus, as an active member in the Orthodox Church, spurred on by my own interest and by a perceived lack of literature on theology and singing, I will explore involved musicological, anthropological, and theological questions about the nature of chant traditions. I wish to explore, as the church father St Maximus the Confessor puts it, the *logoi* of things, in this case, singing traditions, and to discover what such can bring about and theologically show us, what their sonic iconography is, as it were—chant's meanings, purposes, and roles; its embodiment of theology; and its engagement of and effects on the community.

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6 See, for example, Alan Lomax, 'Song Structure and Social Structure,' *Ethnology* 1 (1962): 425-451, but note that the more Freudian of his interpretations have been replaced by more widely-applicable ideas (see note 231 below). Helen Phelan, 'Borrowed space, embodied sound: The Sonic Potential of New Ritual Communities in Ireland,' *Journal of Ritual Studies* 20 (2006): 19-32.


the body, senses, psyche, and entire human person, whether singer or listener.

The field of arts practice provides the necessary cross-disciplinary context and approach for carrying out this work. By allowing the researcher's own practice as a guide in laying the foundation for study and data, it frames whatever combination of disciplinary angles and methodologies is relevant to his or her specific topic and questions. In this chapter, I will introduce the foundations of this research by explaining my perspective and the practice from which it comes, showing how the same can shed light on my research questions, introducing the concepts and principles behind practice-based research, outlining my methodology, and presenting some contested, key terminology according to the definitions and ideas that it will denote in this study.

Prayer and Praxis: The Context of Research

The sound and act of singing are filled with profound meaning in my life, being an outward activity with inner inspirations, consequences, and implications. These ideas, related to my research questions, will be explored in upcoming chapters, and in this section, I will describe my practice, the main motivation, object, and context of my work. It is one of many examples of similar practice that could be studied, and because it is ever available to me for examination, it is a useful source of research data. In Chapter II and much of Chapter III, it is in the background, informing my interpretation of data from other sources, but in the final section of Chapter III and most of Chapters IV-V, I make use of fieldwork in which I am involved. Whether it is in the background or foreground, the reader should be aware of my practice, and the following is a brief description. Its features may not be personally unique but do have ramifications regarding perspective, analysis, and reflection in carrying out research.

While it is a source of deep experience, singing has, at the same time, always been a natural phenomenon, as natural to me as speaking, and sometimes even more so. Not only is singing the primary means of expression, however; I find it to be epistemological, providing a method of learning about other people and cultures and also about myself, where listening to and participating in speech and song are foremost. Thus, my study of music has always included a balance of academic work and practical application. By itself, either would be meaningless. They inform each other, and I cannot study without singing or listening, or sing without following the desire to be informed and to involve the intellect. In part, the point of study has always been to
affect my practice, and I understand what I analyse, read, or write about by bringing it to life. These two sides are woven together, and I can hardly comprehend how they could ever be mutually exclusive or different in focus. I could not, for example, write a paper about Mediaeval chant without immersing myself in it and performing it, and I would not ever consider performing it without doing the transcribing, translating, listening (if only inwardly in the absence of modern recordings), singing, exploration of ritual context, research, reading, and writing. I have explained this relationship between study and performance, or rather, this method of performative study, though it is not unique to me, because it is not shared by all researchers, and it is a thread leading to a deeper way in which I engage with music, especially in the work at hand.

Inextricably linked scholarly and practical activity can be categorised in another way, which can be explained further using Orthodox theological terms. All aspects of my work can be described in one of three ways: scholarly, spiritual, or embodied. However, in practice, there is no separation, and all three co-exist as if woven into a braid; actions may be in more than one category. For example, in my field journal I wrote the following comments on my experience of reading patristic literature after I finished a discourse by the eleventh-century Byzantine father, St Symeon the New Theologian: 'I ask them [saints] not only to pray for me in general but to help me in properly understanding, sharing, reflecting upon, and singing their works. I have experienced their presence and the benefits of their intercessions.'

The academic activity of reading, therefore, is accompanied by other inner activities, namely, prayer and reflection, or rather, it is a spiritual activity. Some activities in and of themselves include all three aspects, and such is the case for writing, singing, listening, and liturgical actions, such as receiving Communion. These actions require the essential roles of and necessary co-operation among the heart, discursive intellect, and body, and I also wrote that they 'inspire or are inspired by faith and the spiritual life.' Such

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9 Field notes, October 2010.


11 There is an increasing number of scholarly works on patristic thought concerning the psychosomatic make-up of the human being and on the nature and function of the heart, mind, and intellect, including discussions of the various patristic terms for these in Greek and Syriac. For example, see Adam Cooper, *Holy Flesh, Wholly Deified: The Body in St. Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Hans Boersma, *Embodiment and Virtue in Gregory of Nyssa: An Anagogical Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Jill Gather, *Teachings on the Prayer of the Heart in the Greek and Syrian Fathers: The Significance of Body and Community* (Piscataway, NJ:
creative and liturgical activities, if examined, can lead to insights regarding questions of theological expression and embodiment.

Along with my own reflections, my interactions with friends and colleagues highlight the key role of practice and especially of embodiment and the spiritual life, the two facets that are newly counted as research in qualitative methodology. For example, after my first day of rehearsal with an ensemble, I had a correspondence with a fellow member, our first interaction outside the practice setting. She began the conversation by immediately describing her first impression of me: 'When I first met you I thought there was something profoundly spiritual, even magical about you, so when you added me on Facebook I thought: "I wonder what religion gives her the magical look?"' The relationship between embodied practice, spirituality, and singing in my life was apparent enough to her to freely comment, unasked, about her first impressions. My course director also referred to my practice during a qualitative data-collecting exercise in which my colleagues and I were describing each other. She observed that '[my] spirituality and sense of [myself] within the cosmos comes through in [my] singing. If you want to get to know [me], just ask [me] to stand up and sing.' One’s intellectual understanding of, beliefs about, and spiritual or phenomenological experience behind practice are evident through their embodiment in musical output. My practice, like the Georgian chant that I often sing and study, has an almost Trinitarian-like perichoresis, with its three interdependent and interpenetrating aspects: scholarly, spiritual, and embodied. Because of this multi-faceted way of working and because of the similarly complex nature of my topic, liturgical chant and embodied theology, my research must therefore be practice-inclusive.

Music is essential to the most meaningful aspect of my life, or rather, that aspect which situates the


12 Field notes, October 2010.


14 Batsheva Battu, personal correspondence, September 2010.

15 Field notes, October 2010. Following the two above observations and others, I will explore the subject of singing as it relates to bodily comportment in Chapter IV.
rest of it, my identity as an Orthodox Christian. As in many faiths, a key tool for and expression of prayer, a means of living its tradition, is praxis, that is, enacting and responding to theology through liturgical participation, which includes such things as singing, fasting, spiritual reading, veneration of icons, and making the sign of the cross. Theology is not primarily thought about; it is practiced and experienced. Theologising is not limited to ideas and concepts about God, and there are warnings against the dangers of academic theological studies. For example, in one of his epistles, St Maximus writes that 'theology without action is clearly the theology of demons.'

Theology has been described as ‘the state of the spirit influenced by the action of divine grace.’ Chant as it relates to grace will be discussed throughout this study and especially in the final two chapters. Even from an academic point of view, then, it would be very difficult and even remiss to study Orthodox liturgical music apart from its ritual context. In my case, because of the essential link between understanding and participation, between study and practice, and because of my identity as a member of that church, I am not satisfied with engagement only on an intellectual level. The intellect alone is not satisfied, knowing that it cannot do all things or supply all information. Most of my 'studying' is done in order to bring my discursive intellect in line with the rest of myself, especially with the heart, and to guide, support, and articulate what I acquire through experience. In singing, the body, mind, heart, and spirit—the psycho-somatic whole—take part, not only in the action itself but also in preparing for, reflecting upon, and

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16 PG 91:601C. For contemporary discourse on this subject see Archimandrite Sophrony Sakharov, *Words of Life* (Essex: Stavropegic Monastery of St John the Baptist, 2010), 40-41.

participating in chant through listening.\textsuperscript{18} The combination of theological texts and music, that is, chant itself, reflects this wholeness, and thus, the repertoire asks to be engaged with in several ways.

Practical Experience: A Source of Data for Exploring Research Questions

Song is such an essential element in Christian worship that it seems to be taken for granted and not always deeply explored,\textsuperscript{19} yet it is a very meaningful act and art form. As we will see in the next chapter, singing is not only a common liturgical act but also a common figure in sacred texts whether or not the person praying is in fact a singer. Its significance has not been discussed to the same degree as that of other arts, such as iconography, and exploring not only common territory such as musicological and patristic literature, but also interrogating my own practice and that of others, can give insight. It can at least provide something with which to support and demonstrate theological and philosophical ideas about the spiritual life and about performance, a practical testament to beliefs, theories, and concepts. Because I am particularly exploring how embodied practice and theology are related and affect each other, the practices must be a part of the research data. Their inclusion can ensure a full view of how faith is expressed, performed, embodied, and experienced. Singing is linked with enlightenment and knowledge in various hymnographic texts, such as this troparion to the Trinity:

\textsuperscript{18} Throughout this dissertation, though much of it focuses on singing, I do not make a marked distinction between singing and listening or consider either of these actions to be either more or less conducive to worship or indicative of participation in the same. Rather, attention and awareness are of greater significance. Listening involves as much activity as singing, including the kinesthetic response and subvocalisation, while singing entails attentive listening. Both are means of participation, and neither should be favoured over the other. Spiritual, bodily, and intellectual participation are the focus of my study. Regarding the kinesthetic response, empathy, and mirror neurons, see Susan Leigh Foster, ‘Movement’s Contagion: The Kinesthetic Impact of Performance,’ in \textit{The Cambridge Companion to Performance Studies}, Tracy C. Davis, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 46-60. For more on vocalisation as gesture, see Shaun Gallagher, ‘The Body in Gesture,’ in \textit{How the Body Shapes the Mind} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008): 105-129. For a thorough discussion of musical participation, of what constitutes it, and of issues surrounding it, such as social pressure, see Thomas Turino, \textit{Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

\textsuperscript{19} I will discuss this issue somewhat further at the beginning of the following chapter.
‘Thou, O Lord, hast raised me from my bed and sleep; Enlighten my mind and heart and open my lips That I may praise Thee, Holy Trinity: Holy, holy, holy art Thou, our God: Through the Theotokos have mercy upon us.’

In the next two sections, I will discuss how practice, experience, and analysis of the same can lead to knowledge about the questions that I am exploring.

Arts Practice Research: The Academic Context for Examination of Practice and Experience

My research questions and chosen means of exploration fit well into the burgeoning field of arts practice research. Part of putting knowledge into practice is realising that there is already knowledge within practice. This principle is the foundation of practice-based research. Before I discuss my particular research questions in more detail, I will provide a context by introducing and describing my understanding of this relatively new qualitative approach, which frames multiple methodologies. It is a way in which many people worked and have worked but has lately been recognised and discussed in academic literature.

In its short existence, practice-based research first had a place in the visual arts and in the performing arts of film and dance. It follows qualitative methods in sociology and anthropology, and an underlying inspiration is the idea that all fields are by nature practice-based. In a paper about the nature of his research, the design artist Dr Gearóid Ó Conchubhair posits that 'all study is based on practice within a specific field, regardless of whether this happens to be medicine, engineering or English literature. All scholars practising within their

20 Kallistos Ware and Mary, Trans., The Lenten Triodion, (New York: St Tikhon’s Seminary Press, 2002), 664.


22 Quaye.
discipline are conducting practice-based study.\textsuperscript{23} The performing arts, including music, are no exception; the dichotomy between performer and scholar, which I discussed earlier, does not or at least need not exist.\textsuperscript{24} The musician must translate arts-practice discussions somewhat since they first applied to the visual arts. The principles are the same, however, and the differences are primarily practical and will be discussed below. Since any researcher's work is practice-based, this fact should be acknowledged and acted upon. Thus, a researcher can generate valid and useful data through including practice; creative work, such performances, being a part of such data, is analysed and also included in submissions.\textsuperscript{25} The inclusion of such new and different data and the place of art in submissions have many challenges, but it also presents opportunities that benefit the research and can lead to important contributions in the chosen field.

The most prominent and difficult challenges in arts-practice research have been openly discussed, and they concern academic institutions, professors, and researchers alike. An understandable and frustrating challenge, especially for exam boards and institutions, is the evaluation of submitted work, especially of its creative component.\textsuperscript{26} Guidelines have been set by institutions for their own programmes, but it is still difficult to gain general recognition for practice-based work. It should be noted, then, that, as stated in the introduction to a group of position papers about arts practice research, where guidelines have been set, practice-based PhD's are carried out successfully.\textsuperscript{27} The challenge of art submissions cannot be ignored, however. Not everyone feels comfortable evaluating such work, and some still do not see it as a fitting or viable part of an 'academic' submission. Yet, it is an integral part of the practitioner's work and should

\textsuperscript{23} Ó Conchubhair, 527.

\textsuperscript{24} For further thoughts on this subject, see Susan Melrose, ‘Entertaining Other Options,’ Inaugural Lecture, Middlesex University (2002), <http://www.sfmelrose.u-net.com/inaugural/> (4 November 2010).


therefore be recognised. In the same introductory paper, the author writes that 'The key issue is that unlike the humanities (history, literature, cultural studies, and so forth) a researcher in the art and design domain is not primarily producing a formal academic text although s/he may be doing this as well.' As I will discuss below, in return, that which is creatively produced can articulate and demonstrate things that written work does not, and it can also be analysed as data, leading to profound academic knowledge. I will expand this point in the methodology section of this chapter.

As more practice-based work is carried out, more examples will be available to defend this idea until a point of acceptance is reached at least through ubiquity. Along with evaluators, researchers, too, face challenges. They put themselves in a vulnerable position as they use their own lives as research data. They can undergo anxiety as they situate their work, analyse it, organise and merge its varied components, think about how it may be evaluated, and reflect on what contribution it will make. Supervisors and others who are involved in the research process are affected by these issues as well. As discussed above regarding the issue of evaluation, a recent practice-based doctoral candidate notes that these 'anxieties reach beyond personal doubt and are shared by supervisors, examiners and senior academic management.' She argues, however, that anxiety is simply part of the research process and even has advantages along with its negative aspects. The process of dealing with anxieties and challenges will inevitably conquer them, establishing practice-based research in higher education. Although Camdlin does not wish to downplay the seriousness of living with acute anxiety while carrying out practice-based research, she reassures students and their academic advisors and examiners that 'Instead of being an anxiety inducing but potentially groundbreaking path that confuses modes of judgement and established authority, [practice-based research] will become a beaten path with its own canons, authorities and precedents.'

Until this point is reached, researchers will still do their work. Despite the challenges, which can appear quite formidable, the opportunities for expanding knowledge and enriching qualitative methods are worth the effort and far outnumber the difficulties.

Arts practice research presents major advantages for the researcher that also lead to rich and

28 Ibid.


30 Ibid.
well-rounded inquiry and results. First, it allows the researcher to have personal say, along with other non-traditional voices, adding to the generally-accepted voices of other scholars as transmitted in their work. Hence, material gathered in various types of interactions, such as classes, discussions after concerts, written correspondence, and reflective narrative, and from all people involved in a person's practice, such as friends, colleagues, audience members, participants, and scholars in other fields, is equal in importance. This equal footing allows for a cross, inter, and multi-disciplinary approach. The actor and performance studies scholar Richard Schechner has found that such is simply the nature of practice-based work, covering ground not through a straight path but rather by cutting across it like a side-winder snake.31 My particular topic, for example, is not simply musicological and anthropological but also philosophical and theological. Arts practice is a field that allows for multi-faceted investigation of complex questions. Besides making room and providing level ground for a harmonious combination of voices and disciplines, this type of research also expands the types of methodology that are available and the types of data that are considered to be valid.32 Among these, 'self-citation' can be acceptable and, more importantly, useful. Journals, poetry, and other personal writings have been recognised as sources of knowledge, and the sociologist John Quaye has used his own examples to illustrate how the author's voice and other types of data should 'count as research.' Practical activities and creative art are included in this new data, but seen in another way, practice is itself constituted by the unique combination of methods, disciplines, data types, and questions in each researcher's particular work. I will now set out the combination of methodology that makes up my own practice and that I am using to explore my research questions.

Multiple Research Methods: The Tools for Exploring Practice

My topic intersects eight disciplines and numerous methodologies. The fields are liturgical studies, musicology, literature, theology and patristic inquiry, philosophy, ritual studies,


anthropology, and, to a small but important degree, psychology; these labels are somewhat for convenience as each field is itself fluid, inclusive, and informed by other disciplines. The methods include four academic strands: study of oral, manuscript, and printed musical sources, historical and literary analysis of liturgical texts, philosophical inquiry, and theological study; and three practice-engaging activities: autoethnographic fieldwork, narrative inquiry, and performance. The combination of disciplines fits my research questions, which deal with broad matters of theology, phenomenology, embodiment, semiotics, and expression. I must explore as many aspects of these questions as possible in order to contribute useful knowledge to varying audiences, including liturgical scholars, anthropologists, chant scholars, theology students, and fellow church musicians. The different strands of academic methodology, while reflecting the complex nature of my practice and research questions, more importantly lead to various types of output that can be of use in academic as well as church settings. Such work includes transcriptions, liturgical surveys, anthropological discussions, and theological explanations. I will go into more detail about the research questions and present this output in subsequent chapters. At this point, I will explain the aforementioned three practice-based research methods.

Autoethnography is a branch of ethnography that includes the researcher within the culture, group, and context that is being explored. Far from having a narcissistic motivation, though such can be a pitfall, it is based on the premise that one can access culture through oneself and that interactions between the researcher and others, not simply the researcher's voice alone, can produce meaningful data and bring about deep and broad understanding. In *Autoethnography as Method*, a definitive book on the subject, the sociologist author stresses to researchers that 'telling one's story does not automatically result in the cultural understanding of self and others, which only grows out of in-depth cultural analysis and interpretation.'\(^{33}\) Thus, my autoethnographic work will include a key analytical and interpretive element, one that takes into account the work of ethnomusicologists and anthropologists who have worked in similar cultures and contexts. This kind of research has been carried out not only in what would generally be thought of as 'cultural,' i.e. ethnic, groups but also in musical contexts, such as dance groups and orchestras.\(^{34}\) The


contexts in which I work are musical (choirs), religious (Orthodox church communities), and ethnic (Georgian, Romanian, and such), and I, as a singer, believing member, and American may have a unique position, which some may call 'edgewalker,' and which will come into the foreground in Chapters III-V. The autoethnography focuses on two primary contexts: a Georgian village in which I have lived, learned and shared music, and taken part in ritual; and performances with my small chant ensemble. In both, I have emic and etic perspectives in different respects and to differing degrees. Shared ritual, collaborative music, and discussions have been filmed, recorded, or written, and field notes, reflections written by others, and musical transcriptions add to and round out this data. This work is unlike much ethnomusicological research in that I have fully participated in the activities and examined my own engagement as well as including the voices of the other participants; I am one of my own informants. Chang describes culture as a 'web of self and others,' and my social and performative interactions furnish overlapping data, which provides cultural insight by bringing the entire web into view. This data can then be organised, analysed, and interpreted to uncover the knowledge that it contains.

The cultural side of autoethnography, concentrated around fieldwork, is a familiar part of qualitative research. However, the 'auto' aspect, centred around self-reflective inquiry, is the newest and perhaps most questioned element in practice-based research. It can, if understood from a certain viewpoint, be dismissed as narcissistic and irrelevant to a wider academic audience. However, the guiding principles behind this method will show that, though such is a very possible danger, it is avoidable, and the results can generate interesting knowledge. Firstly, self-reflective data brings into focus one's own contributed threads of the cultural web. As discussed above regarding the work of Stephen John Quaye, it has been recognised that the researcher's own voice, personal knowledge, and experiences are valid and useful. In her article 'An Autoethnography on Learning about Autoethnography,' the sociologist Sarah Wall points out that 'an individual is

35 Chang, 28-29.
36 Chang, 13.
best situated to describe his or her own experience more accurately than anyone else.\textsuperscript{38} While some data comes from interactive experience, there is also an introverted, introspective, and reflective side to practice, that which takes place within the researcher while at the desk, in a practice room, in a home chapel, during travel, or wherever. This everyday and often inner activity in practice, which also includes the social and phenomenological side of interaction, should not be ignored and is a valuable contribution in academic work since the researcher can 'use [him or herself] to get to culture.'\textsuperscript{39} It should be noted that writing about experiences is not simply a way to explain them, tell about them, or record them. Rather, it is an epistemic tool, a means of discovering important things about them and bringing to light knowledge and information that may be latent even to the researcher. For example, as I note in Chapter IV, it was not until I wrote the same that I was able to articulate ideas out of intuitions and experiences regarding song and prayer. Reflecting on her autoethnographic experience, Wall states that 'writing is also a way of "knowing"—a method of discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it.'\textsuperscript{40} The only way to capture such knowledge, the interplay between oneself and practice, is through documentation,\textsuperscript{41} and I primarily use field notes and journals,\textsuperscript{42} poetic reflection, and audio and video recordings. These forms of documentation overlap with the 'ethnos' aspect of autoethnography, but the processes that are being captured are somewhat different and outside stereotypical fieldwork data. The last two forms of data overlap to some degree with the final aspect of my methodology: art. Like narrative inquiry, the inclusion of creative work in methodology raises not only questions of evaluation, as mentioned earlier, but also questions of function in research. Art is, however, an embodiment of knowledge, as is a piece of academic writing, and I will explore this very aspect by

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looking at the embodiment of theology in liturgical chant. All of the fine arts have been engaged with as methodologies in their own right, and creative output has a particularly important place in the performing arts. In *Method Meets Art*, Patricia Leavy dedicates two chapters to poetry and two to music, my two chosen methods, and she makes strong statements about the value and usefulness of each. She claims that research is poetry and that poetry has the ability to 'capture heightened moments of social reality as if under a magnifying glass.' As Chapter II shows, the poetry of patristic writers can give a very close and detailed view of the experience of chant and liturgy, and Chapter V includes my own reflection on chanting and ensemble directing. Some of my interpretations of data in Chapter IV are also in this vein, relying primarily on metaphor.

Regarding music, Leavy proposes that 'music-based methods can help researchers access, illuminate, describe, and explain that which is often rendered invisible by traditional research practices.' Hence, music is not simply an object of my research; it is a creative outcome that can even articulate and embody findings and responses to research questions. Recent academic research confirms Leavy's ideas. Stephen John Quaye has successfully carried out sociological analysis of his own poetry and gained insights about cultural identity, prejudice, racism, and other important and sensitive issues. The conductor Brydie-Leigh Bartleet has revealed an interesting window into the culture of classical musicians. No matter how difficult evaluation may be, such work shows that artistic qualitative methods produce significant results. It has been accepted that artefacts ought to be a part of research data, and poetry is either a textual artifact or simply part of the accepted academic textual strand. Performances can be artefacts as well since they can, with the help of technology, be recorded, and writing about them can provide analysis and reflection. Creating art can therefore produce knowledge. Even apart from rigorous academic analysis, embodied practice and performance can do so since the discursive intellect

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44 Ross E. Gray, 'Performing on and off the Stage: The Place(s) of Performance in Arts-Based Approaches to Qualitative Inquiry,' *Qualitative Inquiry* 9 (2003): 254-267.

45 Leavy, 63.

46 In all discourse, including everyday conversation, metaphor reflects and describes things according to concrete, embodied experience. See George Lakoff and Johnson, Mark, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

47 Leavy, 101.
does not have a monopoly on information. Recent neuroscientific research shows that much of a person's knowledge is, as the psychologist Shaun Gallagher explains and shows through case studies, ‘pre-noetic,’ that is, before or behind conscious thought, and embodied. As he relates, ‘Nothing about human experience remains untouched by human embodiment: from the basic perceptual and emotional processes that are already at work in infancy, to a sophisticated interaction with other people; from the acquisition and creative use of language, to higher cognitive faculties involving judgment and metaphor; from the exercise of free will in intentional action, to the creation of cultural artifacts that provide for further human affordances.’

Philosophical and anthropological discourse has also revealed that narrrowing oneself to the discursive intellect limits one only to certain types of knowledge, for knowledge has other sources and is rooted in practice. Such ideas about ways of knowing and sources of knowledge are not only relevant in philosophy but are important in Orthodox theology, as demonstrated by the fourteenth-century Palamite controversy, and of great concern to all scholars. Epistemology is at the heart of research. It would be negligent to engage in academic study without including other forms of inquiry, and the assumption that intellectual analysis and academic literature should be foremost, even if believed by some, does not reflect, as we have seen from Gallagher’s words, how human beings actually function. Performance-based data is therefore important on two levels: the academic and the creative; it can be fruitfully analysed and also stand on its own. Embodied and inner non-scholarly activity, such as prayer, are essential parts of study and the creative process, or at least mine, as later examples will show, and the performative magnifying glass can allow access to these elements without hindering them, like studying a butterfly in flight as closely as one could if it were pinned down. My creative work takes two forms, one embodied and one

48 Gallagher, 248.


heuristic, chant performance in ritual and concert contexts and writing. Though these are my primary creative outcomes, I consider performance and my practice itself, however, to be far more inclusive.

**Performing Life: An All-Inclusive Practice**

The obvious performative element in my practice is the act of singing, and as we will see in the next chapter, advice given to singers and monastics on the proper disposition for singing before God extends to all thoughts, words, and actions. Thus, every action, including chanting, takes place before an audience. Even without using or referring to any religious language, ideas, or paradigms, one can view those with whom he or she interacts as potential audience members and fellow performers. I view life, therefore, as a performance, and it encompasses almost all inner and outer activities. Indeed, activities are not strictly either inner or outer, embodied or spiritual, as I described earlier. The multi-faceted description of my practice with which I opened this chapter and the interdisciplinary methodology that I described in the previous section reflect this inclusive concept of performance. This idea stands within a school of established notions about the nature of performance. As already stated, activity that is generally referred to as 'performance' or analytical and reflective study co-exist and inform each other.\(^{52}\) Performance can be studied, and study can be performed. Richard Schechner describes both performance studies and performance as cross-disciplinary. Performance is inclusive of, but not limited to, 'play, games, sports, performance in everyday life, and ritual.'\(^{53}\) Ritual is foremost in my work, and 'performance in everyday life' can include any number of activities, such as writing, reading, rehearsing, and singing while travelling up a mountain. Anything can potentially be a performance, and the point of view of performers and other types of participants has a primary role in determining if, how, and why something is a performance. I consider practice to be life itself, and thus, this inclusive view of performance fits my experience and academic approach.

Performance is defined not only by what it is but by how it is experienced. Regarding a phenomenological element that distinguishes the performance experience from 'everyday activity,'

\(^{52}\) Melrose.

\(^{53}\) Schechner, What is Performance Studies.
Schechner has coined the term 'transformance,' which is a process undergone by performers and audience members. Especially in ritual contexts, it is strongly linked to belief and faith, and as we will see later, it is related to semiotics and even to free will. This phenomenon of 'performers and spectators [being] transported and transformed' is related not only to the viewpoint of participants but also to the effects of embodied, performative actions. Along with 'transformance,' Schechner discusses the differences between, yet overlapping existence of, efficacy and entertainment in ritual and theatre, and these same issues are relevant to ritual song, also being bound up with meaning, engagement, and appropriation, that is, the personal or cultural adoption of music, its text, its sound, and/or its various characteristics in any number of ways and to any given level. These ideas go beyond mere definitions of performance, which has been established as inclusive, and delve into its phenomenology, and they provide a useful framework for discussing experiences within liturgical settings. I will not base further discussion primarily on these terms, but they provide a useful background and demonstrate an approach for studying ritual. They complement discussions of aesthetics, the place of the senses, and the role of iconography and sacred art in Eastern Orthodox worship in historical and contemporary contexts, and similar terminology is often found in the discourse. Icons have even been described as 'performativ[e],' and Chapter III will explore chant and iconography together. Within an academic context, I can interpret and analyse experiences of ritual participants and singers with the help of the terms and concepts of


performance studies as well as those of Orthodox theology and Mediaeval Byzantine philosophy and art theory. I will expound the latter in later chapters.

The experience of practice and performance is further illuminated through discussions about other phenomena in the lives of creative artists and performers. These difficult-to-describe but nevertheless existent and important experiences include intuition, the desire to create something, and other inner processes and feelings. Such discussion of non-academic experiences makes room for discourse about prayer, theology, faith, religious experience, and ritual, which are part of the reality of practice and its religious context. It would be difficult to ignore such things when studying sacred art of any kind, especially from a practice-based, theological perspective.

I should note at this point that, especially within ritual contexts, I consider all people involved to be both performers and audience members simultaneously and in different respects. Schechner's exploration of interaction and blurred lines between supposed 'performers' and 'spectators' in theatrical settings, and the aforementioned idea that any action—and watching is an action—can be performative resonate with this view. Pentcheva widens the 'performer' category in order to include religious icons and other sacred objects, and I would extend it further to include music itself, which goes beyond the singer just as an icon is a thing in and of itself, through which grace can work, once it has been made. Music will therefore be spoken of as various materials and objects, especially in the final two chapters. In this research, I will describe many particulars of chant performance, performed theology and identity through song, transformative role and function of sound within my chosen contexts of exploration, those of Orthodox Christian services, folk rituals, and concerts. Discussion of performance, like that of ritual, goes beyond defining what it is and includes questions of how it is done, what its function is, and what it signifies and brings about. Answers may vary among different performances and performers, and I am examining what they may be in particular cases. However, the conclusions may still be applicable to other contexts, and some may be so to all.

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58 Bannerman, Sofaer, and Watt.


Conclusion

I have introduced my practice, its academic context, my methodology and the principles behind it, and the understanding of performance with which I am approaching my work and investigation. My experiences as an Orthodox church musician and chant scholar have led me to explore deep aspects of the meaning of liturgical singing, and that same practice can be analysed and interpreted to provide rich research data. The arts practice field recognises this extremely useful data, and it grants freedom to choose the combination of methodologies that is most suitable to any given practice and set of questions. Though this situation presents challenges to evaluators and researchers, it is no less desirable for thorough inquiry. My topic and questions could not be investigated using a narrower or easier approach. This chapter describes my practice, overall topic, research methods, reasons for incorporating those particular methods, and understanding of terms. It explains where my research fits within recent and current academic dialogue surrounding knowledge, art, and performance. In the next chapter, I will provide the theological and spiritual foundation and root of this work, a survey of what has been said about the theology of Orthodox chant.
Chapter II

Orthodox Theology of Chant: A Preliminary Survey

Introduction

Much scholarly attention has been devoted to the subject of sacred visual art in the Eastern Orthodox Church, but surprisingly little, especially in English, has been dedicated to church music. A well-known scholar of Russian chant, Ivan Gardner, noted this state of things in a mid-twentieth century polemical article on polyphony, saying that 'the realm of criticism of church singing has not received the love and attention of either the precentors or the faithful. As a result, literature in this field is not distinguished with wealth.' Though some historical, musicological, and practical studies have emerged since that time, discussions of theological aspects have been comparatively lacking. The focus has centred on questions of liturgical development and theology, musical analysis, and performance practice. Most recently, the topic of sound and song has intersected with the phenomenology and theology of iconography and architecture in the previously-noted work of the art historian Bissera v. Pentcheva, but only a few articles strictly on chant have been published to date in English. There is a wealth of primary source material,

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61 Ivan Gardner, ‘Music in Orthodox Divine Services,’ Synaxis 2 (1977): 13-29. Note that this particular English translation is missing portions of the original article, those that deal with what the author considers to be acceptable polyphonic chant settings. Though I have come across complete translations circulating on the internet, they are no longer accessible on the sites where I first found them.


63 For analysis of a subject that will be taken up later in this study, see Diane Touliatos, ‘Nonsense Syllables in the Music of the Ancient Greek and Byzantine Traditions,’ The Journal of Musicology 7 (1989): 231-243.


however, and a need for a theological study, and perhaps such has not been carried out because there has been no 'hymnoclasm' or even vigorous questioning from outside the church to call for an organised defense or discussion of the meaning, function, and value of chant. Such information is nevertheless of great importance to theologians and singers, and this brief survey, though nowhere near exhaustive, will introduce some theological points about singing, gathered from patristic sources, hymnographic texts, and other writings, from the New Testament through the twenty-first century. I will first discuss commentary that applies to all forms of chant and follow with a brief consideration of the symbolism of particular hymns. I will then present ideas pertaining to musical style—unison singing and three-part Georgian polyphonic chant, which have their own unique significance and, as it were, sonic iconography. Discussions of the body, the mind and heart, and prayer will appear when relevant. Though the performance of hymnography may be seen to include two main aspects, writing and singing, I will primarily discuss the latter, the former having been taken up in part already in scholarly discourse. It will be evident that the theology behind Orthodox chant is a rich subject that merits more research.

Food for Figures: The Prevalence of Song in Christian Consciousness and Experience

In much theological writing, musical language, especially regarding song and choral practices, appears in striking metaphors, similes, and allegories. Such devices, rather than being of mere literary interest, say something about the place of singing in the consciousness and experience of Christians. This very experience and way of thinking is what caused authors to use such rhetorical expressions and allowed their audiences to find them effective. Thus, in examining them, we will see some of the ways in which church fathers, their contemporaries, and their heirs regard chant, both the act of singing and song itself.

In the third century, St Methodius of Olympus wrote a work modeled on Plato's *Symposium*, in which ten virgins present discourses about chastity. Natural and especially musical imagery pervades the text, which ends with a metrical hymn To Christ the Bridegroom. In the second

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discourse, the speaker Theopatra interprets Psalm 40, a biblical passage filled with allusions to
song, and says,

‘Now those who sing the Gospel to the foolish are indeed like those who sing the song
of the Lord in a strange land, of which Christ is not the husbandman. But those who
have put on and shone in the immaculate and bright and pure and reverent and precious
beauty that is chastity, these are found to be sterile and unproductive of seething and
painful passions; these do not sing the song in a strange land. For they are not borne
thither by their expectations, nor do they cleave to the lusts of their mortal bodies, or
basely despise the meaning of the commandments. Rather, well and nobly, with lofty
sentiments do they contemplate the promises that are above, thirsting after heaven as
their natural abode. And so, God, pleased with their dispositions, promises with an oath
that He will bestow upon them special honors, setting and establishing them as 'the
beginning of His joy.'

Though this commentary is entirely allegorical, it sheds light not only on the musical language of
the psalms but on how it gained striking theological significance. The gospel is not merely
'preached' but 'sung,' and not only sung but sung with a disposition that is approved of and
rewarded by God. While this allegory should not be taken literally since it is nowhere taught that
all must sing well and be celibate, the only reason why the allegory functions is that there are good
singers and chaste people to be found in churches. It is interesting to note the association of singing
and chastity, especially for women, as the song of the gospel here is carried by virgins, in contrast
to the image of singing temptresses found in some patristic denunciations of pagan music. This
rich passage demonstrates the importance of the psalter, the goodness and effectiveness of chaste
song, and the focus on the heart's disposition in patristic understanding. These themes will
reappear and will do so more directly, but they stand behind the vivid allegory and cannot go
unnoticed.

One might not think to look for commentary on chant in dogmatic writing, but vivid choral
metaphor and allusions to heavenly choirs appear in such discourse. In his work On the Holy
Spirit, St Basil the Great (330-379) writes the following in chapter XVI:

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Press, 1958), 79.

69 For examples of this as well as other references to chaste Christian female singers, see James McKinnon, *Music in
‘It is impossible to maintain a life of holiness without the Spirit. It would be easier for an army to continue its maneuvers without a general, or for a choir to sing on key without its director. How can the Seraphim sing, "Holy, holy, holy," without the Spirit teaching them to constantly raise their voices in praise? If all God's angels praise Him, and all His host, they do so by cooperating with the Spirit. Do a thousand thousands of angels serve Him? Do ten thousand times ten thousand stand before Him? They accomplish their proper work by the Spirit's power. All the indescribable harmony of the heavenly realm, whether it be the praise of God or the mutual concord of the bodiless powers, would be impossible without the authority of the Spirit.’

The choral simile shows that a choir director's role was valued and understood, and explaining that the Holy Spirit is such to the angelic choir strengthens the author's theological position. Speaking of the trisagion hymn and of singing on key makes the argument more vivid since choral singing and a belief in the reality of its angelic prototype would have featured in the experiences and beliefs of both author and audience. Later, in chapter XXIV, St Basil amplifies his previous simile and parallelism by literally relating the work of the Spirit to human voices, quoting the Apostle Paul, "God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts crying, 'Abba! Father!'" so that the Spirit's cry might become the same cry of all those who receive Him. Though this passage can be applied to prayer in general and also to speech, one should not exclude the act of chanting. In light of theological ideas about the senses, the body, and the tongue, these words should not be interpreted in a strictly inner or spiritual sense. Rather, the spiritual idea has edifying implications within it about the role of the human voice and its conductor, the Holy Spirit. This teaching is applicable to any vocal activity whatsoever, and it carries heightened significance for singers, who may meditate and reflect on offering their voices as instruments of God.

In his poetry, St Gregory Nazianzus (329-395), friend of St Basil, employs the same choral metaphor and also speaks of the relationship between the Holy Spirit and singing. In his poem on providence, while explaining how necessary God's providence is, he says that 'the choir would

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70 Stephen M. Hildebrand, St Basil the Great: On the Holy Spirit (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1980), 64.

71 Lit. harmony. In Greek terminology, this word generally refers to concordant unison sound; see below.

72 Hildebrand, 89.
stop, I'd say, without its conductor, and in his verses on the Spirit, he describes the third Person of the Trinity as the one 'in whom the holy choir hymns.' Thus, St Gregory's personal poetry confirms and makes use of the same images and ideas as the dogmatic work of his fellow Cappadocian. He also writes, similarly to St Methodius, about how a chaste disposition and praise of God in song are related. In the opening of his poem on virginity, he exhorts,

‘Let us wreath Virginity in our garlands, singing from clear hearts in clearest hymns.
For this is the choicest offering of our life,
brighter than gold or amber or ivory:
by these things,
Virgin desire casts down pedestrian life,
flaying on wings of mind towards the high-ruling God.
And, as the song begins,
let those who are pure come join in the praises:
For the gift of song is common to all who are blameless.’

As with St Methodius' words, one cannot take this passage as a literal implication that physical singing ability is an indicator of righteousness, but there is nothing against allowing the ideas to be embodied. For church singers to do so would be very edifying, and as we will see in upcoming sections, for those who think themselves to be musically ill-equipped, doing so may be of even greater help in the spiritual life. As we will also see, patristic theology teaches that human nature was created with a capacity and purpose to sing or at least to praise God.

We will look at one final allegorical passage in order to uncover more chant-related ideas and motifs. Another Cappadocian father, the brother of St Basil the Great, St Gregory of Nyssa, writes in his Commentary on the Inscriptions of the Psalms that 'Your life should be a psalm not resounding with earthly utterances (thoughts are these utterances), but you should be a pure, audible sound coming from heaven above.’ Some readers may see these words simply as a poignant and poetic exhortation to live righteously and to pray attentively, but singers may also see

74 Gilbert, 43.
75 Ibid., 88.
in them something quite literal about the nature of their work. It is striking that audible sound is contrasted with thoughts, suggesting that singing can help in cultivating true inner silence. The remainder of this chapter will discuss writings, including some by the theologians already quoted, which directly address chant, the place of the voice and the body, and other related topics; it will be made clear that they convey what the above metaphorical and allegorical passages express yet in a more direct fashion. It is understandable that the varying literary styles should relate in this way since figures of speech derive their efficacy from reflecting people's beliefs about, and understanding of, reality. Thus, we can learn as much about Orthodox Christian writers' views on church singing as much from their rhetorical works on chastity, poetry, and explications on dogma as from their ascetical writings, instructions to chanters, and treatises on liturgy. I have therefore included a few examples from the former three genres, and they will continue to be featured. Upcoming discussions in this chapter will focus on the latter three genres as well, but in the next section, we will continue to gather material from the works of Ss Methodius and Gregory the Theologian while beginning to add other voices to the discourse.

To Sing and Not to Sin: Human Nature and Its Capacity to Hymn God

The idea that the work of angels is primarily to praise God in song is well-known, but it is equally said that human beings were created for the same purpose. In the first discourse of St Methodius' aforementioned Symposium, the character Thaleia states in chapter VI that 'he [man] too had been created in incorruptibility that he might celebrate the King and Creator of all things in a song which would be an antiphon to the angelic voices wafted from heaven.' Thus, this passage supports and provides a literal context for the allegorical psalm interpretation explored earlier. St Gregory Nazianzus, again in his poetry, further enriches and expands the image and concept that human nature was made to sing with the angels. Two nearly identical passages appear in his poems on the soul and on virginity, suggesting that this teaching was of particular value to the author. The passage, as it appears in the second poem, reads as follows:

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77Musurillo, 63.
'…and He [God] said this:

“My servants, pure and ever-living, the worthy angels,
Occupy already the wide heaven: blessed minds,
Hymners chanting my praise unceasingly;
But the earth still vaunts in mindless animals.
So it pleases me to form a mixed species, out of both,
Between mortals and immortals, thinking man,
Who should rejoice in my works, and be a level-headed initiate
In heavenly mysteries, and a great power upon earth, another angel
Sprung from the soil, the chanter of my mind and
Dispositions.’”78

Not only does St Gregory associate chant with prayer and praise, however. In saying that man is to be a 'chanter of [God's] mind and dispositions,' he seems to imply that humans are to know God and to communicate His will and their knowledge of Him to the world. Though this idea can apply to works in general, it is undoubtedly applicable to works of the voice. We will now narrow our discussion, therefore, from theological discourse on human nature in general to commentary on the voice itself.

There is a great profusion of Christian writing, beginning with the New Testament, regarding the use of the tongue and the mouth with reference to speech and silence, and some of these ideas will be explored later in this chapter. However, there are direct references to the voice, and we will give examples from two distinct periods and genres. First, a brief but important statement, essential to the topic of this study, appears in a letter from the nineteenth-century Russian bishop, St Theophan the Recluse, written to a young woman about the spiritual life. In it, the author discusses the body, the soul, and their faculties. He gives an overview of the systems of the body and their functions, which he ends by stating that 'One organ, which stands apart from the system of other organs, the organ of speech, is an organ exclusively of the soul, which alone it is intended to serve.'79 It is clear from the context that the 'organ of speech' is the voice and not the tongue, which has to do with tasting as well as articulating. Though the entire body takes part in singing, the vocal folds are the most essential organ in the process and do not play a role in other bodily functions. Their sole work lies in expressing, and their priority, according to St Theophan, is to

78 Gilbert, 92.

79 Alexandra Dockham, Trans., The Spiritual Life and How to Be Attuned to It by St Theophan the Recluse, (Platina, CA: St Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2000), 46.
serve the soul, that is to express it. In Orthodox theology, the soul is said to be equally present throughout the entire body,\footnote{see, for example, St Maximus the Confessor, Ambiguum 7, translated in Paul M. Blowers and Wilken, Robert Lewis, \textit{On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ: Selected Writings of St Maximus the Confessor} (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003), 45-74.} and the twentieth-century Russian elder, Sophrony Sakharov, has taught that the body gives expression to the soul.\footnote{Nicholas V. Sakharov, \textit{I Love, Therefore I Am: The Theological Legacy of Archimandrite Sophrony} (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2007), 87.} In St Theophan's statement, which does not dissent from these ideas but rather adds a nuance, the voice receives particular spiritual significance over the rest of the body, not because it embodies or expresses the soul to a greater degree but because its work and purpose is purely related to the soul. This concept has ramifications for both speech and song.

As well as expressing the soul in general, the highest expression of the voice is the praise of God. The nineteenth-century Russian Abbess Thaisia of Leushino dedicated one of her Letters to a Beginner entirely to the subject of a singer's duties. We will consider this letter throughout the rest of this chapter, and at this point, we will note what she says about the human voice. She expands upon St Theophan's idea and writes, 'What a wonderful and great gift—the gift of a voice and the ability to sing! They were given to us for this, that with them we might both glorify the Lord ourselves, and incite others to do the same.'\footnote{Thaisia of Leushino, \textit{Letters to a Beginner: On Giving One's Life to God} (Wildwood, CA: St Xenia Skete, 2005), 56.} These statements explain an aspect of the voice's purpose as it relates to God and to one's neighbours. It, too, with the mind, soul, heart, and the rest of the body, has its share of work in fulfilling the commandment of love towards both, and such includes aiding neighbours in their own prayer and praise. The rest of the letter provides rich theological material about the nature and effects of singing as well as practical instructions, and such passages will appear below. From the content of this short work alone, as with most of the writings quoted in this study, one could generate most of the points in this survey. However, I have chosen to include many theologians in the discussion because of the balance, wholeness, synergy, and subtlety that comes from combining their thoughts. Thus, before continuing to the discussion of practical instruction, let us examine another saint's words about voices, human, angelic, and divine.

A fifth-century Greek bishop, St Diadochos of Photike, includes material about chant in all of
his writings. His work stands out as a major influence on later Byzantine theology, especially for its references to the practice of the 'Jesus prayer,' which are the earliest known. His short writings—a century, a homily, an account of a vision, and a catechesis—provide enough commentary on singing to warrant a separate study, but we will limit our analysis to several passages and in two sections of this chapter.

In the saint's account of a vision of St John the Baptist, he records a conversation of questions and answers, which primarily are about the nature of God, how He is seen and heard, and how the soul and body perceive. The dialogue concerns issues of experienced spiritual reality rather than matters of purely rational, scholastic-like interest. Sections of it, therefore, methodically deal with St Diadochos' questions about divine, angelic, and human voices and run as follows:

‘Q. And how, tell me, could he [God the Father] have the sense of speech, if his nature is incorporeal and invisible?’
‘R. The Divine One does not speak by way of vocal chords, but when his will wants to make something heard, this will impinge upon one who is chosen like a voice that speaks by way of divine operation. Thus those hear whom he wants to hear, even if those who are meant to hear are in the same place as others who are unworthy of hearing. Thus the voice was heard in that place only where the Lord was baptized. If it were not that way, the whole world would have heard that thunderous voice, even if it were to come from an angel. For those who desire, it is possible to inquire in the Gospel, above all that of divine Mark, who remembers the voice that rang out over the mountain when the Lord was transfigured. He says, Then a cloud came, throwing a shadow over them; and from the cloud came a voice, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him."'
‘… Q. Well said, but do those holy and heavenly powers sing hymns with a voice or, as some purport, with an interior word?’
‘R. With their voice. For if we profess that they are like flames of fire, as the Scriptures hold, it is evident that they must sing to God with a most excellent voice. Therefore many saints often perceive their voices in visions, as the Scriptures indicate.’
‘Q. That is clear. But some will maintain with equal force that the word from an angelic voice ought to be understood according to the explanation given about the divine voice.’
‘R. Since all things are possible for God, he reveals himself by speaking whenever he wants, but keeps himself above all things because only he is immaterial. But it is impossible for angels to do. Because they do not speak, if they could manifest themselves by speech whenever they desired they might also be able to create from nothing if they should so choose!’
‘Q. Very well. But what must we think about the soul separated from the body?’
‘R. The soul separated from the body, until it returns to take the body through the resurrection, sings to God by way of the interior word, as is fitting for it, given that the faculty of speech is received from the body alone. On the other hand, given that angels
were created with a simple and vibrant nature, they use, as we have already mentioned, incessant voices. It is not so much that they express themselves by way of a corporeal organ, but have a type of extraordinary and continuous mobility which is of the order of speech. Their ethereal nature lends itself to chant and impels them to break out in unceasing and pristine praise.83

The last question concerns the human voice, and in the response, St John teaches that it belongs to, and is a faculty of, the body alone. In describing the divine, angelic, and human voices and how they function, he also indicates that the human voice is unique, echoing St Gregory the Theologian's poetic description of man's nature mediating that of animals and angels. A third point can perhaps be implied about human singing as compared with that of the angels. Since the voices of angels have the power to chant incessantly and are 'impelled' to do so, the songs of humans are therefore, by contrast, linked to will and effort like all good deeds. Since the voice belongs to the body, singing is therefore a way in which the body can serve God. The body's importance in this respect is highlighted by the teaching that the departed soul will not sing with a voice until the resurrection. Whether or not they were singers during their earthly lives, all can look forward not only to glorified bodies but also to glorified voices within those bodies, with which they will hymn God as they were created to do.

In light of the above ideas, one may surmise that, among the consequences of the Fall, one of the aspects of corruption in the world is a hampered ability to sing. The voice did not survive unscathed but, like the soul and the rest of the body, was negatively affected. By no means does this mean that a poor voice is believed to be an indicator of sin (cf. blindness in Jn. 9:1-3); rather, the voice, too, is understood to participate in being redeemed and restored in Christ. Though theological writings, aside from St Diadochos' account of his vision, do not specifically mention the voice in this respect but speak of the body or the whole person, it is important to emphasise the point that this organ is included. As we will see in the next section, a beautiful voice is not the most important aspect of earthly worship, but as we saw in Abbess Thaisia's letter, for those who can sing, they ought to make use of their voices for that purpose. As St Gregory Nazianzus prays in another poem,

‘Grant, immortal Monarch,
that we may hymn Thee,
grant that we may sing of Thee,
our ruler and lord,
through whom is the hymn,
through whom the praise,
through whom the endless ages,
through whom the light of the sun,
through whom the course of the moon,
through whom the great beauty of the stars,
through whom noble man was made,
that as a rational creature he could perceive the deity.’

A voice, therefore, is a gift from God that must not be taken for granted but asked for so that God may be praised. It is vast, glorious, and far-reaching, created along with the light of the sun, stars, and moon, with all of nature, which 'declares the glory of God' (cf. Ps. 19 [18]).

According to St Maximus the Confessor, in his commentary on the Our Father, men become equal with angels and 'sing the glory of God' when they do His will. If anyone can embody this idea in singing well, therefore, even in this fallen state, it is taught that he should do so in order to fulfill God's will for him as a 'chanter of His mind and dispositions.' As later discussion will show, singing even fulfills this purpose when the voice is lacking in quality or even silent. At this point, let us see what the church fathers have to say regarding the proper manner of singing aloud.

Performance Practice and Proper Disposition: Practical and Pastoral Instructions for Chanting

Although there are few works dedicated to the subject of chant alone, Eastern Orthodox theologians provide many instructions about singing in their writings. These passages fall into two categories: practical, that is, dealing with the outward matter of executing chant, and pastoral, that is, concerning the work of the mind, heart, and soul. Comparatively little attention is given to the subject of performance practice in a musicological sense, primarily leaving such things to oral tradition and somewhat to chant books and theoretical treatises. The manner of performance


85 Berthold, 103.
appears in discussion inasmuch as it relates to and indicates the inner state of the performer. We will now examine instructional advice given in church canons, homilies, and ascetical writings. One of the few places where strictly practice-related instruction appears is among church canons since these texts are by nature, rules. Canon LXXV of the Sixth Ecumenical Synod is a useful example and includes the following:

‘Those who chant in the churches should refrain from forcing their nature to yell, but also from saying anything else that is unsuitable for the church. … Those who chant should offer their psalmodies with great care to God, Who looks into the hidden recesses of the heart, i.e., into the psalmody and prayer that are done mentally in the heart rather than uttered in external cries. … The chanting that is done in churches is an entreaty towards God to be appeased for our sins. Whoever begs and prayerfully supplicates must have a humble and contrite manner; but to cry out manifests a manner that is audacious and irreverent.’

While importance is placed on the careful, humble, and prayerful dispositions of those chanting, it is clearly stated that the sound and manner of performance is nevertheless related to those dispositions. The question as to what sort of vocal timbre or technique constitutes a contrite manner and what sort constitutes 'yelling' and 'crying out' may differ across cultures and time periods and even individual singers; though such a question may be of interest, it is not essential to this study. In this canon, which is addressed to singers, importance is placed not on listeners' perceptions of the sound of chant but rather on singers' own inner states and vocal production. Singers would know best whether or not they and their peers were indeed 'forcing their nature to yell' no matter how their sound may be heard.

Further advice addressed to singers appears in a homily, Concerning the Usefulness of Hymns, by St Nicetas of Remesiana, a fourth-century Latin father and bishop of what is now Bela Palanka, Serbia. This work is one of very few in the entire patristic corpus that deals specifically with the subject of liturgical singing. After explaining that the importance of singing with the heart does not preclude physical singing aloud and expounding the history and nature of liturgical music, he says the following among his practical admonitions: 'One must sing with a manner and melody befitting holy religion; it must not proclaim theatrical distress but rather exhibit Christian simplicity in its very musical movement; it must not remind one of anything theatrical, but rather

create compunction in the listeners.' The homily then continues with directions for singing well in unison. A great importance in performance practice, therefore, is not on feats of emotional vocal expression, whatever they may have sounded like, but rather on the melody itself, the cadence of the text, and the style of music. Such things were transmitted through oral tradition at that time and still are in the continuation of Eastern chant varieties, and as with timbre, they differ according to linguistic and cultural contexts. The value of this passage is not that it contains any great musicological insight but rather that it places the power and effectiveness of chant not so much in the person of the singer but in the sound. It also attributes well-executed chant with the ability to engender compunction in people's hearts. Singers must keep such an attitude in mind while working to faithfully carry out what they have learned orally.

While singers seem to be left to their own discernment regarding technical aspects of performance practice, much instruction deals with the cultivation of the appropriate state of the mind and heart while chanting. Regarding the disposition of the soul, contrition and humility have already been mentioned, and the state of the mind itself is often discussed separately. Alertness, attention, and lack of distraction constitute the mind's participation in the general spiritual state. Ascetic literature from the tradition of the Desert Fathers, who are known for their practice of psalmody, provides many examples of practical teaching on chanting. In his instructions to the nun Theodora, the fifth century Abba Isaiah writes,

'...Show at least the same attention during the chanting of Psalms as you do when you converse with others. If you do not apply your care to this, your chanting of Psalms and your conversation with God will be unto destruction and for naught—not only will it be in vain, but it will also be a labor not without harm. One who chants thus must weep and lament, because while thinking that he pleases God he angers Him all the more by his disorderly chanting.'

Not only is mental attention important, but a lack of such is seen to be a cause for great contrition. To help bring about contrition and to remedy the inattention itself, Abba Isaiah later instructs the monastic to 'go to sleep in the evening and arise in the morning with the remembrance of the everlasting fire, and


Isaiah the Solitary, Matericon: Instructions from Abba Isaiah to the Honourable Nun Theodora (Safford, AZ: St Paisius Serbian Orthodox Monastery, 2001), 30.
boredom will never take possession of you during the time of psalmody.\textsuperscript{90}

Besides mental inattention, two other inner qualities that are seen to render chant poorly performed are pride and a lack of compunction in the heart. In his second century on love, text thirty-five, the seventh-century Greek theologian St Maximus the Confessor lists psalmody among the things that 'are noble in themselves, but when they are done out of vainglory they are no longer noble.'\textsuperscript{91} Returning to the Egyptian desert fathers, such as Ss Barsanuphius and John, we find discussions of remedies against pride and lack of contrition during chant performance in their letters:

‘Question: "Often, as I recite the Psalms, I feel that I am growing proud. What, then, should I say to my thought?"

Response. When the heart is elated during recital of the Psalms remember what has been written: "Let the rebellious not exalt themselves." Rebellion signifies that we are not in fact reciting the Psalms prudently and with the fear of God. Examine, then, whether your thought wanders during the recital of the Psalms. You will surely discover that it is indeed distracted, and that you are therefore provoking God.\textsuperscript{92}

‘Question: "How can one acquire compunction in prayer, reading, and psalmody?"

Response. Compunction comes to a person from the continuity of remembrance. Therefore, when one is praying, one must prayerfully recall one's actions to memory, remembering how those who do these things are judged, and hearing the fearful voice: "Depart from me, you that are a cursed, to the eternal fire," and so on.

When I speak of remembrance of sins, I do not mean the recollection of specific individual sins, in case the adversary intrudes again and brings us into some other form of captivity. I simply mean the remembrance of the fact that, as sinners, we are in fact debtors. And if the hardness remains even after all this, then do not surrender; for often this continuance is prolonged by God for our testing, in order to see if we will endure.

As far as reading and psalmody go, one must keep one's intellect alert to the words of the text and assume within one's soul the meaning concealed in them. If the words are about good deeds, then we should strive to perform good deeds; if they are about the punishment of evil deeds, then we should strive to avoid the expected threat against those who do evil. And by persisting in such recollections, do not surrender if the hardness also happens to persist. For God is merciful

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 158.

\textsuperscript{91} Berthold, 52.

\textsuperscript{92} John Chryssavgis, Trans., \textit{Barsanuphius and John: Letters, Volume 2} (Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 51.
and long-suffering, and he awaits our ascetic struggle. Always remember the psalmist, who says: "I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined to me," and so on. As you spend time on these matters, hope that the mercies of God will come upon you quickly.  

The answers to these questions echo Abba Isaiah's remarks about remembering 'the everlasting fire,' also emphasising remembrance of one’s own sinfulness and indebtedness to God. The second response balances the discussion by encouraging understanding and faith in the power of the chanted words, effort, perseverance, and remembrance of God's mercy as aids towards a proper disposition (such ideas do appear in other passages of Abba Isaiah's writings as well). In ascetical writings such as these, though there is little that may seem musically interesting, the subject of chant is nevertheless featured. Within a monastic context, in which chanting is a regular activity, it is most necessary to provide instruction on how to confront inner states that ruin outward sound, such as the dangers of inattention, conceit, extraneous or inappropriate thoughts and feelings, and a hard heart. We will next explore instructions for laypeople, in which the focus shifts slightly.

St John Chrysostom is one of the best known and most prolific of the early Greek fathers. His works include hundreds of rhetorically vivid and rich homilies and commentaries on many subjects and on large portions of Scripture, which were delivered in Antioch and Constantinople in the fourth century. Among these sermons are expositions on many of the psalms, and we find the following instructions in his explication of Psalm 41:

‘And even if you do not understand the meaning of the words, for the time being teach your mouth to say them, for the tongue is sanctified by the words alone whenever it says them with good will. Once we have become confirmed in this custom, we will not neglect this congenial duty either deliberately or through indifference, as custom will compel us to fulfill this grateful service every day, even if unwilling. Nor will any complaint concerning this singing arise, even if one has grown old, is still a child, has a rough voice, or is altogether ignorant of rhythm. This is because what is sought here is a sober soul, an alert mind, a contrite heart, sound reason and a clear conscience. If having these, you enter into the holy choir of God, you will be able to stand beside David [himself].”

Not only does St John repeat ideas that we have already encountered, but he amplifies them and adds others. We see the same teaching about the characteristics of a good disposition, and beyond  

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93 Chryssavgis, 54-55.  
94 McKinnon, Music in Early Christian Literature, 81.
that, encouragement to sing in such a state even if a person may have a poor singing voice or a lack of musical knowledge. St John is neither instructing church singers nor monks who practice chant among their prayers and ascetic labours, but he is working to cultivate the use of psalmody in the spiritual lives of the members of his congregation. Another element in his encouragement, which may seem to contradict the above advice of Ss Barsanuphius and John, is for a person to chant even if he does not understand the words. This instruction is not contrary, however. Firstly, Chrysostom is not disputing the great importance of understanding and truly praying the words of psalms and hymns; rather, he is encouraging people of all levels of learning not to let a lack of merely intellectual understanding discourage them from chanting. Furthermore, he begins to touch on one of the effects of chant, which is its sanctification of the tongue, a property which it has no matter what any given singer's level of intellectual sharpness or understanding may be. Far from being an excuse towards negligence of learning, St John's words are an exhortation to engage in singing the psalms, provided that one possesses a well-disposed mind, conscience, and heart, and thus to be sanctified and also to learn by means of this practice.

Church canons, ascetical writings, and homilies are several genres in which we find instructions on chant performance directed to chanters, monastics, and laypeople. From the few examples above, it is evident that, though emphasis is placed on the state and character of a singer's mind, heart, conscience, and soul, practical questions of technique, performance practice, and sound are not ignored. Rather, the former aspects are much discussed because they are seen to affect the latter, and tradition, mostly oral but some in chant books and manuscripts, is entrusted with the task of communicating and embodying technique, style, rhythm, timbre, dynamics, and all other physical musical characteristics. Though it may seem that certain pieces of advice contradict each other, the difference in teaching lies with the needs, talents, vocations, and lifestyles of the audience; all of the ideas balance each other. Emphasis is on that which is most pressing for each person being addressed; singers are put on guard against pride and careless or over-burdened chanting; monastics are given weapons against vainglory, distraction, and boredom; laypeople, who may feel that they should not sing since they are in neither of the first two groups, are taught to sing both in spirit and aloud, no matter how their voices sound, for their own sanctification and edification. All are universally reminded of the proper dispositions that will render their song sweet-sounding and pleasing to God.
Silence in Sound: The Relationship between Chant and Stillness

A few words are in order about the nature of chant as it relates to silence. The latter features so strongly in Orthodox spiritual writings that one may wonder what place the sonic art of chant has within such a context. Firstly, it is of utmost importance to note the term used, which is 'hesychia,' that is, 'stillness' or 'quietude,' referring to an inner state and not necessarily to an outer, literal one in every respect. The term has been used since at least the fourth century, and it came into great focus in the fourteenth century, when hesychastic ascetic practices were defended by St Gregory Palamas. Though exterior silence is essential to those practices, the fourteenth century also saw the development of the extremely florid, melismatic, and often 'wordless' kalophonic style in Byzantine chant. Rather than being opposed to each other, hesychastic silence and the new development in the sound of chant were two sides of one phenomenon. Both arose from the same spiritual context, and the sound and style of the chant expressed, or was an image of, a positive, interior silence. In his Mystagogy of the Church, St Maximus the Confessor may perhaps be referring to this same relationship between the sound of chant and silence when he writes that '[man, a mystical church] summons the silence abounding in song in the innermost recesses of the unseen and unknown utterance of divinity by another silence, rich in speech and tone.' The silence which is ascetically kept and that which is summoned, namely, chant and space for the presence of God, are not characterised by empty negativity but instead, by positive reality and even sound; by content and meaning at least as rich as that found in language; by a presence that is beyond, and more concrete than, both sound and silence, which thus encompasses both.

Further reflection on chant and both inner and outer silence appears in the following text from St John the Solitary:

'For God is silence, and in silence is he sung by means of that psalmody which is worthy of Him. I am not speaking of the silence of the tongue, for if someone merely keeps his tongue silent, without knowing how to sing in mind and spirit, then he is simply unoccupied and becomes filled with evil thoughts: … there is a silence of the tongue, there is a silence of the whole body, there is a silence of the soul, there is a silence of the mind, there is a silence of the spirit.'

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95 Lingas, Hesychasm and psalmody.

96 Berthold, 190

As hinted at above, God is directly described as a positive silence. Also, the author makes it clear that literal exterior silence is not the best type of silence nor is it the only type, and it can in fact lead to interior noise and turmoil. In other ascetic instructions, chant is given as a remedy for this very problem. In St John Cassian's accounts of Egyptian desert fathers, we find the following exchange:

‘Germanos then asked: “How does it happen that even against our will many ideas and wicked thoughts trouble us, entering by stealth and undetected to steal our attention? Not only are we unable to prevent them from entering, but it is extremely difficult even to recognize them. Is it possible for the mind to be completely free of them and not be troubled by them at all?”’

‘Abba Moses replied: “It is impossible for the mind not to be troubled by these thoughts. But if we exert ourselves it is within our power either to accept them and give them our attention, or to expel them. Their coming is not within our power to control, but their expulsion is. The amending of our mind is also within the power of our choice and effort. When we meditate wisely and continually on the law of God, study psalms and canticles, engage in fasting and vigils, and always bear in mind what is to come - the kingdom of heaven, the Gehenna of fire and all God's works - our wicked thoughts diminish and find no place. But when we devote our time to worldly concerns and to matters of the flesh, to pointless and useless conversation, then these base thoughts multiply in us, just as it is impossible to stop a watermill from turning, although the miller has power to choose between grinding either wheat or tares, so it is impossible to stop our mind, which is ever-moving, from having thoughts, although it is within our power to feed it either with spiritual meditation or with worldly concerns.”

Far from being a rival of silence, the chanting of psalms is seen as a way to help cultivate it, and vain conversations, evil thoughts, and the like are understood as weeds that would choke it. When taken together, the above passages show that sound, when it takes the form of chant and psalmody, which include both texts and certain musical styles, can bring about and even express true, full interior silence.

The Power of Sound: How Chant Affects Singers, Hearers, and God

Among the ideas in the previous two sections of this chapter, we have seen that three effects attributed to chant in Orthodox spirituality are the sanctification of the tongue, the creation of compunction in the heart, and the nurturing and expression of interior silence. However, psalmody and liturgical singing are said to lead to a multitude of other powerful results, some of which we

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will now enumerate.

Above, we saw that chant is considered to be a help when dealing with wayward thoughts. However, in the spiritual life, it is understood that one's own passions, thoughts, and sins are not the only objects against which one struggles. The existence of demonic forces is discussed profusely in ascetical writings, and chant plays a role in this realm as well. In the thirteenth-century typikon of the Monastery of St John at Foberos, the author tells the community that 'Here in the spiritual struggle a very important weapon that brings death and destruction to the one who makes war on us, namely mortal-slaying Satan, is the power that comes from the singing of psalms itself and from prayer.'\(^9^9\) Here, chant is seen as a means of attacking demons, but it is also understood to be a shield against the worst of their arrows, such as despondency. Returning to the works of St Diadochos of Photike, the reader finds the following advice within a brilliant passage about the place of song in the spiritual life:

'When we are burdened by heavy discouragement we should raise our voices a bit more in psalmody, making the sounds of the soul harmonize with hope's joy unto such point that the dark clouds are driven away by the breath of song.'\(^1^0^0\)

Many theological writings, from desert monastic literature to sayings of twentieth-century elders, speak of psalmody as a weapon against various dark forces, but these two passages are striking in that they imply that the sound of the singing and not only the content of the texts has such power.

Other theologians introduced earlier in this study also speak of the sound of chant as it relates to human beings and even animals. In her aforementioned letter on the duties of a choir singer, Abbess Thaisia gives the following information and instruction:

‘The singing of the chanter passes over to the hearts of those who are praying; if the singing proceeds from the heart, it meets the heart of the listener and so influences him that it is able to rouse him to prayer, to incite reverence even in those minutes when the heart itself is distracted and hard. Often it happens that those who enter the church without any eagerness towards prayer, from compulsion or from propriety, begin to pray fervently and tearfully, and leave the church in quite another frame of mind, in a spirit of tender feeling and repentance. Such a revival is produced in them by the magnificent service and fine singing. And conversely, often it happens that those who enter the church with the intention to pray from the soul, to pour out before the Lord their sorrowful soul, when they hear scattered, careless singing and reading,


\(^1^0^0\) Ermatinger, 127.
themselves little by little become distracted, and instead of profit they find harm, they receive no consolation and, having been tempted by the conduct of the singers, involuntarily fall into the sin of condemnation.’ “

‘Strive with all your strength to concentrate attentively on the words which you pronounce; pronounce them in such a manner that they come from the depth of your soul, which is singing together with your lips. Then the sounds of the vivifying current of your hymn will pour into the souls of those who hear them, and these souls, being raised from the earthly to the heavenly, having laid aside all earthly care, will receive the King of Glory Who is borne in triumph by the Angelic Hosts. Will you believe my words if I tell you from the narratives of the Holy Fathers that not only the human soul can be softened and moved by good spiritual singing, but even animals, those speechless creatures, somehow instinctively bow before it?’

‘Behold deeply spiritual singing, coming forth from the depths of the soul and conscious mind! It is able not only to inspire the rational soul and lift it towards its Creator, but to touch even speechless and irrational animals.’ ¹⁰¹

Several currents of this survey thus far join in this passage: the idea that disposition affects sound; the importance of attention and harmony of mind, soul, and lips; the power that chant has in cultivating silence and prayer; and song's ability to move listeners' souls. In addition to these points, Abbess Thaisia puts forth chant as a means of communicating and spreading life and prayer from one heart to another and as a preparation for souls to receive Christ. She alludes to the text of the cherubic hymn in mentioning this aspect of singing, and we will continue this section with ideas drawn from other liturgical texts.

Hymnographic texts themselves provide rich material regarding the significance and effects of the act of chanting, and the Holy Week and Easter services contain particularly outstanding examples. The eirmos of ode V in St John Damascene's Paschal canon reads, 'Let us arise in the early dawn and, instead of myrrh, offer a hymn to the Master; and we shall behold Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, dawning life to all.' ¹⁰² In this short troparion, we see a return of the theme of receiving Christ with the added idea that the hymn is a precious offering to Him and not only a preparation for His coming. In the troparion for the first three days of Holy Week, we find another reference to vigilant wakefulness and chant:

'Bethold the Bridegroom comes in the middle of the night; and blessed is the servant whom He shall find watching, but unworthy is he whom He shall find in slothfulness. Beware, then, O my soul, and be not overcome by sleep lest you be given over to death

¹⁰¹ Leushino, 57.

and shut out from the Kingdom. But return to soberness and cry aloud: holy, holy, holy art Thou, O God: through the Theotokos have mercy on us."^{103}

This hymn, while suggesting that chanting the Thrice-Holy is itself an act of watchfulness in preparation for the second coming of Christ, shares this theme with other Lenten texts such as the kontakion of the Great Canon.^{104} Such texts are said to render and express watchfulness and compunction in the heart.^{105} Thus, hymnographic texts, while giving insight into their own mystery, are, like the sound of chant referred to above, powerful agents of prayer.

We have discussed the effects and power of the act, sound, and texts of chant, and this section would be incomplete without a brief mentioning of how chant is said to 'move,' or to be looked upon by, God. In the first of his monastic discourses, the thirteenth-century Byzantine St Theoleptos of Philadelphia instructs the nuns under his spiritual direction about the importance of the mental, audible, embodied, and holistic nature of chanted prayer:

‘When you approach an emperor, you present yourself in person and make earnest entreaty with your tongue and you fix your eyes upon him, and in this way you attract the imperial favour to yourself. This is also what you should do, whether in the liturgical assemblies in church or in the solitude of your cell. When you are assembled in the Lord's temple together with your sisters, just as you present yourself bodily to the Lord and offer the psalmody to him with your tongue, so fix also the attention of your mind on the words and on God, aware of the one with whom you are speaking and conversing. For if the discursive intellect devotes its time to intense and pure prayer, the heart is deemed worthy of inalienable joy and indescribable peace.’^{106}

Chanting requires the participation of the whole person, and it calls forth favour from God and not only compunction but also peace and joy for the one who prays in such a manner. In turn, singing is among the things that bring pleasure to God as well, according to the desert mother St Synkletike, who says,

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^103 Ware and Mary, 511.

^104 Ibid., 399.


‘When we come before the true Bridegroom, Christ, we must properly arrange ourselves so that we will please Him. In place of precious stones, let us put on our heads the triple crown of faith, hope and love. Let us put upon our necks the precious necklace of humble thoughts, and gird the belly with chastity. Poverty must be upon us in place of brightly woven garments, and at the banquet let us offer the incorruptible food—prayer and chanting.’

As the early twentieth-century Russian St Silouan teaches, 'Sing to God in love and lowliness of spirit, for the Lord rejoiceth therein.'

Symbol as Reality: The Significance of a Hymn

As we saw above, the sound and act of singing are said to have various effects and to bring about spiritual realities. Another way in which chant is believed to act is through the mystagogical symbolism of each specific chant item. As St Maximus states in his Mystagogy, Chapter XXIV, referring to the synaxis in General,

‘By the hearing of the divine words there is effected the firm and unchangeable habits and dispositions of the realities just mentioned, that is, of faith, virtue, and knowledge. Through the divine chants which follow there is effected the deliberate consent of the soul to virtue as well as the spiritual delight and enjoyment that these arouse in it. By the sacred reading of the holy Gospel there is brought about the end of earthly thinking as of the world of sense.’

There is a tradition of liturgical commentary for the Byzantine rite from the fifth-fifteenth centuries, and in these works, the hymnographic significance of most chant items, liturgical actions, and sacred objects is explained and expounded. We will take a chronological look at commentaries on two of the most prominent hymns, the Thrice-holy from the anaphora and the Trisagion, two chants that focus on a triple proclamation of 'holy' and are related to angelic praise.

The first Eastern liturgical commentary is that attributed to St Dionysius the Areopagite and written in the fifth or sixth century. Though the author does not speak of the trisagion in this work, he writes of the Sanctus in his treatise on the angels, The Celestial Hierarchy. In chapter VII.4, he writes that ‘theology has transmitted to the men of the earth those hymns sung by the first ranks of the

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107 Isaiah the Solitary, 69.

108 Archimandrite Sophrony Sakharov, Saint Silouan the Athonite (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1991), 455.

109 Berthold, 207.
angels whose gloriously transcended enlightenment is thereby made manifest.’ He quotes the Sanctus and follows with an explanation that ‘It is right and good that the revered Godhead, which in fact is beyond all acclamation and deserves all acclamation, is known and praised by those minds which receive God, as far as possible.’ The hymn is not simply a likeness of angelic praise but is in fact that very praise as taught to, and repeated by, those on earth.

In his aforementioned liturgical commentary, St Maximus the Confessor agrees with the Areopagite's teaching, writing in chapter XXIV that:

‘The unceasing and sanctifying doxology by the holy angels in the Trisagion signifies, in general, the equality in the way of life and conduct and the harmony in the divine praising which will take place in the age to come by both heavenly and earthly powers, when the human body now rendered immortal by the resurrection will no longer weigh down the soul by corruption and will not itself be weighed down but will take on, by the change into incorruption, potency and aptitude to receive God's coming. In particular it signifies, for the faithful, the theological rivalry with the angels in faith; for the active ones, it symbolizes the splendor of life equal to the angels, so far as this is possible for men, and the persistence in the theological hymnology; for those who have knowledge, endless thoughts, hymns, and movements concerning the Godhead which are equal to the angels, so far as humanly possible.’

He elaborates upon the first idea by expounding the hymn’s significance, and by speaking not only of human praise on earth in the present but also of praise after the resurrection. He goes so far as to speak of restored human nature and even of the state of the body, and these and all aspects of the state and work of men and angels after the eschaton are signified in this hymn. Such a significance is rich for anyone singing on earth who is watching and waiting for this reality to come to pass. It goes beyond meditation on the fact of singing with angels while the world and its inhabitants still suffer from a fallen state.

The next extant liturgical commentary after that of St Maximus is the mystical contemplation of St Germanus of Constantinople (d. 733). About the Trisagion hymn as sung in the synaxis of the divine liturgy, he writes the following:

‘The Trisagion hymn is (sung) as thus: there the angels say “Glory to God in the highest”; here, like the Magi, we bring gifts to Christ-faith, hope, and love like gold, frankincense, and myrrh-and like the bodiless hosts we cry in faith: “Holy God,” that is the Father; “Holy Mighty,” that is the Son and Word, for He has bound the mighty devil and made him who had dominion


111 Berthold, 208.
over death powerless through the cross and He has given us life by trampling on him; “Holy Immortal,” that is the Holy Spirit, the giver of life, through whom all creation is made alive and cries out “Have mercy on us.”

In this passage we see the usual reference to humans singing with angels, but St Germanus, like his predecessor, weaves other teachings into his commentary. He decorates the allegory of the triple chant to the Trinity by bringing in the symbols of the gifts of the Magi (cf. offering a hymn as myrrh in the paschal canon) and the three virtues. While being mystagogical, the author's concern is also theological and dogmatic, hence his description of how the chant text addresses each person of the Trinity and his reference to each person's work in turn. This theological emphasis will take precedence in late Byzantine commentaries.

The next extant major work on the liturgy does not appear until the fourteenth century and was written by the lay theologian St Nicholas Cabasilas. His words on the Trisagion focus on the Church's act of composing the hymn by gathering together the triple 'holy' from the angels and the other elements of the text, 'God,' 'strong,' and 'immortal,' from the Psalter, adding the prayer, 'Have mercy on us.' He defines the Church as 'The assembly of those who believe and profess the Trinity and Unity of God' and states that, through the Trisagion Hymn, 'She wished to show, on the one hand, the harmony of the Old and New Testaments, and on the other, that angels and men form one Church, a single choir, because of the coming of Christ who was of both heaven and earth.' He further explains that, in singing the hymn, 'it is as if we proclaim that he, by coming among us, has given us a place amid the angels, and established us in the heavenly choir.' While the symbolic meaning of the hymn is not absent from the discussion, the author stresses the Church's act of theologising and proclaiming through the hymn itself. This point is of great importance to singers, who are said to be 'the mouth of the Church.'

The last Byzantine liturgical commentator was St Symon of Thessalonike, who, in his treatise on prayer, devotes an expansive chapter and substantial portions of at least seven others to the Trisagion. In Chapter XVII, he writes,


113 J.M. Hussey and McNulty, P.A., Trans., _A Commentary on the Divine Liturgy by St Nicholas Cabasilas_ (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2010), 60.

114 Leushino, 54.
'Then all sing the Trisagion and the God-given prayer, hymning the Holy Trinity with the angels. Regarding the prayer of the Trisagion, we should remind you in brief that this is an ancient prayer compiled by the early Fathers. For this reason the Church sings the Trisagion continually, both in the Holy Liturgy and at the end of the services, anathematizing certain heretics who made an addition to this hymn, while the Church—as from heaven through the boy taken up there—continually sings this heavenly and sweet melody.'

He then continues with a passage very similar to that in St Nicholas Cabasilas' work, describing the origin of each portion of the text (he adds a similar passage in Chapter XXIV and an explanation and similar Trinitarian theological exegesis of the Sanctus text in Chapter XXIII). Though he mentions the necessary and ever-important reference to the angels, St Symeon's emphasis is on the dogmatic and theological nature of the hymn, which is understood both to anathematise heresy and to theologise and praise the Trinity. He summarises the story of the boy who was taken up to heaven and heard the hymn directly from the angels, confirming its correct formulation when it had been altered by Peter the Fuller according to his heretical teaching about the suffering of the Son (discussed in detail in Chapter XXV).

Chapter XXV ends with St Symeon speaking of the Church as did his predecessor, teaching that, since it has received the correct formulation of the hymn, 'the Church always sings [the Trisagion] with the angels at all times of prayer, especially with divine melody as in the Great Doxology at the end of Matins and in the holy Liturgy.' For St Symeon, the hymn's greatest significance is its expression of theological truth, yet in speaking of singing it 'with divine melody,' especially in notable contexts within services, he suggests that such is proclaimed in the sound of the chant at least as much as in the correct words.

When considered all at once, the shades of significance of the Trisagion and related Sanctus, according to the above five liturgical theologians, clearly relate to every aspect of a person. In its mystagogical, angelic origin, theological content, and musical realisation, the hymn touches the soul, mind, heart, and body, leading the individual, a microcosm of the Church, to theologise and praise the Trinity in every member.

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116 Simmons, 43.
Icons of Sound: Symbolism in Musical Characteristics

We have briefly looked at the mystagogical symbolism present in hymnography, specifically in the Trisagion, and now, taking a cue from the previous mentioning of 'divine melody,' we will look specifically at the significance that is attributed to the sound of chant. From among various musical styles, two will serve as prime examples: unison chant, common to most Orthodox traditions, and three-part Georgian polyphony (more will also be said about the symbolism of specific types of Georgian polyphony in Chapter IV).

The earliest Christian references to unison singing are found in the New Testament. The apostle Paul writes,

'And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God' (Col. 3:14-16, RSV).

Unlike the modern understanding of the term, 'harmony' refers to the accordance of several sounds, such as voices or flutes, joining together in the same melody. In other words, it usually describes a well-blended unison rather than polyphony or, in the modern sense, 'harmonised' monophony. 117 This unison sound, according to St Paul, should not only be literally sung among Christians but should mirror, and perhaps give rise to, love and good conduct among them.

The singing of a unison melody, while said to bring love and concord among people, is also believed to restore order within the individual person. In his letter to Marcellinus, the Alexandrian father St Athanasius the Great (D. 373) teaches that:

‘To sing the Psalms demands such concentration of a man's whole being on them that, in doing it, his usual disharmony of mind and corresponding bodily confusion is resolved, just as the notes of several flutes are brought by harmony to one effect; and he is thus no longer to be found thinking good and doing evil. ... so he who sings well puts his soul in tune, correcting by degrees its faulty rhythm so that at last, being truly natural and integrated, it has fear of nothing, but in peaceful freedom from all vain imaginings may apply itself with greater longing to the good things to come. For a soul rightly ordered by chanting the sacred words forgets its own afflictions and contemplates with joy the things of Christ alone. ’

Like St Diadochos of Photike and abbess Thaisia, St Athanasios, though writing earlier against the idea that singing should be done for pleasure,\textsuperscript{119} ascribes great value and power to the sound of good singing. He speaks not merely in allegorical terms but in a way that shows a deep understanding of the virtue of a melody and its real effects in context. St Ambrose of Milan (D. 397) writes of the efficacy of unison singing as well, especially regarding its impact on a community: 'A psalm joins those with differences, unites those at odds and reconciles those who have been offended, for who will not concede to him with whom one sings to God in one voice?\textsuperscript{120}

It can be said that, for chant of any texture to be performed well by a group, co-operation, mutual understanding, shared knowledge, trust, and charity must exist among the singers. The Georgian chant tradition, however, provides a unique illustration of this general concept. It has a three-part polyphonic structure—found in chant as well as in folk music—which is deeply rooted in what the musicologist and singer Malkhaz Erkhvanidze calls the 'Georgian musical consciousness.'\textsuperscript{121} Not only is Georgian chant an intriguing subject for musicological analysis; it holds interest for theologians as well because of its rich mystagogical symbolism.

The earliest extant discussion of the significance of three-part Georgian polyphony appears in a prologue to a translation of the Psalter by the twelfth-century philosopher Ioane Petritsi, an important figure at the Gelati Monastery's academy. Throughout his writings, especially his commentary on Proclus, he employs musical terminology to explain and amplify various philosophical and theological concepts. In the prologue to the Psalter, which speaks eloquently of


\textsuperscript{119} McKinnon, music in Early Christian Literature, 52-53.

\textsuperscript{120} McKinnon, Music in Early Christian Literature, 127.

\textsuperscript{121} Malkhaz Erkvanidze, Lecture, 27 November 2011.
the Trinity, we find the following notable passage:

‘Our beloved [book] [i.e., the Psalms] is altogether a music embellished by the Holy Spirit, and in music there are also three phthongs [tunes], that is to say, tonalities that make one whole. They are “mzakhr” [strained, high pitch], “jir” [middle] and “bam” [lower tension, bass], and all arrangements of strings and voices make a beautiful melody by those three, for any composition is beautiful through its irregularities. You would perceive the same in the number of the Holy Trinity, for we speak about the Father being unborn, the birth of the Son, the procession of the Holy Spirit, and the unity of the Nature, with the difference of the Hypostases. Similarly in different musical tonalities—“mzachr,” “jir” and “bam”—we perceive the unity of a whole’ (Epilogue, 217, 1-14).

Herein, there are references to the three voices, but more importantly, it is stated that they are perceived as forming a whole, so much so that the three parts together are referred to as making a single 'melody.' Furthermore, this understanding and perception of the three-voice structure leads Petritsi to put forth their sound as a sonic illustration or icon of the Trinity.

Petritsi's words are well-known to Georgian scholars and singers, and there is much contemporary discourse about the experience of singing three-part polyphony and its theological and spiritual significance. In a lecture on the subject, Nalkhaz Erkhvanidze explained that, as the three persons of the Trinity will everything in common, singers, too, must join their wills and give space to each other in order to execute a song well. This aspect of singing has been so important that until recently, certain folk pieces, called lottery songs, were composed spontaneously by three singers extemporising together. Along with the importance of joined wills, Erkhvanidze told a group of singers that 'the important thing isn't that you are singing; it's that you are hearing and loving and believing and trusting the one who is beside you.'123 As we saw in previous sections, the dispositions of singers are of great importance, and singing affects and displays relationships among people.124 The Georgian tradition particularly focuses on the love, trust, and giving up of one's will as inherent characteristics of singing, not in a sense that implies that such things are absent from other musical textures but by providing one of many sounds to illustrate that reality. Thus, chanting is, besides an icon of the Trinity, a manifestation of threefold love and kenosis among singers themselves. Singers must empty themselves and love their neighbours with whom

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123 Erkvanidze, Lecture.

124 See Chapter IV for more discussion on music as it is related to kinship and community.
they sing, or the parts will not fit together. Each must provide a place for the other voices by providing one polyphonic part, around which the others can sing theirs. The sound of each unique voice and of each independent part in the polyphony must give its energy to the others in the essence of the whole.\textsuperscript{125} The Russian philosopher Nikolai Fedorov states that 'The Trinity is our social project,'\textsuperscript{126} and of Georgian polyphonic chant, which is an icon and a means of participating in trust, kenosis, and love, it can be truly said that 'the Trinity is our musical project.'

Conclusion

In this survey, I have introduced the writings and ideas of theologians across centuries and cultures, from the Apostle Paul to St Silouan the Athonite, from fourth-century Cappadocians to Mediaeval Greeks and Georgians. Though the authors offer a vast amount of material and many interrelated teachings and concepts concerning the nature of chant, their shared Christian experience and spiritual life is evident. Various threads and themes reappear, sometimes under the same form and sometimes amplified and elaborated. In the opening section on allegorical language, we saw glimmers of what was later said outright, such as the existence of a sound which expresses that which is in the essence of true silence. When all of the passages are viewed together, with such repeated and highlighted themes, several points stand out in clear relief. The right inner state is what renders chant well-performed, yet chant can bring about such a state. Though the singer's disposition is of utmost importance, a good voice, or better said, a pleasing sound, is nevertheless of great value to people and to God. It is a gift from God to human beings and their offering to Him in return. The voice belongs to the body, serves the soul, and is an instrument of the Holy Spirit; thus, chant is a work of all three. It is a co-operation of men and angels. It is an embodied act, a great help in the spiritual life, a good work, a spiritual sound born of material beings, a powerful force that works on humans and other creatures, a pleasing offering that rises to God from the bodily temples that He has made. It is prayer in the energy of sound, prayer incarnate, prayer of the body, which gives birth to prayer in the hearts of one's neighbours. As prayer, it is born out of a longing for God and brings about union with Him and with angels, other

\textsuperscript{125} For further discussion, including ethnomusicological comments, see Chapter IV.

\textsuperscript{126} N. Sakharov, 124.
human beings, and all of creation. As the contemporary Greek elder Porphyrios has taught regarding chant,

‘The divine services in the church should always be celebrated with eros. The divine services of the Church are words in which we converse and speak to God with our worship and with our love. The hours spent closest to Paradise are the hours spent in the church together with all our brethren when we celebrate the Divine Liturgy, when we sing and when we receive Holy Communion. Together we all follow the divine services—the words of our Lord. With the Gospel, the Epistles, the hymns of the Book of the Eight Tones, of the Lenten Triodion, and of the Offices of the Saints, we achieve our union with Christ.’

That which binds all of the above aspects of chant together, that which infuses it, and that which it communicates and manifests, that which all works should spread, is love.

\[\text{\hyperlink{endnote}{127}}\]

\[\text{Sisters of the Holy Convent of Chrysopigi, Trans., } \textit{Wounded by Love: The Life and The Wisdom of Elder Porphyrios} \text{ (Evia, GR: Denise Harvey Publications, 2009), 165.}\]
Chapter III

Text, Sound, and Image: An Example of Chant in Iconographic and Liturgical Context

Introduction

Now that I have set forth my research principles and methodology and provided the theological data, I will present the first case study of my research. I have chosen church services that have, as the troparion quoted in the previous chapter shows, rich hymnography for analysis but that have not been subject to much study in the English language: the matins services of Holy Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. These rites, from the important week leading to Easter in the Orthodox tradition, engage all aspects of my methodology, including study, fieldwork, narrative inquiry, and chant performance. This chapter is, however, primarily academic in nature, with a final section on fieldwork with my ensemble. We will look at chant not by itself but within its ritual context, considering it together with iconography in worship.

As mentioned in the introduction to the previous chapter, much recent scholarly attention has been given to the role of icons in Orthodox worship, and many aspects of hymnography have been studied by literary scholars and musicologists. In the discussion of icons, interaction with hymnography does appear, yet more facets of this synergetic relationship can be uncovered. Also, though all five senses are mentioned, sight takes precedence in much of the discourse. However, the reality of the experience of icons goes beyond this sense since it also includes touch, proximity, and embodied awareness in general. Because this experience involves the soul, it is based on faith and spiritual perception at least as much as on sight or any external sense. Also, the

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128 English service texts can be found in Kallistos Ware and Mary, Trans., The Lenten Triodion (New York: St. Tikhon’s Seminary Press, 2002), 511-516, 524-528, 535-541. A useful bilingual Greek-English edition is George Papadeas, ed. and trans., Greek Orthodox Holy Week and Easter Services: A New English Translation (Daytona, FL: Patmos Press, 2007).

129 This aspect is explored further in Chapter V.
work of God should not be taken for granted, and grace is an obvious but perhaps under-discussed aspect of the power of sacred art. This subject will feature in the final chapter of this study. The presence of hymnography in worship involves the sense of hearing and also the act of uttering prayer. Much can be said about how, by grace, all these sensory elements of iconography and hymnography relate to each other and involve the human person, not only as they complement one another but as they participate in and expand each other. Hymns and icons do not merely present the same information to the respective senses of hearing and sight but together help one to pray to and perceive Christ. This synergy can be explored through an approach that considers, along with hymnographic texts, music, and images themselves, their spiritual dimension, their place in worship, and, following the theological data in Chapter II, relevant theological and exegetical patristic commentary about their meaning. Thus, this discussion has two intertwined levels that are difficult to separate: first, the relationship between hymns and icons and second, the action of sound and image upon the senses and the heart, or rather, worshippers' experience of the same within a liturgical or ritual context. The services of bridegroom matins from Holy Week provide a rich example for such an exploration of the nature and effects of sung text and venerated icon as they reach the mouths, ears, eyes, bodies, hearts, and souls of worshippers.

Though much of this chapter will focus on the textual content of hymns, the text cannot be separated from its music, and the entire sonic experience of a hymn is what reaches a person and not simply the words. The following chapter will discuss something other than text that can be expressed in sound, taking Georgian singing traditions as a particular case, a type of ‘sonic iconography’ that was touched on in the previous chapter. I will now discuss hymn texts, small musical examples, and an icon from bridegroom matins. Through the matins examples, I will show, taking into account the theology presented in the above chapter, how the body, mirroring the soul and also presenting information to it, interacts with and responds to Christ's presence as pointed to by sound and image.

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130 Patristic voices will continue to provide data throughout this dissertation, including the chapters that focus on contemporary fieldwork. Though one could argue that it is problematic to apply such discourse outside its historical context, yet all contexts in question share similar practice and experience. Also, see Chapter IV for a brief discussion of music and a sense of ritual time.
Themes and Commemorations of Bridegroom Matins

A focus on three chant texts and on the Nymphios icon will show how hymn and icon work together in the bridegroom services, though other texts and images will be mentioned to shed their own light on these primary examples. Before looking at them individually, it is important to contextualise them within the general themes of the services. Some are common to matins of all three days, but each day also has its own commemorations, which expound these shared themes. The *Eschaton*, repentance, the anticipation of Christ's passion, and His last encounters and teachings are common threads. On Monday, the Old Testament patriarch Joseph is commemorated as a model of purity and faith and as a type of Christ, and Christ's enacted parable of the withering of the fig tree (Matt. 21:18-22) is set forth as a call to repentance and good works. On Tuesday, the theme of repentance and bearing fruit in readiness for Christ's coming is expanded with the proclamation of the parable of the wise and foolish virgins (Matt. 25:1-13), which is alluded to in the troparion and exaposteilarion of all three days. Meditations on the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30), which directly follows in Christ's teaching, also appear in the Tuesday hymnography, such as in the stichera. On Wednesday, Judas' greed and betrayal are remembered and juxtaposed with commemoration of the sinful woman who, in repentance, washed Christ's feet with her tears, wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and anointed them with precious myrrh. This woman is presented as a model of individual repentance, as a type of the contrite, forgiven, purified, worshipping church—the bride of Christ, and also—not to be overlooked since Christ commands her memorial for this reason—as a myrrh-bearer who anointed Him in preparation for His death and burial. All of these themes and commemorations are deeply and clearly expressed in both the hymnography and the iconography of the services. However, we will specifically look at how the texts and images convey the presence and work of Christ, focusing on the incarnation, passion, and second coming.

The Hymn of Kassia, Embodiment, and Perception in Worship

Though most of the hymnography for Great and Holy Wednesday expounds the commemoration
of the sinful woman, the doxastikon of the aposticha\textsuperscript{131} is particularly poignant and thus is one of the few aspects of bridegroom matins that has received notable scholarly attention. It is a composition by the ninth-century nun St. Kassia,\textsuperscript{132} and most of the text is in the voice of the woman being commemorated. As the initial word 'Κύριε' ('O Lord') shows, the entire hymn, including the opening narrative lines, is addressed to Christ. Not only does the hymn tell the woman's story, but it also allows worshippers, speaking her words in the first person, to identify themselves with her (as they also do in the pre-communion prayers)\textsuperscript{133} and to encounter Christ, seeing themselves in the same penitent position before Him. In recent scholarly work, such individual assumption of the text has been discussed, and the role of the body, the senses, and feelings, as illustrated in the text, has been described.\textsuperscript{134} When taken together, these ideas shed light on the nature of icon veneration. In the hymn, the woman describes the distress in her soul because of sin, her repentance, and, most importantly, her bodily actions, such as weeping, bowing down, and kissing Christ's feet. These actions are not unlike those of worshippers before Christ's icon, and it is significant that a prostration is called a \textit{me tanoia} since the sinful woman shows her repentance with a similar action, asking Christ to incline to her heart and to save her. She refers to His self-emptying and also empties for Him her heart, fountain of tears, and alabaster jar. Worshippers, therefore, are to empty themselves in a similar way, and aside from weeping, praying aloud or chanting, with its required exhalation, is a way to do so in an embodied manner.\textsuperscript{135} Penitent icon veneration and prayer, then, engage the sense of touch, include

\textsuperscript{131} Ware, 540.


\textsuperscript{133} A recent study on the history and content of these prayers is Stefanos Alexopoulos and Annewies van dem Hoek, ‘The Endicott Scroll and its Place in the History of Private Communion Prayers,’ Dumberton Oaks Papers 60 (2006): 145-188.

\textsuperscript{134} This hymn has been discussed in such a manner, along with some of Kassia’s other writings, within the context of iconoclasm. See Niki Tsironis, ‘The Body and the Senses in the Work of Cassia the Hymnographer: Literary Trends in the Iconoclastic Period,’ Byzantina Symmeikta 16 (2003): 131-157. The author focuses on the idea of using the body to express repentance rather than punishing it.

\textsuperscript{135} On breath, the sound of chant, space, and kenosis, see ‘Icons of Sound: Hagia Sophia and the Byzantine Choros,’ in \textit{The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium}, Bissera V. Bentcheva (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010).
meaningful gestures, and rely on proximity.

The sound of a hymn in its entirety is the point of focus in this Chapter. Such sound includes the phonetics of the words, in whatever language is used, and the nature of the music, from whatever tradition, to which they are sung. The text is neither subordinated nor left to itself but rather is made available through being sounded in a heightened way. Such is even the case for highly melismatic settings, including those of the doxastikon being featured in this study, and vocables, which express, as we mentioned in Chapter II, prayer of the heart. Therefore, the meaning of the text should be examined as it is part of what the music delivers, and we will also see examples of how music acts as such a vehicle.

A primary characteristic of the hymn of Kassiane is the theological content of its text. Like an icon, it helps one to perceive Christ's divinity as the sinful woman did. The text contains many descriptions of Christ's nature, most of which are addressed to Him in vocatives rather than being said of Him. Some phrases describe His work, such as in 'O Thou Who drawest down from the clouds the waters of the sea.' Two phrases are particularly striking in their manner of teaching about the incarnation. The first is the aforementioned reference to Christ's self-emptying. The second speaks of His body, particularly of His feet, which are described as the very feet whose approach Eve heard and from which she hid. By contrast, the sinful woman approaches and touches the divine feet, reminding one of St. Thomas and others' encounters after the resurrection. In various musical settings, the relative clause that shows Christ's divinity by describing the sound of His footsteps in Paradise is presented in a way that puts the idea in relief. For example, in a thirteenth-century Byzantine melody, the phrase Ὄν εν τῷ Παραδέισῳ Ἐυα τῷ δειλινόν ('whose sound in Paradise Eve') is highlighted by a shift of focus to the lower part of the mode, centred around the subdominant, containing melodic material that appears in the opening lines that narrate the sinful woman's perception of Christ's divinity (see ex. 1). In a contemporary kalophonic setting from Vatopaidi Monastery, the same phrase displays the most activity and movement throughout the mode, in contrast to the preceding parts of the sentence, and is one of the most melismatic passages (see ex. 2).

These two instances of drawing attention to a particular phrase show how, while hearing this hymn text, worshippers are struck by and proclaim the truth of God's coming in the flesh and boldly approach Him in faith. The hymn inscribes Christ's form before the eyes of their hearts as it draws their attention to the reality of His presence, especially through its light on the incarnation.
A simultaneously-present, venerated physical image intensifies the experience. Hearing, sight, action, and proximity thus work together to help one realise that he or she is standing and bowing down before Christ, calling upon Him, and being seen by Him. One approaches Christ and, perceiving Him, finds that the only self-awareness is that of being 'in the accusative … in front of God,' of being looked upon in 'mercy without measure.'

Example 1. Passage from Middle Byzantine Hymn of Kassiane

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136 Mannousakis, 106.

Example 2. Passage from kalophonic hymn of Kassiane. Note that the provided transcription outlines the melody and does not include fully-ornamented interpretation of the neumes.

Preparing for Christ's Coming: Chanting in Anticipation of the *Eschaton*

In Chapter II, we referred to the bridegroom matins troparion and saw that chant in general is understood to aid in preparation for Christ's coming. We will now look at this text again in context. The most recognisable elements of the bridegroom orthros service, common to all three days on which it is celebrated, are its troparion\(^{139}\) and exaposteilarion,\(^{140}\) along with the icon of Christ after which the service takes its name. The troparion, which is also ordinary in the midnight office, speaks of Christ's second coming, using the bridal imagery and call to vigilance from the parable of the ten virgins. The exaposteilarion refers to the same parable and also borrows language from another wedding feast story in the same Gospel, that of the guest without a wedding garment (Matt. 22:1-14). The troparion is marked by a striking rhetorical device, one that is especially common in Lenten hymnography, an admonition to one's own soul. This phrase, 'Βλέπε όυν ψυχή μου' ('beware therefore, O my soul'), is emphasised in the Byzantine melody by the type of tonal shift mentioned above and a new, descending motif (see ex. 3). Not only does the soul tell itself to be watchful but also to chant 'Holy, holy, holy art Thou, O our God; through the Mother of God, have mercy upon us.' This line of text appears not only in this troparion but also in all the Lenten triadika and is of great importance since it suggests that chanting with compunction provides an effective, embodied means of keeping the heart awake and watchful. Unlike the hymn of Kassia discussed earlier, this hymn is not addressed to Christ but is rather sung in the Bridegroom's absence in anticipation of His coming. A procession with the Nymphios icon takes place on Great Monday while this troparion is sung, and though an icon can provide a sign of presence as mentioned before, it can also signify the absence of its prototype and kindle desire for Christ's presence. As Charles Barber has noted, icons do not 'make present or even re-present,' but rather, according to the definition from the Seventh Ecumenical Council, 'move their spectators to "remember and desire" the ones depicted.'\(^{141}\) As the Holy Wednesday aposticha and icon veneration embody repentance in Christ's presence, the troparion and the same veneration can

\(^{139}\) Ware, 511.

\(^{140}\) Ibid., 514.

\(^{141}\) Barber, 11.
bring about vigilance and desire for Christ's coming.

The exaposteilarion brings together themes from the previous two hymns. It is a prayer to Christ, during which one sees, as it were, the glorious second coming, Christ's bridal chamber. Worshippers acknowledge that they are not fit to come in and ask that Christ, the Light-giver, would transfigure and save them. They address Him as if they are already before heaven's gates but also as spiritual strugglers in need of Christ's love and help, as well as of greater love towards Christ. In his fifteenth monastic discourse, the aforementioned St Theoleptos of Philadelphia instructs the nuns under his care to understand the hymn in this way, relating it to their present spiritual lives as they sing and take in its words. He rephrases the hymn as follows:

‘I see the bridal chamber of your help (the soul says), O my Saviour, filled with all goodness, but I have no wedding garment of love that I may enter the citadel of your help. Therefore, make my discursive intellect to shine with the robe of love, O Giver of Light, and save me, so that adorned by love I shall be deemed worthy of salvation.’

The text itself and this patristic reference to personal identification with it emphasise that faith and mindfulness of the life to come are at work. This hymn is sung not only in Christ's presence here and now but at the *Eschaton*, and it is therefore more ontological than metaphorical, being in liturgical time as well as relating to one's current spiritual state. I have taken worshippers' personal identification with hymn texts for granted in our discussion so far; thus, patristic discourse on doing so is of great importance. Such identification is not related to the imagination but is rather, as we have been describing, an experience of the embodied soul and spiritualised body, of the senses, mind, and heart, which is brought about through worship, with the help of hymns and icons. The exaposteilarion refers to the 'bridal chamber,' not simply to the wedding feast, thus joining Christ's two parables of the wise virgins and of the wedding garment. This bridal chamber imagery is used in patristic and liturgical texts to refer to eschatological, individual, and intimate encounters with Christ, and the chamber itself is seen, among other things, as the human body, while the bride is the soul, the five senses being the wise virgins with their lamps still burning. The chamber is also the heavenly kingdom at Christ second coming. In the exaposteilarion, faith and a spiritual sense of

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142 Sinkewicz, 295.

143 On bridal chamber imagery in Byzantine as well as Syriac and early Georgian and Armenian liturgical texts, see Sebastian P. Brock, ‘Some Distinctive Features in Syriac Liturgical Texts,’ in *Worship Traditions in Armenia and the*
the coming kingdom are thus highlighted in addition to the present sensory engagement that takes place during services.

Example 3. Passage from Byzantine Troparion of Bridegroom Matins.

The Nymphios Icon: A Window to Christ and an Image of His Work

Figure 1. Carved Nymphios icon, made for the author by iconographer George Bilak

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144 Touliatos, Cassia, 8.
I have been exploring the significance of icon veneration, and it is now time to look at what is expressed through the Nymphios image itself. This section will discuss symbols that are particular to this icon and not mention features common to all icons of Christ, such as the inscriptions that point to His divinity. The icon of Christ the Bridegroom has several specific layers of meaning. As the art historians Hans Belting and Gerasimos Pagoulatos have stated, it is a depiction of Christ as the Man of Sorrows, being related to twelfth-century Byzantine icons and to the contemporary image known as 'Extreme Humility.' It displays more than Christ's suffering, however. Patristic commentaries and hymnographic texts provide further exegesis of this image.

The Nymphios icon is seen to foreshadow Christ in His second coming. The purple robe, crown of thorns, and reed sceptre, though bestowed in mockery, are types of His authority and judgment. They are described in the fifteenth antiphon of Holy Friday matins, a hymn which also refers to Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church. A doxastikon from the same service, sung before the tenth gospel reading, speaks of judgment, alluding to a passage from Psalm 2: 'They placed a reed in My right hand, that I may break them in pieces like a potter's vessel.' These same symbols of majesty also show Christ's love. The reed in His hand calls to mind His care and mercy even for those with lamps that are running dry, expressed in the Scriptural passage 'A bruised reed he will not break, nor will he extinguish a smoldering wick' (Is. 42:3; Matt. 12:20). Concerning the crown of thorns, St. Theodoret of Cyrus, in his commentary on the Song of Songs, writes the following about the eleventh verse in chapter three:

‘By mother she [the bride speaking in the text] refers to Judah in regard to the humanity for the reason that it unwillingly gave him this crown: it crowned him with thorns out of disrespect, whereas in his case it was the crown of love he received in the thorns, deliberately submitting to the disrespect and willingly proceeding to the passion. Hence the reference also to that day of the wedding and to the day of his joy of heart: on that day the communion of marriage took place.’ St. Theodoret then recounts Christ's words at the last supper and says that 'Those who eat the


146 Ware, 587.

147 Ibid., 597.
bridegroom's limbs, therefore, and drink his blood enjoy the communion of marriage with him.\textsuperscript{148}

Much is said concerning Christ as Bridegroom in this rich passage. Besides the crown of thorns being a crown of love, the passion and the mystery of the eucharist are metaphorically, mystagogically, and ontologically spoken of as a marriage. Church members' participation in the mystery is, like the wedding feast at the end of the age, an encounter and union with Christ. The eucharist has an eschatological dimension,\textsuperscript{149} and Christ enters the bridal chamber of one's body. As mentioned earlier, veneration of the icon itself also affords an encounter, though the icon's role and nature is not the same as that of the eucharist. (cf. Barber), and St. John Damascene shows the nature of such encounters in his third discourse in defense of holy images. He relates an episode from the life of St. Eupraxia in which she says, upon standing before Christ's icon, 'I have joined myself to Christ.'\textsuperscript{150} As previously discussed, the icon can remind one of Christ's presence while also, in another way and at the same time, showing His absence and renewing one's desire for a sacramental or eschatological meeting with Him. Furthermore, the Nymphios icon in particular shows His suffering in the flesh and His majesty, His judgment and His love.

It is important to note the entire above passage from St. Theodoret's commentary, not only because it gives special significance to the crown of thorns, but because it is one of many patristic references that link the eucharist with the eschaton. This link has important implications for one's understanding of the Holy Week and paschal services. Holy Week often marked the last stage of intense preparation for catechumens, who would be baptised on Pascha.\textsuperscript{151} This theme of preparation has not been lost, however. As the hymnography that we have explored shows, this preparation is for Christ's second coming and for all encounters with Him, including that which

\textsuperscript{148} Robert C. Hill, Trans., \textit{Theodoret of Cyrus: Commentary on the Song of Songs} (Brisbane: Centre for Early Christian Studies, 2001), 75-76.

\textsuperscript{149} The eschatological nature of the eucharist and its fulfilment of the nuptial language in the Song of Songs is discussed in Jean Daniélou, \textit{The Bible and the Liturgy} (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956), 127-142, 191-208.


\textsuperscript{151} For a thorough study on this process, see Byron Stuhlman, \textit{The Initiatory Process in the Byzantine Tradition} (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009). For an interesting discussion of early baptismal rites associated with veneration of icons of Christ, see Pagoulatos.
takes place at the Easter liturgy. This general preparation is shown not only by the inclusion of the bridegroom matins troparion at every midnight office, but it is also supported by the praying of the sticheron from Holy Tuesday during the prayers of preparation for holy Communion. Fulfillment is spoken of in the paschal liturgy. The exaposteilarion prayer for a shining wedding garment is answered in the anti-Trisagion at the divine liturgy: 'As many as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ, alleluia' (Gal. 3.27).

St. Theodoret, also in his commentary on the Song of Songs, mentions this very text, saying that ‘the bridegroom himself became her [the bride’s] garment, and blessed Paul confirms it in the words, "All of you who were baptised into Christ put on Christ." Now, the bridegroom is both God eternal and was born a man from the holy Virgin in the last days. While remaining what he was, he took as well what is ours, and clothed the bride who was formerly left naked.'

We have now returned to a topic from the beginning of this study, to teachings on the incarnation, which was shown forth in St. Kassia's aposticha for Holy Wednesday. This exegetical link between the hymnography and iconography of bridegroom matins with the eucharist and paschal liturgy brings a fuller vision of Christ and of His first and second comings, a summary of His work for the world's salvation, to borrow a phrase from St. Theodore the Studite, 'evidence of the divine economy.' In the incarnation, Christ put on humanity that He might then clothe it with Himself. At communion and at the end of the age, He is the wedding garment, bridegroom, light, priestly king, loving judge who suffered, sacrifice, feast, and host. As a later church father, St. Symeon the New Theologian, says in his third monastic discourse,

‘He will be all things for all, and every good thing in all good things, ever super-abounding and filling up beyond measure all the perceptions of those who recline at the wedding feasts of Christ the King, the Latter Himself being the One Who is uniquely eaten and drunk, and every kind of food and drink and sweetness. At that time, when seen by all and Himself seeing all those innumerable multitudes, His own eye fixed forever and unchangingly in its gaze, each of them will believe himself to be seen by Him, and no one of them will sorrow as having been overlooked. The Same shall be, as we have said, a crown set unalterably and unchangingly upon the heads of all the saints, one which reveals itself as different for each of them, and He will distribute Himself among them according to the dignity of each as each is worthy. He shall

152 Ware, 527.
153 Hill, 82-83.
Himself be the vesture of all, to the degree that each is eager at that time to be clothed with Him, since no one enters the mystical marriage without putting on that unapproachable gown.\textsuperscript{155}

In worshippers’ faith-driven singing and hearing of the above hymns and in such viewing, touching, and placing oneself in the presence of Christ's icon, the heart begins to become aware of these things.

The Meeting of Wise Senses and Christ: Sound and Synaesthesia

In the example of the bridegroom matins service, we have looked at the nature of the synergistic combination of hymns and icons in worship, at their interweaving of meaning and mutual exegesis as they interact with and act upon the senses and the soul. This interaction is not simply of literary interest, a mere linking of ideas and motifs, but is a liturgical experience that is centred around Christ's presence. In preparation for the next two chapters, I will now discuss the sonic aspect of this experience, separated from how it works with text—something that was touched on in the two Byzantine chant examples. Earlier sections of this Chapter demonstrated how non-visual sense-perception in worship aids spiritual perception of icons, and while discussing the hymn of Kassiane, we saw that one aspect of the relationship between hymns and icons is that a hymn text can function like an icon. Manoussakis considers the hymn to be the sonic equivalent of the icon on theological, incarnational grounds, saying that, 'since the uncircumscribed can be described and the unrepresentable depicted in iconic representation in virtue of the flesh of the Incarnate One … thanks to the Word-made-flesh, created flesh can now utter the unnameable and ineffable Word.'\textsuperscript{156} This equation also appears in St. Andrew of Crete's Great Canon, in which the author, taking King David's psalm 50 as an example, refers to writing a hymn as if it were an icon (ode VII, troparion 5).\textsuperscript{157} Different types of sensory input can merge, participate in each other, stand in for one another, and be united by the intellect. Such is especially so when Christ is the source of perception while the senses are lamps. As St. Symeon again says,

\begin{itemize}
  \item Manoussakis, 101.
  \item Ware, 403.
\end{itemize}
‘You see how, for those who are spiritual, knowledge and likeness, contemplation and recognition, are one and the same. Thus Christ becomes all things for us: knowledge, wisdom, word, light, illumination, likeness, contemplation, recognition. Even in the present life He gives to those who love Him that enjoyment, in part, of His own good things. He mysteriously allows them both to sense with the intellect and to hear the ineffable speech which is hidden for the many.’

Sound Out of Context?: Chants of Bridegroom Matins in a Concert Setting

I will conclude this chapter and lead into the following one with a few words about a difficult research question. The deeply contextual discussion of chant in this chapter begs the question of what its function and nature is outside iconography and church services. In order to explore this issue, my small female choir at the University of Limerick, Ensemble Terirem, held a concert on 23 May 2013, featuring Holy Week, Easter, and thematically-related chant repertoire (see Chapter V for further fieldwork with the same group). Using the idea that music and texts can have iconographic significance and drawing on the shared themes in Holy Week and paschal hymnography, I sought to create a programme that would contextualise bridegroom matins chants in a meaningful way.

The programme, entitled Offering Hymns to Christ, consisted of two parts, one centred around chant repertoire and one around Georgian folk song, with a terirem piece bridging the two. We began with the vespers chant Lord I Have Cried, from the Shemokmedi tradition and followed with a cherubic hymn. We then sang three hymns, each with repetitions or portions in Greek, Church Slavonic, and Georgian: the troparion of bridegroom matins, the Easter processional, and the fifth ode of the Easter canon, which included the Svan variant of the troparion Christ is Risen. The Terirem followed, and the performance finished with three Georgian religious folk songs: a glorification and table prayer, preserved by St Ekvtame the Confessor along with Gelati school chant; a Ch'on, or Easter ritual song, from Imereti; and two Svan settings of the Trisagion.

158 Golitzin, 134. St Symeon is speaking of ineffable spiritual experiences, but such do not exclude, in some kind of dualistic way, sense perception.

159 We will consider a passage from this saint’s writings in the next chapter and at the musical characteristics of Gelati school chant in Chapter V.
(see Appendix B and Chapters IV and V for transcriptions and analyses of both settings). Most of this concert repertoire has a wider importance in this entire study, the bridegroom matins troparion, cherubic hymn, paschal canon ode, and Trisagion having furnished important textual data in Chapter II, and the vespers psalm and Svan pieces will be discussed later, being related to ethnographic work (see Chapter IV) and Ensemble Terirem's second case study performance (see Chapter V). The variety of musical textures and chant traditions reflects discussion from the previous chapter, and participants’ thoughts on such a combination will also appear in the final chapter. This first performance provided a place to put all this literally-linked, theologically-related, and musically-complementary repertoire together. The idea was that pieces could reciprocally give context to, and, like iconography and chant in this chapter, provide exegesis for, each other, and we sang them in an order that could facilitate such contextualising and provided programme notes and translations for audience members.

This situation leads one to ask if this new concert context was effective and if so, in what ways. To begin with, the concert was not planned with the idea to give a sense of or to imitate liturgy but with the idea that a concert is a different performative context, and this one was my ensemble’s first major performance, a place to begin sharing our work in preparation for singing similar material within a service. Regarding this concert and our later church singing (see Chapter V), one of my ensemble members wrote that ‘each performance brought us deeply into the sonic and textual world of the repertoire, but I experienced the first as primarily pedagogical and the second as primarily liturgical.’ She also felt that the first performance ‘allowed us a public space in which to share our learning’ and that this learning was ‘with a view to reintegration’ into a liturgical context. 161 The concert, then, served as a pedagogical goal and to generate musical confidence and familiarity with future application in mind.


161 Personal correspondence, 31 July 2014.
The rehearsal process centered around discussions of texts and services and around building three-part polyphony (for the Georgian material), from the bottom voice up. This way of working gave members aural and intellectual familiarity with repertoire, and as we will see in Chapter V, the emphasis of various musical aspects and topics shifted in rehearsals for singing the vespers service. I will explain the concert rehearsal process and briefly analyze this type of polyphony in the example of the bridegroom matins troparion from the Gelati Monastery tradition, and analysis in later chapters will focus on musical structure.

Part of our learning process for chants involved singing the bottom voice alone and successively adding the top two. For folk songs, I taught the middle voice, followed by the top and then the bottom. I received both of these methods from my Georgian colleague Nana Mzhavanadze, a Gurian singer and ethnomusicologist, whom we will meet throughout this study. I also provided recordings of repertoire so that members could listen outside of rehearsal time to help instill a sense of the co-operation of the parts and the whole that they form. I spoke of how the parts mutually support each other and stressed the necessity of ‘emptying oneself’ into the sound. In preparation for this concert, we spent most of our time repeating parts and looking at translations of texts rather than on such theologically-related ideas, and members asked me practical questions about vocal placement and technique. Pedagogy was therefore of a primarily practical nature. One of the singers described this process, explaining that I ‘brought us incrementally into the sound world we were acquiring through a building technique, teaching the songs layer by layer, but simultaneously teaching text all the time. It is striking…that we never learned the repertoire without text, as if separating the melody from the text did not make sense.’

The Gelati bridegroom matins troparion is characterized by phrases that begin with syllabic setting and end with neumatic passages. The polyphony, may be heard as generally homophonic in that all voices declaim the text together. Yet, they are contrapuntal in that they are not equally active at the same points and do not always move together. Each voice has its distinct gestures, at cadences, for instance, and means of providing a foundation for the others. The foundational aspect is most notable for the bottom voice, known as bani, but the upper voices also give space to one another, one moving while the other holds a note. Also, at some of these same points,

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162 Personal correspondence, 31 July 2014.
syncopation occurs in the bottom voice, bringing about rhythmic counterpoint and independent but complementary movement in all three parts (see ex. 4).

Example 4. Passage from Georgian Troparion of Bridegroom Matins, Gelati School.

Besides the relationship of the parts, the harmonic and tonal structure are aspects with which all ensemble members worked in order to acquire Georgian repertoire. I worked to encourage a sense of vertical movement of the three-voiced unit by sometimes quietly humming the top voice at the first stage of the polyphonic building described above. I also instructed members to 'hear' the other voices when practicing their parts alone. Though they had recordings to listen to, these were usually at a much lower pitch than that which we were using, and they served the same purpose as the pictures that accompany puzzles. Each singer still needed to fit the voices and phrases together when practicing. This troparion has the overall structure of abcb'da'ec'b'd'a'. We will find similar structures in Georgian pieces in later chapters and discuss their significance then, and at this point I simply note the form for the sake of analysis. Most sections, such as 'a,' are entire phrases, but 'b' is recitation that begins phrases with various other elements. Besides the end, all phrases end on a fifth at one of two levels, each a step apart, giving all phrases a particular sense of direction towards one of these two resolutions. The final unison also has its characteristic approaching gestures. Phrases also differ in range, occupying two levels that correspond with the two points of resolution, though the ‘level’ with the lower cadence pitches ascends higher, and a sort of modulation occurs in the final phrase. These features are common in Gelati school Georgian chant.

and will be discussed further in Chapter V. In rehearsing for this concert, they were musical features that were becoming a familiar language, as it were, for Ensemble Terirem members. Without having acquired this familiarity through the rehearsal process, our first performance and also later church singing may not have been successful. One member said that the process ‘allowed us to sing with a degree of familiarity and therefore to be more present to other aspects of the liturgy and not just the notes and words on our page,’ and she felt that my ‘insistence on our understanding what we were singing made it possible to also bring a level of semantic as well as sonic awareness to the liturgical framework within which we were singing.’ Therefore, this understanding also affected singers’ approach to the concert and even led them to ask how it fit within the nature of the texts and music that we were presenting.

Though the concert rehearsal process had strong practical elements, theological aspects were discussed, especially in conjunction with the chant texts. Thus, singers were deeply aware of the sacred nature of the music. Their knowledge affected their approach to the performance, which I will now discuss. On the day of the concert, one of my ensemble members asked me how we were to involve the audience and if we were to make eye contact with attendees. I was at first perplexed by her question, and my response was to refer to the sense of a church service and to say that our role (or at least mine) was to involve the audience in our music. While such a comment gives no practical information, it gave my ensemble a ‘sense of what we were doing.’ The feedback that I received after the performance was that it was successful, yet the comments were of an aesthetic or technical nature. These responses do not indicate that the chant had only the function of entertainment, however. The concert experience was deep for some, and one colleague could only describe it in metaphorical terms as ‘a steak dinner but sacred.’ Listening was satisfying and nourishing on some level, if not spiritual, at least psychological. Such responses are in contrast to those that followed the vespers service discussed in the last chapter, and such seems to point to a marked difference in the two experiences, which, as one member put it, were

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164 Personal correspondence, 31 July 2014.
165 Field notes, 23 May 2013.
166 Ibid.
167 Ibid.
‘distinctive and overlapping.’ However, their ritual frames, those of concert and liturgy, may have also led participants to feel permitted or drawn towards making particular types of comments and framing their experiences in certain ways. Participants who regularly engage with repertoire in liturgical settings may experience concerts differently than those who do not. Such does not imply that chant sung in concert settings loses its significance, however, and it seems to have additional technical pedagogical value.

In an anthropological study of pilgrimage in Russia, Jeanne Kormina notes the belief that icons and places are believed not to lose grace on account of being transferred to museums, turned into storage spaces, or otherwise taken out of ecclesiastical or ritual context. The same could be said for chant that is sung in concerts or in any other context outside Orthodox religious settings. Also, as we will see in the next chapter, the type of effect that music has is not only dependent on context but on how that context is understood by the persons who are involved. Thus, for worshippers, music and icons may afford the same significance wherever they are met, and for others, the matter is complex and open-ended. Findings from Chapter V on music and grace will shed more light on this issue, and some aspects may differ for every individual singer and listener and remain unknown to anyone else.

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168 Personal correspondence, 31 July 2014.

Chapter IV

The Substance of Song: An Autoethnographic Look at the Embodiment, Oral Transmission, and Performative Significance of Svan Ritual Song

Introduction: An Element of Three Fields

In Chapter II, I discussed the views of the twelfth-century Georgian philosopher Ioane Petritsi concerning his culture's polyphonic tradition. I also referred to the thoughts of the contemporary scholar and singer Malkhaz Erkvanidze. This chapter will be a practical exploration of some of the above theological themes and is meant to show some of the ways in which theology is manifested and carried out, that is, how chant theologises. Song will be spoken of through several metaphors, as various substances and objects, revealing the tangible, embodied experience of something that is sometimes thought to be intangible or ephemeral, especially if not recorded. This descriptive method will clearly illustrate key views about the nature and function of religious folk song, with special emphasis on the Svan tradition in the Republic of Georgia. As explained in the book _Reflections on the Musical Mind_, 'Music is often functional because it is something that can promote human well-being by facilitating human contact, human meaning, and human imagination of possibilities.' While some concepts that will feature in this chapter have been touched on previously, the language focused on the significance and effects of singing as stated in theological writings with few descriptions of the efficacious agent itself, which was considered to be understood. We will see music as an agent, though not separated from people and context nor reduced to a social phenomenon or to its discernable elements, but rather as a synergy, as a sign of communion, as a valuable and powerful material and medium, and as part of a wider cultural and theological world view.

In _Music in Everyday Life_, the ethnomusicologist Tia Denora explains that music's force is not inherent in its forms but is 'constituted in relation to its reception, ... [and] particular aspects of

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the music come to be significant in relation to particular recipients at particular moments, and under particular circumstances.\footnote{Tia Denora, \textit{Music in Everyday Life} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 22-23.} She notes that ‘music’s effects are generated by a describable addition, whose sum is greater than its parts: music, plus the ways that the recipient ... attends to it, plus the memories and associations that are brought to it, plus the local circumstances of consumption.’ This addition is an example of synergy—Denora calls it an ‘alchemical process’—and though she is referring to contexts of listening to recorded music, a similar and perhaps stronger process takes place in live music, especially when the musical recipients are simultaneously producers and participants.\footnote{Ibid., 42.} The circumstances and associations throughout this study are those of social interaction, ritual, and prayer. This chapter will shed light on song in action and context by looking at relevant situations through an autoethnographic lens, drawing upon my experiences and interactions, including the viewpoints of others—singers, teachers, church choir members, friends, colleagues, and students. Depending on the situation, I in turn take many of the roles just listed; thus, the cultural web of interaction between self and others, through which one finds ethnographic insight, (see Chapter I) is rich and textured.

My daily work with Georgian chant can be put into three fields: my teaching at the University of Limerick, my participation in the choir of the Georgian Orthodox parish in Dublin and in other congregations, and my intensive fieldwork in Lakhushdi, a village in the Upper Svaneti region of Georgia. This chapter will primarily focus on this fieldwork, which itself encompasses the three fields of classroom, concert, and ritual settings, both church and home-centred. I will refer to my work at the university and to experiences in various church communities where relevant. Before beginning my exploration of Svan song, I will briefly describe these autoethnographic contexts and make some methodological clarifications.

I teach on two courses at the University of Limerick, the Bachelor of Arts in Voice and Dance and the Master of Arts in Ritual Chant and Song, and I direct a small female Orthodox chant ensemble. I also teach one-to-one voice electives and other miscellaneous tutorials. On the two courses, I give lectures on Orthodox liturgy and chant, deliver modules on ritual studies, and teach practical chant repertoire classes, which are about 80% Georgian repertoire and 20% Byzantine and Slavic. I rarely give students scores since I teach as I have been taught, that is, via oral
transmission. A major objective of the BA and MA courses is that students explore their voices and learn through practical engagement with a variety of singing traditions, taught by practitioners. While the classroom context could seem to bring up sensitive issues, such as questions about the place of religion and the teaching of sacred repertoire at a public university, I have not found such to be the case; rather, I teach the music and share its contextually-understood meaning and background as academic information and personally take the responsibility of praying and doing the spiritual work that is, as I have been describing throughout this dissertation, involved in the music. Students are free to appropriate the music in whatever way they wish; how and to what extent music is appropriated depends on each person's free will, intention, and preference hence, as has already been noted, the non-inherent nature of its effects. My teaching is directly related to my fieldwork in Georgia because it has given me the opportunity to keep repertoire active and in free development between visits to Lakhushdi, and I learned and was required to acquire new songs and skills across both contexts. For example, I am required at times to sing the lowest voice part, bani, an essential aspect of Georgian polyphony and a skill that I did not have before my first visit to Svaneti.

The second important chant field is the Georgian parish of St Maximus the Confessor in Dublin, Ireland. This community has not had its own Georgian priest for some time and therefore did not provide the most ongoing, stable place in which to conduct fieldwork; neither does it have services on days which are important to the whole of this study, such as the first three days in Holy Week (see Chapter III). However, I currently attend and sing in the choir whenever possible, and during my first two years in the parish, I was generally there on a weekly basis and have collected a small amount of recorded material and autoethnographic writing. Singing in the St Maximus parish choir has been a crucial element in my formation as a singer in the Georgian chant tradition. Around the time of Easter 2010, I was welcomed into the choir and have gained much knowledge and confidence by singing the top voice, and I also became more confident with the middle voice when I had to sing it out of necessity and found that I could carry out the task; again, I acquired new skills in context through participation and oral transmission. The feedback and examples of my fellow choir members have been indispensable, and even more so, the liturgical experience in that parish has been of the greatest importance.

\footnote{A recent work on world music ensembles at universities is Ted Solis, \textit{Performing Ethnomusicology: Teaching and Representation in World Music Ensembles} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).}
In late summer 2011, I made a three-week pilgrimage to Georgia, where I spent several days in the capital city, Tbilisi, where I also attended the liturgy at several churches, and I had the privilege of taking the remaining time to live and work with singers, families that continue their local oral tradition, in Lakhushdi, a small village in the remote region of Upper Svaneti. I was with a group of colleagues and Georgian song enthusiasts who had been invited by the community to learn and share their music within its contexts of religious feasts and everyday life. I made a similar trip in 2013, to several convents, where I attended services and choir rehearsals, and to the same village but for the celebration of different feasts, including a harvest festival in conjunction with the Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God. In 2014, I stayed in Lakhushdi a third time, celebrated this latter feast again, attended a funeral, and participated in Sunday Liturgy and chanted in the choir at Lamaria Monastery in the village of Ushguli. Especially during the second and third trips, my perspective was interestingly both emic and etic since, though I was clearly an invited outsider in one sense, it seemed that I indeed belonged to the same culture because of my adherence to the same faith and previous musical background and experience. Even during my first visit, another guest referred to me in a toast as a 'cultural interpreter.'

As I will describe, primarily in the third section of this chapter, I was in fact considered by many others to belong, and such was made quite clear throughout my second and third visits. During both trips, I was regarded as a villager and family member by my hosts and teachers; my singing was met with strong reactions from new Georgian acquaintances; and I was assumed to be Georgian or Svan, or said to be so despite any differences in appearance, in various instances. I was quite surprised by my instant sense of membership in Lakhushdi as I have been in situations of cultural sharing, learning, and singing before, in which, though I participated to an intense degree and even had greater competence with the given languages, I was a visiting student, not a community member, teaching assistant, close friend, and insider. Thus, singing had strong and particular roles and effects in ritual contexts and social interactions. Though three concerts did take place during my fieldwork, they are not furnishing any of my core data. My involved perspective in Georgia, as one who received and also had a share in forming the music around me, helped me to identify several important aspects of the nature and role of Svan ritual singing. In learning and discussing repertoire, participating in

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174 Field notes, July 2011.

175 Ibid., July 2011, August 2013.
religious activities and social life, sharing toasts at daily supras (traditional Georgian banquets), and having informal conversations with Georgians and my fellow visitors, a rich sense of the meaning and role of song unfolded. Therefore, I was not only a participant-observer in the usual sense, observing through a participatory vantage point, but rather, in accordance with the arts practice methods outlined in Chapter I, including my own practice and participation within the observed research material; I did not participate in order to do research but chose to study something in which I would have taken part in any case and not simply for the academic purpose of acquiring information and discursive understanding. My interactions with people, therefore, were varied and unpredictable as my role was not pre-determined as that of a visiting scholar, though my research was known to and supported by my Georgian friends and acquaintances. As Denora states, '[music's] temporal dimension, the fact that it is a non-verbal, non-depictive medium, and that it is a physical presence whose vibrations can be felt, all enhance its ability to work at non-cognitive or subconscious levels ... the levels on which we do not turn to music as a resource but are rather caught up in it, find ourselves in the middle of it, are awakened by it.' My research, then, comes from a place of being caught up, in the middle of things, and aware.

I must make two final methodological notes before presenting my findings. My knowledge of Georgian and Svan is limited, and one friend asked me during a supra, 'You are singing in Georgian; when are you going to start talking?' I am also totally blind from birth, and I have been asked about how missing a sense affects not only my life in general but my interactions in doing research. I am aware that these two factors have affected my interactions, observations, and research data to a great degree. Perhaps these factors created a need for music to take a particular type of communicative role (see below), and such would show the creative, non-stagnant nature of oral tradition. However, participatory music, like that of Svaneti, is generally a form of heightened social interaction. Also, my personal interactions, group dynamics, and other peoples' musical experiences are similar, and thus, music already had such a cultural function. This pre-existent use

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177 Denora, 159.

178 Field notes, 7 January 2014.

179 Turino, 29.
and understanding of music is what allowed my interactions to be almost completely free from much blindness-related self-explanation and disclosure, which I find is often required and requested in social life. Also, because singing was such a common skill in the village, I did not meet with the stereotype of the blind, and therefore good, musician; my disability was irrelevant to my singing. Finally, blindness does not entail a lack of awareness of what may be considered strictly visual phenomena such as colour. My friend and colleague Nana Mzhavanadze, one of the organisers of my field expeditions, illustrated this point well in the following note that she shared while working with me in Ireland:

‘Sydney has floated into the classroom. She really walks like she is floating. Her long, silk-like blond hair is spread on her shoulders. Her skirt is long ... almost to her ankles. She is always dressed very simply but tastefully. I've looked at her from her head to her feet and her white ankles hit my eyes.

“What's up, Sydney? Why are you not wearing socks in this cold?” I'm asking.
“This morning, I've discovered that I had no socks of the proper colour. So, decided not to wear any.” She is smiling.
“I was amazed. Sydney was born blind.”

My awareness of appearance, though acquired through memory and the other four senses, was evident to her and a cause of surprise. Regarding the aforementioned ‘blind musician’ stereotype, I do not make claims about congenital blindness being inherently related to greater musical insight, though some may do so based on neurological findings. For example, blindness leads to cephalic adaptation, and thus, the occipital lobe in such individuals (and blindfolded sighted subjects) is stimulated by sound and tactile objects. Rather, these same findings show that the senses, especially sight, touch, and hearing, can be synthesised, and as examples will show, such may play a role in musical semiotics, that is, the perceiving, finding, and making of multifaceted significance in and through sound. Everyone is a synaesthete to some degree, at least in making associations.

Finally, based on a strong intuition that I felt upon arriving in the village and according to the later request of the villagers themselves, I did not conduct formal ethnographic interviews. The music

180 Gjerdingen and Schulkin, 8

181 Ibid., 30.
classes already provided a platform for discussion, the supra, sometimes referred to as the 'academy of the heart,' was a place for speeches and toasts, and everyday conversations and interactions created material that direct questioning could have missed. Formal interviews could have also led to a sense of distance and lack of participation as well as feelings of discomfort for myself and my friends; this issue is a common one in the fields of ethnomusicology and ritual studies. Throughout my work in Georgia, I took situations as they occurred, and I had no need or desire to orchestrate contexts or to draw out responses by formal questioning; I was simply there to listen, participate, and give in return through interaction, affecting contexts thus. Perhaps I had a privilege of 'invited intrusion.' My engagement and attention often took, therefore, 'non-discursive and corporeal forms,' and Denora mentions that such is usually the case in musical contexts and meaning-making, being important in investigation of interpretations of the same. Thus, my understanding of the nature of Svan song came through experience and participation, through being directly taught and singing the tradition, from involvement and interaction more than from inquiry. The object of this study is the music in action, which makes other kinds of data more useful than questions and answers.

This chapter will not be an exhaustive discussion of all aspects of the repertoire but will focus on views, ideas, musical and textual aspects, and songs that are particularly related to theological themes. The Svan material comes from a current culture, grounded in Eastern Orthodox Christianity and yet also possessing its own unique characteristics, which have survived from pre-Christian times and were appropriated into practices that now carry Christian or general cultural significance. Before I describe song in what may be called mystagogical forms, I will introduce lakhushdi village and the Svan culture and give a brief survey of Svan music.

182 Field notes, July 2011.
184 Denora, 30.
Lakhushdi is one of nine small hamlets that make up the greater Latali village in the upper Svaneti region of northwestern Georgia. Situated in the Southern Caucasus at approximately 1347 metres, it is known, like Upper Svaneti in general, for its having been less affected by the Turkish, Persian, Mongol, and Arab invasions experienced by Georgia over the centuries; neither was it included in the collectivisation that took place under Soviet rule.186 Latali, with its nine communities, is home to many ninth-twelfth-century Orthodox churches and possesses many icons, vessels, manuscripts, and other works of liturgical art. Its singing tradition is likewise considered to be one of its treasures. In 2007, restorations were carried out by UNESCO, which declared the village to be a world heritage site, having already declared Georgian polyphony a part of intangible world

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Svans, whose language is one of three in the Kartvelian family, along with Georgian and Mingrelian-Laz, consider themselves to be Georgians and belong to the Georgian Orthodox church. They adorn their faith with folk customs, such as those discussed below, and their language has many religious terms, including many regarding the particulars of Orthodox fasting. Along with celebrating the feasts of the church calendar, they keep local festivals associated with village churches and their patron saints and to commemorate the dead. In Latali, one such celebration is the Feast of Limkheri, celebrated on the Sunday that precedes the Feast of Ss Quiricus and Julitta (28 July). It is one of many festivals in honour of an archangel, and takes place in and around hilltop churches, such as the Tanghili church where we celebrated. The nine communities share in hosting the feast, and it was Lakhushdi’s turn in 2011. I lived in the village for two weeks surrounding this holiday, during which I took part in preparations, repertoire acquisition, and the feast itself, which, perhaps auspiciously, happened to fall on 25 July, coinciding with the Feast of the Archangel Gabriel according to the ecclesiastical calendar. I also celebrated the Feast of Ss Quiricus and Julitta (Kvirikoba) in the nearby village of K’ala on 28 July. In 2013, I stayed for another two-week period and participated in a harvest thanksgiving and commemoration of the departed, which took place on Anchiskhatoba (the Feast of the Icon of Christ Not-Made-By-Hands, 29 August). This local festival would usually take place on 28 August, the Feast of the Dormition (mariamoba), but as this feast fell on a Wednesday, which is generally a fast day, it was moved to Thursday. I will not describe these festal celebrations and their ritual structure and actions in great detail, but they are the context of much music and interaction. Before giving such examples, I end this introduction with a few words on the characteristics of Svan song.

Georgian chant and folk music are respectively divided into monastic schools and regional

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187 Despite frequent application of this term, this chapter focuses on the palpable nature of Svan repertoire. For a discussion about ‘intangible cultural Heritage,’ performance, and preservation, see Diane Taylor, ‘Performance and Intangible Culture,’ in The Cambridge Companion to Performance Studies, Tracy C. Davis, Ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 91-104.

188 See Chato Gudjedjiani, Svan-English Dictionary (Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1985). Note that there is no standard way of writing Svan, and this dictionary makes use of a different system than mine and also employs a great number of linguistic abbreviations. Throughout this chapter and in musical transcriptions, I will present Svan using current standard transliteration of Georgian as a foundation, with a few additional IPA symbols for sounds that do not have a Georgian equivalent.
dialects. The Svan musical dialect belongs to the Western Georgian group and has some common features, e.g. unison notes rather than fifths at most final cadences, with the music of neighbouring regions, such as Rach’a, Lechkhumi, and Samegrelo. The repertoire of the upper part of Svaneti is thought to be better-preserved than its lower Svanetian counterpart, displaying fewer signs of influence from other dialects, and it bears features that are considered to mark the oldest Georgian polyphony. Wide, non-tempered tuning, \(^{189}\) particular timbre, and certain vocal nuances are outstanding characteristics, which present a challenge for transcription. It shares its three-part structure with most Georgian music, and such usually takes the form of two close and sometimes quite parallel upper voices over the bass. The middle and top voices, when not parallel, can have solo sections, and such is particularly so with the middle, which is considered to be the main voice (it would not be accurate to call it the ‘melody’) and which usually has the characteristic call gestures that mark the beginnings and various transitions in most Svan songs. Given the shift from middle solo to a three-part structure with precedent top voice—though sometimes the middle voice joins the bottom voice, rendering only two parts at certain points—the two upper voices can dominate at different places within the same piece (see Ts’khav Krist’eshi and Jgragish in Appendix B). As we will see later in this chapter, Svan musical structures are cyclical and labyrinthine.

Because of the nature of Svan tuning and timbre, which are difficult to transcribe in modern Western notation, musicologists have sometimes considered the music to be heterophonic rather than polyphonic. Yet, the texture of the three voices is clear; Svans understand the music according to such a texture, using local terminology for the three voices; and the current consensus is that Svan folk repertoire is indeed an example of three-part chordal units polyphony.\(^{190}\) As with all

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\(^{189}\) Some have suggested that wide tuning, which is common in a variety of folk music, makes room for greater participation from musicians at all levels. See Turino, 45. For more on tuning and timbre in Georgian polyphony, see Johan Westman, ‘On the Problem of the Tonality in Georgian Polyphonic Songs: The Variability of Pitch, Intervals and Timbre,’ in *The First International Symposium on Traditional Polyphony*, Rusudan Tsurtsumia and Jordania, Joseph, Eds. (Tbilisi: International Research Center for Traditional Polyphony of Tbilisi State Conservatoire, 2003): 212-220 [in Georgian and English]. In my transcriptions, I have sometimes attempted to indicate tuning with arrows, but all transcriptions serve only as outlines. I am still exploring methods of transcription and types of notation, including neumes, in order to arrive at a satisfactory means of transcribing. Contemporary Georgian musicians use Western notation, sometimes with arrows, so I am employing the same in this study.

\(^{190}\) Maka Khardziani, ‘Mravalkhmianobis Tipis Gansazghvris Da Samkhmianobis Tsarmoshobis Sakitkhisatvis Svanur Musikalur Polklorshi [Formation of Three-Part Singing and Determination of the Type of Polyphony in Svanetian Traditional Music],’ in *The First International Symposium on Traditional Polyphony*, Rusudan Tsurtsumia
Georgian polyphony, the three parts are perceived as a single unit, and to separate one out, without the other two at least being sung quietly, is, as several singers often feel and one has remarked, 'like torture.'\textsuperscript{191} Besides the aforementioned general Western Georgian characteristics and particular Svan tuning and vocal style, the most prominent feature of Svan song is its texts in the Svan language with rich and profuse employment of vocables, some of which are also found in other Georgian musical dialects. Such 'wordless' polyphony is widespread in Georgian song,\textsuperscript{192} but in Svan repertoire, as I will show below, it often takes on particular significance that is of a religious character or related to specific rituals (cf. the zari, a funeral song composed entirely of vocables). This value of vocables is also shared with other regional dialects, such as in the zruni lament genre from Rach'a (words occur alongside vocables in this case),\textsuperscript{193} and it may have been more widespread in Western Georgia in the past. Svan examples are a vibrant and contemporary occurrence of this intriguing feature of Georgian music in which it has a particular meaning or power. We have now reached the body of this chapter, in which I will describe Svan song as various substances and objects in order to show how it acts and what it actualises.

\textsuperscript{191} Field notes, July 2011.


\textsuperscript{193} For a discussion of the zari and zruni genres and for an example of the latter, see Nino Tsitsishvili, \textit{National Unity and Gender Difference: Ideologies and Practices in Georgian Traditional Music} (Lambert Academic Publishing, 2010), 276-277.
Even when it includes text, music is not always appropriated in a narrative or verbal way. Its sounds may carry meaning by reflecting situations and calling forth associations, by being images of, or providing windows into, communities, places, people, and even states of being. I will now discuss these two overlapping semiotic aspects of song, its iconic and indexical significations, which underlie several other topics. Such meanings are not set, being examples of many possibilities, which are grounded in the context and experiences of particular people. However, as
cross-cultural comparison and relation to aforementioned theological ideas will demonstrate, such
significance is not arbitrary or merely subjective. It is based on cultural foundations and shared
association and appropriation, being related to established practices and symbols and a part of
intersubjective interaction.

Near the end of Chapter II, we saw that three-part Georgian polyphony is seen to be an icon of
the Trinity. It is so in a theological as well as a semiotic sense. Polyphony was also felt to be an
agent and reflection of mutual love among people. This idea is also directly related to the
conversational and social role of music and to its forging of communion and kinship, aspects that
will be discussed below. Group singing is thus an image of the Lakhushdi community, including
its new and guest members. In a similar way, field recordings and professional ones that include
villagers can serve as photographs. Recordings function for me in this way, acting as pictures of
myself, my friends, and the surrounding environment. Recordings do the same for others as well,
sighted individuals in different contexts of oral traditions, such as Peruvian Aymara musicians, for
whom a recording is 'a representation of a celebration and of social interactions realised in a
special way.'

Even a written song text, when associated with a particular person, can act upon memory and
function in this way. For example, in a correspondence with Nana Mzhavanadze, who was about to
begin a performance tour, I wrote the opening vocables of a travelling song (see Appendix B,
Mgzavruli), and in her reply, she said, 'I can hear you singing that!' Likewise, a colleague from
Lakhushdi has interacted similarly when I have quoted songs, writing the next line or encouraging
me to 'please continue.' In live situations, music can be perceived in a similar, photographic
manner as is the case in the Sami joik tradition, in which repertoire acts like photographs of
people. Joik is, however, perhaps better described as indexical in its manner of signifying, and
the same can be said regarding some experiences of Svan repertoire.

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194 For an introduction to semiotics and music, see Turino, 8-9.
195 Ibid., 24.
196 Personal correspondence, September 2012.
197 Personal correspondence, September 2011.
198 See Carol L. Krumhansl et al., ‘Cross-Cultural Music Cognition: Cognitive Methodology Applied to North Sami
I will now look at field situations with a view towards indexical significance and what power this has beyond intellectual association. During a walk to a hilltop church, my friends and I stopped periodically to sit down and sing a song or two. It is notable that the repertoire of choice consisted of cradle and healing songs, and at one point, when someone suggested that we sing a particular piece, our friend responded with, 'Yes, and I will sleep.' The associations of these songs with rest and sleep made them appropriate to the situation. The singers were women, and though these songs have gendered associations, their indexical significance was foremost since it was related to the music's actual function at the time. Singing, though an energetic, bodily activity, served, at least in my case and perhaps that of my friend, to bring about rest. It was perhaps more effective and rejuvenating than a physical cessation from all activity. The concepts of bodily awareness and ‘latching,’ a term that refers to the bodily appropriation of music and the related physical effects (such as dancing, toe-tapping, or changes in pulse rate), help to explain how and why this is so.

The song was likely appropriated and latched on to semi-consciously by the bodies of those present and thus used to shape energy levels and physiological states. Several types of appropriation or engagement, especially latching, which I will later apply to mental and spiritual phenomena, are responses to music that are integral to many phenomena and experiences studied in this chapter.

During our time at the church on the hill, when my friends explained the rituals that take place there to the guests who were with us, we sang the appropriate songs. We were already in the ritual space, and the songs provided a likeness of or window into the ritual itself, though it was not being performed at the time. They also constituted their own ritual as we lit candles, venerated icons, and prayed, together while singing and individually. In both this and the previous example, it seems that the iconic and indexical significance of songs, besides allowing them to be reflections and windows, is, at least in part, what makes them able to function and not only to suggest the various entities being discussed in this chapter. Perception of music as an icon or dicent index, that is, an index with a true association and not simply a discursively-assigned one, makes it available for

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199 Field notes, 28 August 2013.

200 See Tsitsishvili, A Man Can Sing and Play Better than a Woman.

201 Denora, 99.

202 Ibid., 144.
appropriation. Music is said to work by 'carrying connotations and secondary significations' or by '
[placing] on offer ways of moving, being and feeling through the ways its materials are configured into a range of sonic parameters,' and it may work in both ways at once, such as in this study's examples. Actualisation and meaning overlap. Neither necessarily leads to or arises before the other, but rather, they coexist and are interwoven.

The Blood in Our Veins: Embodied Song as Life-Giver, Bond, and Carrier

Figure 4. Games during the celebration of the feast of Limkheri.

Music can be perceived as something that resides in the human body. It is shared and realised through being heard and sung or played, that is, through bodily perception and production. The anthropologist Florian Muehlfried has described how wine and the condiment tkemali can act as

203 Denora, 124.
second and third blood in Georgian culture, especially in the diaspora, where the same is procured and shared as a mark of Georgian identity,\textsuperscript{204} and Svan music can be understood as shared in a similar way. This blood metaphor is useful for describing several key aspects of the Svan oral tradition, which can be considered a vital substance that is not owned property but is rather a source of life that one possesses, protects, and shares. It can best thrive within people, is in danger of being 'spilled' when not sung and left to transcription,\textsuperscript{205} and has a vivifying role in its cultural context. It is also passed down within families and can forge strong kinship ties with those who are not blood-relatives. Song does not simply reflect social structure, as Alan Lomax has discussed,\textsuperscript{206} but it can play a role in determining it. As Denora writes, 'music's force is made manifest through appropriation and reception ... it is perfectly reasonable to speak of music as a material of social organisation, because styles of movement, emotional and social roles come to be associated with it and may issue from it.'\textsuperscript{207} Furthermore, the songs carry the force that is appropriated and received, nutrients, as it were, embodying the culture and faith of singers and listeners.

Within Georgian culture, music is associated with life and all its activities. Almost all song genres arise from or are related to daily routine, work, and church and folk ritual. Yet, while one mourns the death of a relative, there is a tradition not to sing for forty days, and some may extend this time to a year. During a toast at a supra, a friend explained how, after a death in her family, life was brought back to her family through guests and music.\textsuperscript{208} Not only is music synonymous with life, however; it is understood to sustain life. In his toast to music during another supra, the singer, teacher, and orphanage-founder Gia Rasmadze said:

>'There are three ways of preserving good things in this world: written form, ritual, and living [oral] traditions. Music is one of the living things. ... All men have something good in their hearts even if they don't know it. There are seeds ... and songs are one of the things that keeps these seeds alive.'\textsuperscript{209}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[204] Muehlfried.
\item[205] Such is the case for any transcribed or composed music if one cannot interpret a written score. Interpretation is based on embodied and aural training.
\item[206] Lomax.
\item[207] Denora, 125.
\item[208] Field notes, 28 August 2013.
\item[209] Field notes, 18 July 2011.
\end{footnotes}
Thus, music is felt to be the life of people and to revive all good things. This idea fits well with the thoughts of St Athanasius discussed in Chapter II.

Svan music is passed down within families, is shared by entire villages, and can bring new members into these communities. The music has a part in defining communities, forming what have been termed 'communities of sound.'

210 Though most of the repertoire is considered to be anonymous, some women's songs are asserted by various song masters to have been composed by their grandmothers. This conflict does not seem, however, to be a mere fight for ownership but rather a desire for the songs to literally be in one's bloodline. The latter phenomenon, that of music bringing new members into communities, has been central to my field experience. For example, a singer and friend from Scotland, who visits Lakhushdi village regularly, was asked to give a toast at a supra and was introduced at first as a guest but then 'not a guest anymore but a villager.'

During my time in the village, I have been referred to as a Svan despite my American origin. Statements like, 'She knows the words! You are Svan, Nicoletta!' followed songs that I initiated or in which I took part, and these remarks also have further significance, which I will discuss later in this chapter. They have an element of identifying me as a community member and not only as a guest. Even more telling in this regard are statements by the singing teachers with whom I worked. For instance, in the midst of hours of informal singing around a bonfire, one of them said to me, 'You are my little child,' and at a supra, another toasted me and said, 'I am blessing you as if you were my own daughter.' Since singing Svan songs elicited such comments, meaningful and satisfactory participation in the oral tradition, especially from the vantage point of its transmitters, can make someone a community or family member.

The ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino describes such participatory musical bonding as follows:


211 Field notes, 25 August, 2013.

212 Field notes, 27 August 2013.

213 Field notes, 25 August 2013.

214 Field notes and recording, 25 August 2013

'Special attention to what is going on in the moment is required. This enhances the potential for
flow and a special awareness of other participants as realised through their sounds and motions.
This need to pay attention results in a kind of heightened, immediate social intercourse; when
the performance is going well, differences among participants melt away as attention is focused
on the seamlessness of sound and motion. At such moments, moving together and sounding
together in a group creates a direct sense of being together and of deeply felt similarity, and
hence identity, among participants. Knowing and hence being able to perform appropriately in
the style is itself a dient index of belonging and social identity, because performance
competence is both a sign and simultaneously a product of shared musical knowledge and
experience—shared habits.216

In the above autoethnographic examples, it is important to note that any 'shared habits' that may
have led to my friends' remarks were transmitted to me through them. Any habits of my own were
somehow seen to be complementary or at least not conflicting. Also, though ethnic differences
may have melted away, other differences existed in the music as different people sang the various
parts. I almost always sang the top or first voice, for instance, and I had primarily been taught this
part and was perhaps expected to sing it. Important differences were thus due to the synergetic
nature of the polyphony, and the identity, role, and membership of each singer was reciprocally
given to each by the others, who took up the remaining parts.

Interestingly, the aforementioned 'You are my little child' comment was preceded directly by
'Nicoletta, you're first voice,' to which I responded affirmatively, in preparation for the next
song.217 Along with the distinctness of the parts, one must keep in mind that together they 'make
one whole,' as we saw in Chapter II according to Ioane Petritsi, like the persons of the Trinity and,
as this example suggests, like the members of a family or other closely-bonded social group that
has a place for varied roles. Awareness of others yet of similarity of identity through collaborative
belonging in shared polyphony, a kind of sonic dialogue, with each member making a gift of his
voice, reciprocating in contributing a part and thus creating space for other voices, characterised
this social situation of singing. In his book on Eucharistic theology and ontology as ‘dialogical
reciprocity’ according to St Maximus the Confessor, Nikolaos Loudovikos notes the work of
anthropologists such as Claude Levi-Strauss in their description of ‘exchange, which is the

216 Turino, 43.

217 Field notes and recording, 25 August 2013.
conscious expression of an unconscious need to place communion on a firm foundation.\textsuperscript{218} We will therefore continue the current anthropological discussion in theological, eucharistic terms.

Citing several psychological studies, the linguist John L. Locke writes that singing together can 'state or establish group bonds' and express 'the mutual experience of joy or excited delight of being with someone.'\textsuperscript{219} He also discusses what he sees as the duality of agency versus communion, of individual action versus noncontractual co-operation and union,\textsuperscript{220} and Georgian polyphony, with its required complementarity,\textsuperscript{221} brings balance and transcends such duality. Also, a different definition of 'agency' does away with any problematic dualism altogether. Denora uses the term without any individualistic connotations, defining it as 'feeling, perception, cognition and consciousness, identity, energy, perceived situation and scene, embodied conduct and comportment.'\textsuperscript{222} Agency in this sense refers to each person's experience, role, work, contribution or gift, and conduct in social activity and, in this case, in musical production. Communion, then, does not entail agents dissolving into oneness but persons sharing something and finding unity therein. That which is shared is, to use liturgical eucharistic language, eaten but never consumed,\textsuperscript{223} music being ever-repeatable and able to be shared by an ever-growing number of persons. Indeed, in Chapter II, St Synkletike referred to chant as 'incurruptible food.'

The linguist and anthropologist Kevin Tuite has studied the practice of what many anthropologists have called 'fictive kinship'\textsuperscript{224} in the eastern Georgian highlands, which includes a

\textsuperscript{218} Nikolaos Loudovikos, \textit{A Eucharistic Ontology: Maximus the Confessor's Eschatological Ontology of Being as Dialogical Reciprocity} (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2010, 38.


\textsuperscript{220} Ibid., 153-154.

\textsuperscript{221} Ibid., 158.

\textsuperscript{222} Denora, 20.

\textsuperscript{223} Monastery of St John the Baptist, \textit{The Orthodox Liturgy} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 85.

\textsuperscript{224} An interesting article on anthropologists becoming kin in the field is Jeffrey Kaufmann and Rabodoariniadana, Annie Philippe, ‘Making Kin of Historians and Anthropologists: Fictive Kinship in Fieldwork Methodology,’ \textit{History in Africa} 30 (2003): 179-194.
blood covenant ritual. Though I am not aware of a similar ritual practice in Svaneti, a similar phenomenon or view of kinship seems to be at work. The idea of blood covenant also extends to how Christian faith and practice forge ties, and the proverb, ‘the blood of the covenant is stronger than the water of the womb’ illustrates this relationship, especially when thought of again in eucharistic terms. The shed blood of Christ is shared in the eucharist, wine is shared like blood in Georgian feasting, and this idea can also apply to the shared material of musical tradition and to the communion that it creates, especially when the same Christ is called upon in song, an aspect that I will discuss below. The oral tradition here refers not only to the musical sound itself but also to its context and to that which it conveys and signifies. Therefore, it is not merely knowing the words or singing well that brings about a sense of cultural sharing.

Svan songs have a primary function of accompanying certain rituals and communicating specific content. Even when they are sung for leisure, their purposes and meanings are kept in mind and sometimes discussed. The main aspects that are embodied in Svan song are prayer, often expressed in vocables, and unique cultural heritage, usually in the form of stories and legends, which are the Svan equivalent of Western classical texts. These two elements can be mixed since the form of prayer is culturally-specific, and most songs are considered to have pre-Christian roots. The hymn 'Ts'khav Krist'eshi' (see Appendix B), is a representative example of the genre (other song types, such as round-dances, can also have religious texts; see below). This hymn mostly consists of vocables and has only a small amount of discernable text, which is itself expanded with non-semantic syllables: 'Let us pray to Ts'khav Christ,' the word 'ts'khav' also not having a known lexical meaning. Lauren Ninoshvili’s work on Georgian vocables stresses un-intelligibility and changing meaning based on context, but in ritual genres, the wordless polyphony is Svan prayer, similar to the Greek phenomenon of teretismata and kalophonic chant mentioned in Chapter II. One song master, Gigo Chamgeliani, referred to the pre-Christian

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existence of some form of 'Ts'khav Krist'eshi', and given the current text and context, as another singer, Murad Pirtskhelani, put it, 'Every word is to glorify Christ;' he even went so far as to give etymologies to some of the vocables, relating 'dihoi' with 'didab' ('glory'), for instance. These two views of the song are no cause for tension and reveal, almost with a prophetic tinge if the hymn's text is believed to be an unchanged pre-Christian one, though it was likely Christianised, how culture can be taken up by and express faith. Prayer and glorification are common in many texts and corporate religious contexts and activities. Sharing prayer and culture in and through the music, rather than simply knowing the words and notes, is what the singing entails, and as I will describe below, prayer is found in all musical aspects, not only syllables.

During a teaching workshop for this song, one of the teachers, to my surprise, complimented my singing of the top voice, singling out my sound in a large group of people singing together. I belong to the Orthodox Church and consciously engage with such songs as prayer, feeling drawn to do so, and, given the responses to my singing, such seems to inform and affect my musical engagement, which is also, as described above, mediated by other singers and their parts. It is also visible in acts such as making the sign of the cross and born out in context, such as when I hummed part of a Svan travelling prayer (mgzavruli; see Appendix B) while saying good-bye to a friend, unaware that there were bystanders. This song prompted one of the 'You are Svan!' declarations to which I referred earlier. Expression of deep cultural elements, therefore, is an affirmation of one's kinship with a community and gives significance to the ability to vocalise its oral tradition. Singing is, in part, as Turino stated above, a performance of belonging, yet sharing goes beyond the phenomenon of collaboratively-produced sound, which has been a point of emphasis, and includes participation in prayer and knowledge of specific customs and stories. Seen in another way, full participation in the sound may constitute or indicate such prayer and knowledge.

We have just seen how Svan songs, especially from certain genres, encompass faith and culture, and this section opened with a reference to the embodiment of music by singers, who become musical vessels. This phenomenon is not simply part of a singer's felt experience or a

228 Field notes and recording, 22 July 2011.
229 Ibid.
230 Ibid.
231 Field notes, 27 August 2013.
useful idea to suggest in order to aid learning but can be observed by others. For example, during an evening of discussion and music, Abbess Mariam, from the Tbilisi Convent of the Transfiguration, had a sudden and strong response to my singing and teaching of a Svan cradle song and wrote the following summary of what she said:

‘I am surprised and happy by what I saw and heard. How it is possible that the woman raised in a completely different culture can perfectly apprehend the culture of the foreign country by means of singing. When Nicoletta was singing a Svan lullaby, she sounded and even looked like a Svan girl.’

The song, perhaps acting as an index, may have evoked a related image for the viewer, a visual equivalent of the sonic illusions described by Gerhard Kubik; it may have included an actual shift in gesture and bearing on my part; or such an image and related conduct may have coexisted. Not only does one's blood—one's genetic make-up—affect one's appearance but also one's environment, conduct, comportment, behaviour, and gestures. Singing is, and is often accompanied by, gesture and is thereby in and of one's body.

I suggest that my third premise is likely the case and that 'micro-stylistic changes in comportment and its relationship with social and cultural settings' do occur in response to music and accompany musical performance. As Denora writes, 'we can actually see music as it configures, reconfigures and transfigures subjects, their modes of consciousness and their

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232 Personal correspondence and field notes, 22 August 2013. The Georgian text is as follows:

‘გაოცებული და გახარებული ვარ იმით, რაც ვნახე და მოვისმინე. როგორ შეიძლება სრულიად განსხვავებულ კულტურაში გაზრდილმა ადამიანმა სიმღერის საშუალებით აღიქვას სხვა კულტურა. როდესაც ნიკოლეთა მღერდა სვანურ ნანას, ის გარეგნობითაც ის გავდა გარეგნობით ეს როგორც გარეგნობით ეს მიღება ჩერკახ და ინტონაციაზე.’


234 See above, note 13.

235 Denora, 146.
embodied capacities; it must be remembered that music is a physical medium, that it consists of sound waves, vibrations that the body may feel even when it cannot hear. The aural is never distinct from the tactile as a sensuous domain. This medium is mutually formed and shared in collaborative performance. It is also transferred from one person to another in the process of teaching oral traditions; meaning, though it can change, may also be transferred with it or already exist in a recipient's mind, for instance, through shared beliefs. The music, though not a force with its own pre-determined specific results, can thus be appropriated in a similar way, be used as a resource in social activity, and shape everything from behaviour to bodily processes and one's sense of bodily state and being. In this regard, bodily latching on to music, its 'absorbing it into the blood' as it were, takes place during singing, active listening, and the latter especially when a listener's aim is to learn and produce the same music for and with its transmitters. In this sense, one keeps the music flowing. After a performance of several Georgian songs, one of which I had heard for the first time only a moment before, someone said, 'You must have a computer in your head, Nicoletta! A human being, body and soul, may be the only true recording and playback device and the best vessel for 'intangible cultural heritage.'

Ibid., 159.

Ibid., 86. Cf. my comments on synaesthesia in this chapter’s introduction.

Field notes, 21 August 2013.
Sung Threads: Music in the Formation of Social and Spiritual Connections

Figure 5. Spinning wool and singing in Lakhushdi.
As we saw in the above discussion, music is a medium that people use to perform and shape relationships. The same extends to the spiritual realm, and though the subsequent section will focus on prayer, I will now speak of how Svan music can be understood to unite the living with each other in ways that differ from or transcend kinship, the living with the dead, and all with God. Thus, we will see how songs function as connecting threads and how they even have literal counterparts in certain ritual situations.

Svan music is not only a key social element, such as at a supra or gathering, but it can be a powerful form of non-verbal communication. I do not mean that music simply acts as a common interest or agent of friendship but that interaction through singing together constitutes close and meaningful conversation. Conversation refers to social conduct in general and is not restricted to language. Rather, vocal music, though related to language, can act in its stead when cultural and social significance is shared or exists for all musical participants, who may find a variety of meanings in the experience. Whatever these shared or individual meanings may be, the point is that music affords close contact. Singing, which precedes and is related to speech, has such a social and expressive connective role across cultures and is thought to have developed, among other things, from collective activity, social grooming practices, and from the need to maintain a bond when occupied mothers put down their infants, voices taking the place of hands and arms. Thus, musical contact can be synonymous with physical contact as well as being accompanied by it. As it is in everyday life, singing was just such a primary communicative force and form of contact during my fieldwork. Even when all people present could understand each other without a translator, there seemed to be a marked preference for singing together and many times when only music [would] do, when a social situation [was] given over entirely to musical materials.

I previously referred to instances of singing with a strong social aspect, those which took place at the bonfire and around Tanghili church. Much similar social singing of an informal nature

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239 See Joseph Jordania, *Why do People Sing?: Music in Human Evolution* (Melbourne: Logos, 2011); Dean Falk, *Finding Our Tongues* (New York: Basic Books, 2009). Jordania posits that singing is crucial to humanity, stating that, ‘It was singing that provided our ancestors with defence against predators, provided our ancestors with food, gave rise to human intelligence, morality, religion, formed the human body and facial morphology, gave birth to human arts and the mystery of artistic transformation.’ 8.

240 Denora, 44.
occurred outside of song-learning contexts, supras, and other rituals, often while travelling and in people's sitting rooms. The singing at supras and in music classes did not lose its conversational nature, however (see film for examples of all three situations). For example, after demonstrating pieces, singers remarked that they had enjoyed the song, and at times, if someone asked to hear a particular phrase again, they would continue beyond it, being caught up in the experience. Such highlights the sense of connection and state of flow that can be reached through shared singing.

Yet, songs also served to include those who were not singing at any given time, especially in the supra setting. At such banquets, songs expounded toasts made by the tamada (toastmaster), among the extensions spoken by others, thus helping to form conversation among all at the table and contributing to joint expression. This process often created a chain of songs and speeches. Even the slightest musical, symbolic, or semantic resonance among toast topics and songs could be followed, to such an extent that toasting has been joked about by Georgian acquaintances. Such connections can nevertheless be made well, leading to chains such as the following: a toast to children; a number of lullabies and healing songs; a toast to women; speeches extending the toast; a new toast to the Mother of God; a chant that mentions her; an Easter chant; a toast about the privilege of singing; the toasting of guests; a song sung in their honour at the tamada's request (see film for an excerpt of a healing song from within such a chain). The music thus connects ideas as well as the tamada, hosts, and guests.

All this social singing at classes, in sitting rooms, at supra tables, and elsewhere, not to mention that which was the core of religious rituals, was felt to bring about greater love and friendship. It had revealed shared beliefs, indexical and iconic associations, and experiences while also constituting its own new shared experience and significance. Such 'indexical experience plus

241 Field notes, August 2013.

242 For a brief explanation of the psychological flow state, see Turino, 4-5.

243 Even everyday foods can be given symbolic associations, such as khachap’uri (a cheese-filled bread and Georgia’s national dish) and k’ubdari (A Svan meat-filled bread), which are made in honour of the Mother of God and St George, respectively, for the harvest festival. Field notes and recording, 24 and 29 August 2013.

244 Field notes, 7 January 2014. During a supra, someone said, ‘And now [the tamada] is going to toast the chips because they nourish our hungry friend who won’t eat anything else! I have to put up with the kind of thing all the time’

245 Field notes, July 2011.
a perception of iconic similarity with other people...is the basis for feeling direct empathic connection.\textsuperscript{246} During farewells after my second visit, several guests and villagers freely described such feelings of love and friendship, and the woman who made the aforementioned toast about music and life expressed herself by singing a few lines.\textsuperscript{247} Indeed, greetings and farewells often included spontaneous singing. It thus can help to mark and join beginnings and endings, and as demonstrated in an earlier example, it accompanies people on journeys, especially in the form of travelling songs. We will now see how it is understood to bridge not only distance but life and death, heaven and earth.

Svan ritual song is associated with the departed in three primary ways, which are common to all Orthodox Christian prayer. Hymns are sung in honour of saints such as St George and St Barbara (see discussions of the hymns Jgragish and Barbal Dolash below). Local variants of two chants from funeral and memorial services, the Trisagion and three-fold Lord, Have Mercy, are sung to commemorate the dead at grave sites (see film), in churches, during supras when ancestors are toasted, and at folk ritual celebrations like Limkheri and the harvest thanksgiving (see film). An especially important festival in this regard is that of week-long Lipanali, which also includes Likurieli, a feast to St George, and begins in conjunction with the Feast of the Theophany.\textsuperscript{248} This time is when the deceased are believed to visit, or rather are invited into, people's homes. The third aspect of the musical link between the living and departed is in part bound up with this celebration.

The heads of families go to the village church, where they pray and ask Christ's permission to receive the souls of the departed into their homes. A feast is then held, and a special supra table is kept for the souls, who are ritually escorted back to the church. My host’s daughter was once asked if, during their supras, the departed, like Svans today, also sing Jgragish, the hymn to St George, to which she answered, 'Of course they do!'\textsuperscript{249} Thus, it is believed that all, whether living or departed, share the same sung prayers in the present and, during Lipanali at least, in the same place. The

\textsuperscript{246} Turino, 16.
\textsuperscript{247} Field notes, 2 September 2013.
\textsuperscript{248} For information on Lipanali in General, see Nino Abakelia, ‘The Spaciotemporal Patterns of Georgian Winter Solstice Festivals,’ \textit{Folklore: An Electronic Journal of Folklore} 40 (2008), \texttt{<http://www.folklore.ee/folklore/vol40/abakelia.pdf>} (11 July 2014). For a frequent guest’s description of the festival in Lakhushdi, see Madge Bray, ‘Where the Rain is of Milk and the Snow is of Cotton,’ forthcoming.
\textsuperscript{249} Bray.
general belief extends to angels as well, who sing the Trisagion, and other songs (e.g. Didebata; see Appendix B) and festivals (e.g. Limkheri) are dedicated to the archangels. Therefore, folk ritual songs, like church services, are seen to connect the living on earth with heavenly beings and departed souls. Earthly worship reaches heaven, Christ sends souls from heaven who sing again on earth, and such beliefs demonstrate a particular sense of ritual time and space and of the communion of saints. They also have interesting implications for thinking about oral tradition, which is not carried out with reference and appeals to the past but in the present time, to which the ancestral sources of that tradition are felt to belong. Moreover, all belong to eternity, and sung prayer is one of the intersecting threads, being both sent down from heaven and rising up from earth, encompassing all who encounter it and providing a meeting place that transcends time and space.

At various Georgian churches, literal thread has an important place in devotional practice. Along with candles, women offer thread to St George or to the Mother of God and unwind it while singing and making a procession around the church three times, thus wrapping it around the building. Sometimes this circumambulation is done while kneeling. One of the earliest recorded accounts of such a ritual is the nineteenth-century English ethnographer Oliver Wardrop's description of thread offering and veneration of the icon of the Mother of God in the church at Mtats'minda in Tbilisi. He finds the thread to be 'a fitting symbol' of a supplicant's 'boundless love and devotion.' I have not come upon any other speculations concerning the thread's significance within a Georgian folk context, and I will now offer several possible interpretations that have a folk or theological basis.

Thread symbolises the connection between heaven and earth in much Eastern European

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folklore, and it may also be related to symbolism of the chain in the Georgian context. In this context, it could do likewise and, more specifically, it could represent the achievement of this eternal link through unceasing prayer and perhaps also repentance. It may call to mind the circular Orthodox prayer rope made of knotted thread, yarn, or cord, the history of which, like the Georgian thread ritual, is not well documented. The procession has liturgical counterparts, such as that which takes place at Holy Saturday matins, containing the same elements except for the thread, though counterclockwise circumambulation is also an element of Georgian practices that may not have Christian significance or origins. A second significance of thread, also written about by Mencej in her article cited above, is the length of a person’s life. This meaning can be extended to a person him or herself through traditional Orthodox symbolism, in which the threads in the fringes of a priest’s epitrachelion (stole) signify the individual souls under his care. Thus, in offering a thread, one is offering one’s life and being. Not only is it one’s life and being in the widest sense but also in the most tangible sense, one’s very substance, one’s body as material to be united to God. This significance is especially pointed to by the veneration of the icon of the Mother of God. As expressed in icons of the Annunciation and in much hymnography and patristic literature, purple thread symbolizes the incarnation, Christ’s taking on of human nature, and specifically His flesh and blood, which His mother gave to Him from her body. This thread symbol is thus related to blood, the Eucharist, the body of the Church, and the body of each of its members.

A third meaning for thread, perhaps somewhat less apparent than prayer, is the all-encompassing grace of God. In Svan prayers for the dead at Lipanali, one asks that the souls be

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252 Field notes, 22 August 2014.

253 This author has not yet come upon any academic literature on the subject.

254 For descriptions, see Tuite, Interview.


welcomed into paradise, 'where the snow is of cotton,' and Javaxishvili specifies that, at least in some places, offered thread is cotton; Tuite states that it is silver in others, and in Svaneti, black thread is tied around the wrist, recalling the prayer rope again, on Holy Monday.

Finally, the three strands of circular thread that are shaped in the ritual reflect the sung polyphony that accompanies their formation. Each of the three parts in Georgian song can be likened to one strand, which must be unwound, not tangled, and plied, braided, woven, embroidered together on to the foundation of prayer, or otherwise joined with the simultaneously-unravelled other two voices. These threads may be seen as uniform or as differing in colour, texture, thickness, and material, and such ways of thinking have been useful tools towards performance as my students and I have seen in classes and ensemble rehearsals. Textile metaphor can be used to describe nearly all aspects of oral transmission, memory, and performance, repertoire acquisition being akin to spinning, for instance. During my fieldwork, having had prior interest and practice as I had with singing, I learned Svan spinning techniques (see Fig. 5) along with musical repertoire and often referred to my attempts to sing the bottom voice, which were often inaudible on recordings and met with my fellow singers instructing others to take up the part, as 'cobweb bass.' In the next section, we will see how a prayerful expression in the form of concentric or combined circular threads, taking the form of a labyrinth structure from Svan folk carving, can be found in the musical structure of Svan ritual songs.

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257 Bray.

258 In Jewish folk practice, the red thread is also tied around the wrist and is believed to have apotropaic and health-giving properties.

259 See Chapter V.

260 There is a marked connection between singing and weaving in a variety of Indo-European and Asian cultures. See, for example, Anthony Tuck, ‘Singing the Rug: Patterned Textiles and the Origins of Indo-European Metrical Poetry,’ in The Anthropology of Performance: An Introduction, Frank J. Korom, Ed., (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons Inc., 2013). For textile work songs, see Ted Gioia, ‘Thread and Cloth,’ in Work Songs (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), but note that the author does not include Georgian examples anywhere in the volume, though there are well-known genres, including spinning songs.

261 Field notes and photographs, 23 July 2011.

262 Field notes and recording, 25 August 2013.

263 In The Svans, 347, Tuite notes that the symbols in such carvings are related to ritual practice and even round-dances.
Speaking in Chords: The Sound of Svan Prayer

Figure 6. Svan labyrinth carving on a wooden chest, housed at the Ethnographic Museum in Mestia, Upper Svaneti.

I will now speak of song not as a physical object but instead highlight one of its actual forms in several genres, that of prayer. Svan religious repertoire has an interesting role in worship since there is no ecclesiastical chant school that has its origin in the region. It is understood that, in regions such as Imereti, Guria, Kartli, and K'akheti, characteristics of pre-Christian local
polyphony were appropriated into the affiliated monastic and regional chant repertoire.\textsuperscript{264} In Svaneti, however, while the same process took place to some degree, as there are settings of the paschal troparion, Trisagion, and Lord, Have Mercy, it is likely that entire songs, along with many folk ritual practices, were given new or expanded meaning and may have acquired new features, primarily names and short texts, in Christianity. We saw that prayer is expressed, especially through vocables, in the example of the hymn Ts'khav Krist'eshi, and we will explore this phenomenon further in other songs, along with textual motifs, musical characteristics, and ritual context.

Svan prayer texts can be primarily found in two genres: hymns and round-dances (perkhuli). The first genre includes settings of church chant texts, such as the trisagion and Easter troparion, as well as Svan folk texts like Ts'khav Krist'eshi. The round-dance texts are folk prayers, mostly glorifications, but with unique characteristics besides those shared with other Georgian glorification songs, e.g. those to St George from Kartl-K'akheti.\textsuperscript{265} We will look at one particular feature, a Svan textual allusion, in the last section of this chapter. Musically, Svan round-dances are antiphonal, with the two choirs overlapping at the end or beginning, depending on each choir's point of view, of the repeated, cyclical, square-phrased strophes (see Didebata in Appendix B). The verse usually consists of two phrases, one with an open cadence and one closed, sometimes with a middle-voice call gesture between them as in Didebata. Other round-dances and songs feature the repetition of one open-ended musical phrase, ending with a final closed version (see Appendix B, Mgzavruli, whose ritual context we saw earlier in this chapter). The lines of text in Svan songs do not rhyme, except in examples of vocable repetition (see Appendix B, Barbal Dolash), and are often not precisely metrical,\textsuperscript{266} but they follow rhythmic patterns over a particular

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\textsuperscript{264} Tsitsishvili, National Unity, 295-297.

\textsuperscript{265} Field notes.

\textsuperscript{266} Trochaic metre, especially tetrameter, occurs in the texts of certain pieces and genres, such as narrative laments, e.g. Mirangula (see film). This particular metre is common for texts that are sung as parts of longer rhythmic patterns and musical phrases, and such texts are decorated with additional liquescences and vocables. Trochaic tetrameter is found in other Western Georgian music as well, including Mingrelian folk songs, e.g. Chela (see film).
number of beats, with repeated vocables. Vocables and sung consonants\(^{267}\) help to round out any differences in syllable count from verse to verse. Each verse usually begins and ends with refrain vocables (the end is often an entire line).

All these musical characteristics exist in most Svan round-dances, whether the texts are prayers, historical narratives, or pre-Christian legends. They render a structure that lends itself to variations and even improvisations in texts. Such is especially significant in religious texts. For example, as explained by Madona Chamgeliani, an ethnologist from Lakhushdi, in Didebata, a glorification of the Archangel and the first perkhuli that is sung on various feasts such as Limkheeri, additional verses of blessing for Lakhushdi Village can be added before the usual final verse.\(^{268}\) I heard these additions on several occasions, and my singing them prompted the 'She knows the words!' comment discussed above.\(^{269}\) It was significant that I knew these words of prayer for the village.

Like the music of perkhuli, the choreography is also cyclical, and Didebata is an interesting case of circular combination. All singers perform the steps together regardless of which choir they join, and at times, some sing both choirs’ verses, usually providing bani, the bottom voice, for the opposite choir. All form a circle, sing the hymn-like introduction, which has the same final musical phrase as Ts'khav Krist'eshi, and continue with the first verse. Mirroring the musical introduction just sung, this verse begins with a single dance step over four beats, which is then followed by a repeated series of steps for the remainder of the piece. The ten-beat cycle of dance steps does not directly coincide with that of the eighteen-beat verse, which, due to the overlapping entrance of the subsequent choir, seems to have sixteen beats until the end, at the second repetition of the final strophe. A clap occurs on the seventh step, and because of how the music and dance complement each other, this clap cycles through eight positions within the musical phrase, on beats eleven, five, fifteen, nine, three, thirteen, seven, and one in succession. This shift, along with the changing verse texts, gives variation throughout the song and requires a certain sense of time, a thick sense of the

\(^{267}\) I have sometimes transcribed these using schwa's, though the phenomenon is perhaps best described in Western musical terms as liquescence.

\(^{268}\) Field notes and recording, 19 July, 2011.

\(^{269}\) Field notes and recording, 25 August 2013.
The two cycles also combine to form a third, overall structure. These cycles work together in the same way as the characteristics of the Svan labyrinth symbol (see photograph above), a variation of the classical labyrinth common in many cultures, which has nine concentric circular sections (ten including the 'end,' or only true circle, at the centre) but seven circuits in the unicursal path that goes through it. The common Classical labyrinth has a ‘dead-end’ at the centre instead of the circle in the Svan example. The differing numbers of circles and circuits form the labyrinth's structure as the cyclical musical phrases and dance steps form the perkhuli. Also, a labyrinth's path approaches the centre, sometimes very closely, and moves away again in every other circuit, until the actual arrival at the end (in order, the course, beginning from the outer-most circle, runs through circles one, eight, two, seven, three, six, and nine, skipping four and five). The same is true for the musical structure, in which, until the last phrase, the final cadence is circumvented by the overlapping choir's entrance. While there is little information about labyrinth significance, it is an extremely useful tool for describing and understanding Svan musical structure, and we will see this even more so in the discussion of hymns below.

There has been little academic discussion of Georgian round-dance choreography, and it has been surmised that the movement signifies natural cycles, especially that of the sun. However, circular, dance-like movement and layered circuits are also inherent in liturgical action, church architecture, and circular vessels and objects, and such motion has been described as a ‘dance of the human and material [which] simultaneously withdraws and advances in order to make space for divine energy to become perceptible.’ Cyclical withdrawing from and advancing towards the centre is precisely what takes place when following the labyrinth structure, whether architectural or musical.

Following this liturgical and theological understanding of layered, cyclical, labyrinth-like movement, along with Ioane Petritsi's use of music as a resource for theological explication, I will now describe the perkhuli as a theological illustration. The two joined cycles of music and

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271 Tuite, The Svans, 347.

272 Pentcheva, The Sensual Icon, 7.
movement may symbolise the uniting of the divine and human natures in Christ and of heaven and earth. The overall circular structure of both may reflect the co-operation of body and soul, of people with each other, and of humanity with God in salvation. The three cycles together could, like the sung polyphony, be understood in a Trinitarian manner. The circular movement and labyrinth structure are like one's eternal movement towards God, which is said by Sts Dionysius the Areopagite, Maximus the Confessor, and others to be 'in a straight line, in a circle, or in a spiral.'

Like the liturgical movement referred to previously, the perkhuli need not be thought of only as an illustration of these things but also as being used in order to enact them, as a means of making divine energy perceptible in its own ritual context. In his Great Catechism (Chapter XXXV), St Gregory of Nyssa likens one’s life and also the journey of death to a labyrinth, the turnings of which each person follows with the help of a thread previously laid out by someone who has gone before and is familiar with the complicated-looking structure, namely, Christ.

We have seen what interpretation musical and dance structure can afford, and we will now see what the few words of Svan songs can add before exploring the musical aspects of the hymn genre. A particular series of lines occurs across several ritual songs, including Lile, Lazhghvash, and the aforementioned Didebata. All are round-dances except for Lile, which is an antiphonal hymn; round-dance versions also exist, however. In each song, the text is slightly varied due to decoration with vocables, but translated, the lines are as follows (note that Lile is often sung with the second and third lines reversed and without the last two, and Didebata often has additional lines about the offering of goats with golden horns):

‘Glory to you. 
Let us implore him to have mercy on us, 
With [or we offer you] golden jewellery. 
We had oxen to sacrifice to you. 
They had golden horns.’

These lines refer to various aspects of prayer, such as glorification and supplication, and to ritual actions and objects. As we will see in the last section of this chapter, it seems that not all lines

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273 Loudovikos, 166.

274 The topic of animal sacrifice has been controversial, and the issue is quite complex, going far beyond the idea that such is a pagan or Judaic practice. Also, the ritual slaughtering of an animal can have different connotations in different contexts, such as sacrifice, atonement, offering, gift, or sanctification of the otherwise ordinary act of preparing meat for a feast. Though church canons prohibit animal sacrifice of various kinds, the ritual offering of
relate to current practice, but such text is symbolically significant. Another hymn, Barbal Dolash, refers to the offering of blessed bread and spirits, which takes place at Svan feast day celebrations. Such texts, while being prayer, also describe prayer and encourage it. Next, we will look deeper into the hymn genre, which tends to contain more examples of 'wordless' prayer in contrast to the above texts.

Though they are hymns, Lile and Barbal Dolash have characteristics that make them quite similar to round-dances, including refrains in the case of Lile, square phrases in Barbal Dolash, and more extensive texts in both. Like Ts'khav Krist'eshi, most hymns have one or two lines of text concentrated at the beginning and/or end of the piece, which is otherwise vocables. As in most Svan song, the text becomes a part of the overall sound and structure, being expanded, decorated, mixed, and otherwise joined with vocables, similar to the way in which inscription texts are part of overall images in Georgian iconography. The phrases are not square, and neither the text nor the rhythm is metrical or according to beat patterns. Hymns are sung slowly and primarily in chordal units, movement and momentum being bound up with the harmonic progression and the notes having relative duration. These songs are characterised by, as one ethnomusicologist has put it, 'vowels and chords,' and as Ioane Petritsi would have it (see Chapter II), the 'melody' is the movement of the vertical entity of all three voices together.

Besides Lile, Barbal Dolash, and several others, hymns are more complex in structure, going beyond the repetition of a single, one to four-phrase melody over consecutive strophes; the structures are nonetheless built on cyclicity and especially the labyrinth structure, however. Since hymns are often not antiphonal, structures can vary, and they contain many 'calls' from the middle

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animals is attested to in Byzantine euchologia, which include prayers for such a ritual, and in hagiography, such as an episode in the life of St Nicholas. The most well-known account is the legend of Justinian’s offering of many animals at the founding of the church of Hagia Sophia. For a discussion of all these issues, see Christopher P. Jones, ‘Sacrifice, Blood, and Prayer,’ in Between Pagan and Christian (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Ekaterina Kovalchuk, ‘The Encaenia of St Sophia: Animal Sacrifice in a Christian Context,’ in Patrologia Pacifica: Selected Papers Presented to the Western Pacific Rim Patristics Society, Vladimir Baranov and Lourié, Basil, eds. (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009): 172-214. For more on offering gold, see below.


voice to make the form clear; both the form and call gestures are functionally and symbolically significant. Jgragish, a hymn to St George, shows such a complex structure, having the overall form VABCV2DBV3A′BCV2DBC′E, consisting of cyclical elements within larger repeatable sections.277 These sections, which differ in length, are like the circuits of a labyrinth, and the calls are like the turns from one circuit to the next. The piece is also sung with fewer ‘circuits,’ giving rise to the form VABCV2DBV3A′BC′E (see film for most of this shorter version, beginning with the first ‘b’ section), and it can also be enlarged by adding repetitions of phrases, e.g. the DB compound, rendering forms such as VABCV2DBCV2DBV3A′BCV2DBC′E. I once sang Jgragish with colleagues at a Georgian ensemble directors' workshop, and our inability to decide what version we were singing led the middle-voice singer to continue and then to say, 'Sorry; I thought we were going to loop back around,' demonstrating his cyclical understanding of this structure. The unit C′E always marks the end. C′ is, in a sense, C finally truly approaching E, the recited line of text, the final cadence, and the centre of the labyrinth structure.

Modulation takes place at the repetition of A, though such is difficult to notate due to the gradual sharpening that takes place throughout most Svan songs and also due to the size of the interval at the modulation; writing the remainder of Jgragish up a half-step would give too wide a jump rather than the more subtle shift. Modulation is also found in Lile, which has the structure VaBCV2Da′B′C′V2Da'b'C′, where the shared beginning note of all later verses, given their incorporation of the D phrase, begin a step above the ‘a’ phrase and occupy a different tonal area before progressing to that phrase. The verses are renewed with an initial higher note in contrast to the resolution, which is always on the lowest note of the entire piece from the point of view of the top voice. In some single-choir hymns, including Ts'khav Krist'eshi, this final note appears only at the closed end of the entire song and not at any internal cadences. All other phrase endings are either open or interrupted; in the latter case, when the melodic gesture that usually leads to the final note appears, the ending is instead cancelled, the song re-routed, as it were, by a call in the middle voice, thus forming a transition to the next phrase. In antiphonal pieces, the affect of the delayed final cadence is retained since the resolution occurs at the second repetition of the final verse, having been previously obscured by the overlapping entrance of the other choir as in

277 Letter designations are those used in most poetic and melodic analysis, but I have added numbered V's to represent different call gestures.

278 Field notes, August 2013.
round-dances.

In Ts'khav Krist'eshi, though it is a single-choir piece and also lacks modulation, the cyclical, labyrinthine phrases are still evident and made clear by the type of internal transition just described, in which the middle voice seems to give the direction, 'Continue; do not finish the phrase. Turn and move away from the centre.' This hymn's structure, VAV2BV'CV3AV2B', is less complex than that of Jgragish, but it nevertheless includes five calls in only two major musical sections. C is neither a section unto itself nor entirely new material. Note that its text is, with the exception of one liquescence, identical to that of the beginning call; thus, unlike Jgragish, the entire hymn text is repeated, almost as it would be by turns in a double-choir piece, but with the addition of two syllables in the closed ending's vocables.

We have already seen that vocables express prayer in the context of ritual song, and the cyclical nature of the music can do the same. I have already mentioned how the labyrinth can symbolise movement towards God, and besides Svan sonic creations and folk carvings, similar structures appear in late Roman and early Byzantine Christian art, including a church in North Africa and a marble carving at Knidos, and they appear in conjunction with prayerful inscriptions and other Christian symbols. The cyclical music can be perceived as an illustration of ceaseless prayer and, especially in antiphonal songs and call gestures, how the same can be shared in turn, carried out by one for another, and mutually supported and encouraged. The calls in the middle voice are like the thread that the other voices follow, like Christ leading the church along the path of salvation. Like wordless polyphony, the basic cyclical structure, too, is also a characteristic of secular songs and of much Georgian repertoire, but since structures and vocables do not have inherent meaning, such depends on context, point of view, belief, and experience. However, the more complex, circuitous labyrinth found in the hymns is not a feature of secular genres, being shared only with the aforesaid zari and also Kviria, which are both sung at funerals. As we will see in Chapter V, this structure is also a feature of chant from the Gelati Monastery tradition, which points to prayerful significance.

Though I have little direct data, beyond Murad Pirtshkelani's comment regarding glorification through vocables, about my interpretation of musical elements as prayer, my premise is similar to that made by Alexander Lingas in his discussion of Greek kalophonic chant and its

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279 For information on these and other Christian labyrinths, see Staffan Lundén, ‘A New Labyrinth at Knidos,’ *Caerdroia* 33 (2003): 6-12. Note that it is also thought that labyrinths have been believed to confuse the devil and to represent the simple, unicursal path of salvation.
association with hesychastic prayer, discussed in Chapter II. In both contexts, music is appropriated, latched on to, and used by the body and soul to bring about prayer. As Denora writes, music 'allows us, should we latch on to it, to engage in a kind of visceral communion with its perceived properties' and is something through which 'feeling, perception, attention, consciousness, action and embodied processes are produced.' Liturgical and ritual song, therefore, embodies prayer not only in its text and theologically-interpreted musical characteristics but in worshippers' appropriation of those characteristics in order to embody theology themselves. Put another way, remembering that the voice and body express the soul (see Chapter II), music is created out of the existent experience of prayer.

I will now end this section with a brief discussion of a Svan setting of a liturgical text and a few words about the sung prayer of a more ecclesiastical affiliation. The Lakhushdi variation of Ts'mindao Ghmerto, the Trisagion (see Appendix B, Ts’mindao Ghmerto 2), has most of the characteristics that we have been analyzing. The text is expanded with vocables, and one cyclical phrase is repeated three times, punctuated with and begun by (cyclicity makes both the case) second-voice calls. The chant is usually sung three times, and in order to signal a full repetition, the middle voice does not stop on the unison final note but instead finishes the only unrepeated phrase by moving down a step, thereby making a call gesture. Interestingly, this single phrase is nevertheless cyclical, being composed of a thrice-repeated figure, with room for slight variations, and the final note. Though call gestures in the middle voice have a practical function in longer pieces like Jgragish, it is significant that they are found in less complexly-structured songs and in settings of liturgical texts, along with vocables and cyclic figures even at the smallest scale. As we saw in Chapter III and will examine further in Chapter V, church chant examples also display cyclical repetition and labyrinth-like structures, withholding of resolution until the end, modulation, and even melismatic passages with extended vowels and sometimes vocables.

These features especially occur in items from the ordinary, such as the cherubic hymn (see Appendix A), 'We hymn Thee', and the aforementioned Trisagion. Most hymnography has a structure that matches that of the more complex texts, but as we have seen in the example of the bridegroom matins troparion in the previous chapter, these structures are nevertheless built around

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280 Denora, 161-162.

281 I do not have the space to explore instances of this particular feature, but it is especially prevalent in Shemokmedi chants and in some East school examples, such as the Trisagion in Appendix A.
repeated phrases and clear final cadences. It is notable that shorter and often-repeated texts, as well as chants that are proper to each day, share structural characteristics with folk ritual prayer; similar musical phenomena are present in two types of sung prayer that some might see as differing from one another rather than as manifesting the same thing.

Finally, besides vocables and cyclical melodies, the tight three-part polyphony of all our examples, while being an icon of the Trinity, expresses the communion, along with the physical and spiritual proximity,²⁸² of those who are praying. It is one of many such illustrations, one of many sounds that can be formed through choral singing. As in other situations of worship, the music helps people to 'picture [be aware or mindful of; embody] their relation to God and to religious values' and to order their consciousness, imagination, and memory.²⁸³ As people gather together in song, they may see Christ’s image in each other and find Him in their midst, at the centre. The structure and movement in the music reflects the 'movement towards the unifying, living centre of universality in Christ.' Such movement is a 'state of permanence, moving around God without end in identity of eternal movement.'²⁸⁴

²⁸² I mentioned proximity as it relates to icon veneration in Chapter III, and I will discuss human proximity based on fieldwork reflections in the next chapter.

²⁸³ Denora, 146.

²⁸⁴ Loudovikos, 18.
'We Offer You Golden Jewellery': The Valued Gift of a Song

Music has often been associated with ritual exchange or referred to as a gift from one person to another or to a community or from God to human beings. Svan music can be viewed in this way and, more specifically, as gold. In his study of colour in Caucasian cultures, David Hunt used constructive methods, analysing oral folk texts for symbolic information, inferring such from context, rather than searching for data through direct questions posed to informants. He discussed how the colour gold can symbolise wealth, value, beauty, and even life-giving power. Using a similar methodology with song texts, toast content, and conversation, I will show how Svan song can be equated with similar symbolism, which has to do with gold the substance.

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285 Schechner, From Ritual to Theatre and Back.

286 See Chapter II; also, Tsitsishvili quotes Georgian singers’ comments about God-given singing ability in National Unity and Gender Difference, 192.

287 Hunt and Chenciner, 462.
Gold has a well-known place in Svan culture, from the legendary practice of panning for gold with fleece\textsuperscript{288} to the manufacturing of rich Christian liturgical objects.\textsuperscript{289} There is a gold icon of Christ in the church in the village of K'ala, which is believed to be miraculous and is surrounded by stories of being given as payment, coveted, stolen, and finally, of choosing its own resting place where the church was built.\textsuperscript{290} Gold is, therefore, an apt symbol, not of status or monetary possessions, but of treasured cultural and religious elements.

The most telling source of the gold symbol is the songs themselves. Many double-choir ritual songs contain a form of the aforementioned line, 'We offer you golden jewellery,' which is often the words 'vokvrash samkal' ('golden jewelry') expanded with vocables. Current ritual practice does not include any golden vessels or ornaments.\textsuperscript{291} However, other Georgian genres include texts that refer to symbolic golden objects, such as the golden cradle mentioned in many bat'onebi songs (healing songs), and babies are called ‘golden’ in Svan lullabies.\textsuperscript{292} The line in the Svan prayers, therefore, is not obsolete or some archaic reference but, I suggest, is a living symbol of prayerful and significant singing (cf. gold, the Trisagion hymn, and faith as allegorized by St Germanos in Chapter III). During toasts and while greeting and wishing farewell, one of the village singing teachers even regularly referred to a singer as gold.\textsuperscript{293} Thus, not simply their sound but those who perpetuate it can be seen as precious gifts and vessels.

The above symbolism is supported by the conscious discourse of Georgian singers regarding their traditions. In the writings of St Ekvtime the Confessor (d.1945), we find the following:

‘When I was living in Gelati Monastery I spent days and nights painstakingly recopying chants. I compared my good copies with the originals to make sure that I didn't make any mistakes. Often while I was writing, other monks and novices would come into my room and say, “You are so foolish!” ’ I asked them why they thought so, and they would say, “We see you hunched


\textsuperscript{289} In ‘The Svans,’ Tuite discusses the importance of Svan metalwork in Georgian Christian art.

\textsuperscript{290} Field notes, August 2014.

\textsuperscript{291} In Tuite, The Svans, the author mentions that Svan women would pray to a domestic deity, represented by a small gold or silver animal, but in current song and ritual, god is either offered or venerated in the form of Christian icons.

\textsuperscript{292} Field notes, July 2011.

\textsuperscript{293} Field notes, July 2011, August 2013.
over the table day and night, working and working, without a dime to show for it.” I would reply, “How can I think about money while working with this treasure trove? It is more precious than gold, silver, and jewelry. It is an eternal treasure! I cannot even think of my work as gratuitous, not at all! I imagine myself as a goldsmith who sorts through his pieces to put all the jewelry in order. And sometimes I wonder how this treasure happens to be in my hands, that such an unworthy person as myself dares to touch it at all.”

Though he speaks of Gelati school chant in written form, these ideas can also apply to the sung tradition, recalling Gia Rasmadze's toast about tradition in written and living forms, and they are held by Georgians living today. Ana Changeliani, from Lakhushdi, and Nana Mzhavanadze, one of the field trip organisers, belong to a women's ensemble named Sathanao, a word that refers to something precious and costly. In another of his toasts, Gia Rasmadze referred to the biblical passage translated in English as 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice' (Hos. 6:6; Matt. 9:13), in which the word translated as ‘mercy’ (‘Ts’q’aloba) can connote a donation or gift. In a later conversation with Nana and Gia, we described songs as being such gifts, and my two colleagues explained the inner disposition of love and joy that makes singing such an offering of love rather than a duty. Their words were resonant with the advice and instruction on humility and right inner state for singing discussed in Chapter II, such as that described by St Silouan the Athonite. The rich Svan gold symbolism and conscious views about the value of musical tradition indeed influenced my friends' invitations to others to participate in the same. They also show the primary place that music has in meaningful ritual and how it likewise reflects and helps to bring about the value of those who carry out such practice.

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294 This passage can be found in one of the saint’s manuscripts, Tbilisi National Centre of Manuscripts, Q830. This translation was kindly shared with me by John A. Graham.

295 Field notes, 23 July 2011.

296 Field notes, 31 July 2011. Such gift-related discourse has continued in much conversation since, as reflected in my field notes from all subsequent work.
Conclusion: A Mystagogy of Svan Ritual Song

Figure 8. Murad Pirtskhelani making a toast.

This chapter has presented findings from autoethnographic field research, information from other anthropologists, and supporting ethnomusicological and sociological points. Yet, the focus has remained theological, referring to ideas from previous chapters and providing, primarily through metaphor and symbolic interpretation, a sort of mystagogy of folk musical and ritual elements, an attempt to discover their logoi. Though I have worked to include as much relevant discursive scholarly support as possible, my interpretive suggestions have primarily arisen from practice and experience. It was not until I wrote this chapter that I realised, for example, the many aspects of how and why I felt that my Svan friends and teachers had taught me a great deal about prayer. This method reflects the teaching given in St Maximus the Confessor's third century on love:
"We walk by faith, not by sight," and have knowledge in mirrors and riddles [symbols]. Because of this we need to be very occupied with these so that through lengthy exercise and discussion we might forge a tenacious habit of contemplation. Since things can be understood as having many meanings based on context and viewpoint or may have no symbolic value outside oneself, I have taken theology as a lens and starting point. The music and context call for this interpretive framework, and not applying such can lead to somewhat idiosyncratic results. Such can be seen in writings on iconography, for example, as well as subjective, exoticised descriptions of Georgian music, with discussions of 'warped harmonies' and imprecise references to all less-familiar vocal gestures as 'yodel-inflected.'

An instance where this kind of interpretation can overlook commonly-understood theological symbolism occurs in one contemporary travel writer's description of a Svan icon of Christ, in which he states that Christ's hand is out calling for attention. The gesture may have struck the viewer thus, but an 'insider' or even someone with a working knowledge of iconography and priestly gestures would recognise the act of blessing. Therefore, experience is itself partly shaped by what a person or group brings to it.

I have discussed musical significance according to the context of ritual function and held Orthodox beliefs. This theological reading of Svan song may stand in contrast to various views of folk practices as pagan or having to do with secular enjoyment and of little theological value. Madona Chamgeliani, the aforementioned ethnographer from Lakhushdi, described many instances of seeing her culture being portrayed as pagan, an idea with which she does not agree, and these experiences were given as one of the main reasons for the request not to have formal interviews. Rather than simply being my bias, then, this point of view has shown Svan ritual song to be a complexly-looped sound that can engender prayer and fellowship, a purple, white, and gold cloth adorning the Georgian musical icon, and an oral tradition that is firmly rooted in the present and in persons, not in the unrecoverable past and ideals. Those things which it realises and expresses, namely prayer and love, will continue to renew it as long as it continues to be perceived, given meaning, sung, and allowed to enrich lives.

297 Berthold, 70.
298 Bart Plantenga, Yodel in Hi-Fi (London: Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System, 2012), 237-238. Note that yodel is, however, an important feature of many Gurian and other Western Georgian folk songs, but it is generally not found in the Svan musical dialect.
299 Peter Nasmyth, In the Mountains of Poetry (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 168.
300 Field notes, 19 July 2011.
Chapter V

Co-operation and Grace-filled Sound: An Ethnography of a University Ensemble in an Orthodox Vespers Service

Introduction

In Chapter III, I described a concert by my small women’s choir, Ensemble Terirem, a group which I founded at the University of Limerick, comprised of students and colleagues. We have performed in several other concert settings and in informal contexts, and we recently sang the greater portion of a daily vespers service, which is the subject of this final chapter.

This particular service was a unique situation that came about with this study in mind. It took place in the icon chapel at Glenstal Abbey in County Limerick. The Very Rev. Ivan Moody served, Ensemble Terirem, with the addition of a visiting colleague, the singer Carl Linich, in the bani section, sang six of the chants and some litany responses in Georgian, and other guest colleagues, Orthodox scholars and chanters, Costin Moisil and Jaakko Olkinuora, read and chanted the remainder of the service in Romanian, Greek, and Finnish. Family members, friends, and members of the Glenstal community were also present at the service. This combination of languages and chant traditions and of Orthodox and non-Orthodox singers (I am the only Orthodox church member in my ensemble) and listeners in a small, unique space in a Roman Catholic monastery provided an interesting situation and context for study and reflection on the nature and function of Orthodox church music in action. It is common for similar situations to take place in Western Europe, but this one had its own anomalies. It was a performance exam as well as a church service, and there were various requirements to meet for both contexts, some of which caused concern for me. I wanted to ensure that my ensemble performed enough repertoire for evaluation while also including other chant traditions. My ensemble had worked on Blessed is the Man, which is usually sung only at great vespers for Sundays, but we included it in place of the read kathisma. Also, because of the small space and presence of a smoke detector, the usual censing did not take place. I thought that I would have been quite bothered by these things and not only out of concern for
tradition. Such was especially so regarding the lack of censing, even for academic reasons since
the participation of all senses is an aspect of my research. However, my colleagues who
commented on such structural and practical oddities said that the service was nevertheless
successful, and despite several moments of disorientation, the singing and supportive presence of
colleagues provided a sense of stability for me while I attempted to balance the elements of prayer
and performance exam. I will offer reflections on the role of chant in this context through an
analysis of fieldwork data, but first, I will give some musical analysis and relevant information
about the rehearsal process.  

Revisiting the Labyrinth: Western Georgian Chant Characteristics, Tangible
Appropriation, and Performance

Near the end of Chapter IV, I briefly discussed that Georgian ecclesiastical chant traditions display
some of the same structural and stylistic characteristics as Svan folk hymns. Such is especially the
case in Western traditions, and before describing the vespers service, I will now provide a short
analysis of such features in the Gelati School chant that was sung by my ensemble, along with
fieldwork data from rehearsals, showing how awareness of these characteristics was related to our
learning process and performance.

During the service, we sang the Svan version of the Easter troparion, which I have mentioned
previously and will analyse shortly, one chant, Lord I have cried, from the Shemokmedi regional
tradition, and four chants from the Gelati Monastery tradition, referred to in Chapter IV in St
Ekvtime the Confessor’s account of copying chant books. These were Come let us Worship,
Blessed is the Man, O Gladdening Light, and the song of St Symeon, all items from the ordinary of

301 After the service, I asked my ensemble members and colleagues to write brief reflections on their experience. I also
received correspondence from others who had been present. I also documented rehearsals with my ensemble, and
some data will be taken from those field notes. I have chosen to keep all quotations from participants and ensemble
members anonymous due to their personal nature.

302 I transcribed this piece from the archival recording available at

303 These are copied in Appendix C and can be found in Malkhaz Erkvanidze, Comp and Ed., Kartuli Galoba.
Mtsukhri. Tsiskari. Tsirva. Ighumen Ekvtime Kereselidzis da Dekanoz Razhden Khundadzis Khelnatserebis Mikhedvit
Razhden Khundadze’s manuscripts] (Tbilisi: Chant Center of the Georgian Patriarchy, 2004) [in Georgian and
English].
vespers (see Appendix C for scores).

The Svan paschal troparion, or Krist’e Aghsdga, has a simple structure of VABC and is sometimes sung with slight variation in the middle voice, giving rise to VAV2BC. Despite this through-composed structure, the characteristic cyclicity occurs because this hymn is sung three times, and the figures in the ‘B’ phrase, in the two upper voices, circle around the final note of that phrase. Regarding the final cadence, this hymn is one of a very few Svan examples that end on a fifth, sharing this feature with a short setting of the Trisagion (see Appendix B, Ts’mindao Ghmerto 1). Though a fifth marks a closed ending in much Georgian music, it also, as in these Svan cases, can mark the end of a phrase or repetition that calls for continuation.

In Gelati School chant, a fifth at internal cadences seems to have this precise function. In chants that are repeated an indefinite number of times, such as the Easter processional hymn, which featured in Ensemble Terirem’s first performance, a fifth marks the end, unlike many Gelati chants. In all five vespers chants, including the Shemokmedi example, fifths occur at the ends of all phrases except the final one, which, also like most Svan ritual songs, ends with a unison. In some pieces, such as Lord, Now Lettest Thou Thy Servant, there are also internal unison cadences at the end of repeated phrase compounds. This hymn has the form abcdceabcdcf, where ‘a’ and ‘c’ are recitations at two different levels and ‘b’ and ‘f’ have unison cadences. This structure, withdrawing from and advancing towards a final unison, looks very similar to those that we found in complex Svan folk hymns but with one seemingly major difference: the complete absence of call gestures.

In Chapter IV, we saw that calls from the middle voice clarify musical structure, lead singers in following that structure, and allow for freedom in the number of what could otherwise be endless cyclical patterns. We also saw that vocables facilitated repetition, with prayerful words marking the beginnings and final endings. In ecclesiastical chant, however, text is in the foreground and, taking the role of call gestures, dictates the musical structure. When one is following a written text with corresponding music, which also has its own structural rules, there is no question regarding how many times a particular pattern is to be repeated. However, final endings are highlighted in a special way, not only with unison notes but with specific approaches to them, in which the upper voices cross and the top voice approaches the note first from below, and often again from above, before reaching it. The last phrase often begins with or contains upward modulation, a characteristic that we also found in Svan examples, and Come, Let Us
Worship demonstrates this feature well.

In Western Georgian chants, we have come upon the same labyrinth structure that we found in Svan folk songs. However, its circuits are textual and its turnings are marked by cadences rather than call gestures. Whether one is accompanied in this sonic structure by threads of texts or vocables, the prayerful path is the same.

This similarity became very clear during weekly rehearsals with my ensemble. None of its members are Georgian speakers, and translations were useful for understanding the idea of the music but not for its practical execution. For example, when I would suggest that we start at a particular point in any given piece, specifying that point by its unique text was often met with, ‘Sorry…where?’ If I sang the part, however, and indicated roughly how far into the hymn or which repetition of some other phrase it was, the whole ensemble became oriented. If, however, I skipped any repetitions, as I did with verses of Blessed is the Man at a rehearsal on the day before the vespers service, even my own sense of orientation was lost, though I had consciously made the decision to skip the verses in an attempt to save time. This situation reminded me of several other experiences, including our performance of the Byzantine teretisma in the concert discussed in Chapter III (see Appendix A). This chant also has a labyrinth structure, pitch levels, and even call-like or bridge gestures, yet we did not approach it in this manner and ended up getting lost, perhaps trying to embody the piece in too linear a fashion; my fully written-out transcription, with no repeat signs or other such indications, did not help, and I had spent little rehearsal time discussing the structure in this case.\footnote{Field notes, 30 April 2014.}

The musical characteristics became a means of orientation and support in other ways as well, beyond the sense of musical form. For example, at our first rehearsal this academic year, a middle voice singer commented to new members, who sang the bottom voice, that she was so glad to have their support.\footnote{Field notes, September 2013.} Each part makes the others clear and, as we saw in the previous chapter, provides structure for the others like warp and weft threads in textiles. This way of parts fitting into each other is further demonstrated by a comment that Nana Mzhavanadze made at a master class with my ensemble, in which she said that a particular healing song from Samagrelo in Western Georgia
was ‘like a puzzle.’ \(^{306}\) Her words apply to the three-voice structure in all Georgian repertoire. I suggest that such descriptions and my ensemble’s tangible sense and use of structure for orientation helped in successful repertoire acquisition and performance. In a written reflection about the vespers service, to which we will return below, one member mentioned that I taught ‘complicated’ material in an ‘uncomplicated way,’ and this ‘way’ is the previously-described path that is threaded by the sound.

Though a palpable sense of structural features in Georgian chant was important in Ensemble Terirem’s work, it seems that theological ideas also helped to inform our performance. A particular example is the characteristic unison note at the final cadences, which was executed differently among our two major performances. In rehearsing the vespers repertoire, I greatly emphasised the importance of this note and the light yet supported way in which it is usually sung in chant repertoire. In rehearsals, though I gave practical information, what seems to have contributed most to the sound of our unison was my relating it to the idea of ceaseless prayer and saying that one must sing the note with the sense that it continues for eternity; the chant does not end when the musical pattern does. I also described the thread ritual that is discussed in Chapter IV and said that our final unison was like an even thread that we needed to continue unwinding. \(^{307}\) As we will see later, this kind of imagery was taken up by ensemble members, and performance indicates that such appropriation—whether it was in an intellectual, aesthetic, embodied, theological, or combined way for any given member does not seem to matter—affect our singing. Tangible and theological references, whatever people’s experiences and beliefs may have been, were useful pedagogical tools. Such seemed more effective than textual and conceptual focus, which characterized much of the preparation for our previous concert (see Chapter III). As one of Ensemble Terirem’s members said, ‘I had a much better sense of placement and of how the music works. I performed so much differently the second time; I could hear and feel the difference.’ \(^{308}\) Immediately after the vespers service, she wrote that she sang in a more ‘Georgian’ way than ever before. Though two of my ensemble members participated in both performances, most had only sung in the group for the academic year leading up to the second one, so it seems

\(^{306}\) Field notes, April 2013.

\(^{307}\) Field notes, April 2014.

\(^{308}\) Interview, 1 August 2014.
that my later pedagogical points of emphasis were effective and necessary for more successful performances. Now that I have discussed important features of the repertoire and how my ensemble latched on to them, I will continue this chapter by discussing the effects of chant within the vespers service performance, based on the responses of others and from a primarily theological point of view. It should be noted that all this pedagogical work, including that which our first concert encompassed, allowed singers to shift to a more involved focus, as mentioned in Chapter III, and one member said that ‘I find it hard to imagine experiencing the second performance in [a liturgical] way without having done the pedagogical work in the first performance.’

Transfigured by Singing: the Effects of Sound on Space and People

In the previous chapter, we saw how song is associated with ritual space in the case of Svan churches. Glenstal Abbey’s icon chapel was an interesting space for this study as it is not an Orthodox church, though it is generally structured like one, and though it houses icons, these are not positioned in the usual way. For instance, other icons were placed where those of Christ and the Mother of God would be on the right and left sides. Also, the walls are unfinished, and there are metal gates, features which are not generally present in Orthodox church buildings. The acoustic is not resonant, but everything is quite clear in such a small space. In previous chapters, I have focused on the synergy between sound and ritual space, but in this context, it seems that chant changed and enhanced the space.

One of my colleagues noted that the icon chapel was 'not the best' space for singing vespers, yet it may have been somehow improved, at least to those perceiving it, by that same service. A local colleague in attendance wrote the following in a note sent to me the same evening: 'the icon chapel, where I go to pray every evening, will never be the same again, and the icons too will be smiling at the good of it all;' and one of the Glenstal monks felt that 'the chapel came into its own.' Chanted vespers seemed to transfigure the space, to provide something that may have been perceived to be lacking, and to be a fitting service to have in a chapel built to house icons. Chant repertoire has had a similar function in other instances in which Orthodox services have taken

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309 Personal correspondence, 31 July 2014.
Space was not the only thing that underwent change, or, to use a performance studies term from Chapter I, transformance, through exposure to chant within the service and throughout the process of preparation. One of my new ensemble members this year wrote,

'I think by working on this repertoire and other world music this year, I have come to realise that my idea of a beautiful sound is changing and widening. My answer to the question of what is meaningful and beautiful has been significantly altered through this musical journey.'

Not only can perception of sound be affected but also one's overall experience and newly-informed sense of significance and beauty.

Interestingly, chant can have a powerful impact even when those who engage with it do not understand its texts and have little or no familiarity with its musical styles. It provided, as one attendee put it, 'an aural rather than cognitive experience,' and another ensemble member felt that it was 'gentle musical beckoning.' Though these listeners and singers had almost no experience of Orthodox services and understood only the small amount of English text, they found the new or less-familiar sounds of other languages and chant traditions to be significative and inviting. A colleague's quip about 'Orthodox propaganda' also underscores the positive nature of the experience for many. This is not to say that there were no negative aspects; positivity also has to do with people's general mindset about the event as I will describe in the next section.

The most surprising example of a positive experience came about for a participant who speaks Georgian and has a great amount of professional experience with Georgian singing. He responded to the vespers service thus:

'My experience tonight was uplifting in many ways. I had never sung [Georgian chant] in a service before, so that was rich simply as a musical and contextual experience; but, there's far more to it. [He describes his experience, as a non-Orthodox, of exclusion from the Georgian church.] So this evening, singing the [service], hearing words of praise in many words and languages, and feeling very welcome among Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike, was very heartening. I have many reasons to be thankful that I was able to be a part of this outpouring of grace.'

As discussed in Chapter III, grace is indeed that which gives chant its power, as it works with

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human beings. Furthermore, as St Maximus the Confessor teaches, as explained by Nikolaos Loudovikos, regarding the chants and symbols in the liturgy—and I extend this to all chant and symbols discussed in this study—

‘Grace reshapes “each of those present” “truly,” that is, existentially and ontologically, not in an imaginary way or according to the aesthetic fancies of some supposed “religious feeling.” This is further evident from the truly amazing phrase that follows, which impressively disconnects the ontology of the mystery from the gnosiological approaches to it, “...even if he [a person] is not aware of it—if perhaps he is among those who are infants in Christian faith—even if he is unable to see the depths of what is taking place, or to perceive that the grace which is indicated by every one of the divine symbols of salvation is working within him, leading him in an order and sequence from things imminent to the final goal of all things.”

Although St Maximus is speaking of believers present at the Divine Liturgy, there is no reason why anyone present at any service, whatever his knowledge or belief at the time, which would be known by God, would not be reached in some way by grace.

Interwoven Energies: Synergy of Grace and Persons in Proximity

Proximity was a primary aspect of the vespers service. I chose the small space in order to explore this factor in people's experience. One ensemble member wrote that she felt at ease from the friendly presence of others and that 'proximity would not have it any other way.' While close proximity could cause discomfort for some, such was not so in this case. Several people referred to their 'will to be there,' their placing of themselves in the same proximity through co-operation as it were. Though they came from different backgrounds and faiths, they gave their personal support and effort and engaged at various levels, in all cases at least through what some religious scholars have termed 'informed empathy.' Physical and spiritual proximity thus reflected and supported each other and contributed in bringing about the same kind of synergy among people.

Another choir member, after describing her vivid experience of close proximity, wrote,

311 Loudovikos, 15.

‘It was truly a spiritual experience. I could feel that energy, and it was intense for me. I know there was energy in the form of recital nerves, but there was great energy in spiritual connection, energy in thanksgiving to God, energy in the love of music, energy in the love of people.’

I discussed chant as it relates to love previously, especially in chapters II and IV, and following my colleague's reflection, I suggest that chant traditions can be thought of as different energies of the essence of prayer. They are created energies, which are themselves synergies of the combined created energies of people, which God weaves together, intertwining them with the uncreated energy of grace. As one of my ensemble members, recalling my extensive use of textile metaphor (cf. Chapter IV) wrote, 'performing vespers felt like a co-creation of strong, firm, robust, quality “stuff”—a weave of many different threads.' She then described the different threads of languages, Orthodox cultural traditions, and 'participants' own cultural and spiritual/religious backgrounds.' In their reflections, most people mentioned the combination of languages, chant traditions, and even faiths that were present in the icon chapel, and a monk from Glenstal Abbey found it to be 'a wonderful mixture of tongues, faiths, and people.' It was a microcosm of the world in a sense, in which Christ is carrying out His work and in which the church sings and is heard. There were, in fact, people at the service who were not there with any thought or intention towards a spiritual experience or in order to attend church but rather, to see my final doctoral performance. Nevertheless, one agnostic listener, also a former ensemble member who has been to Georgia, though she did 'not understand the texts and prayer,' 'felt transported back to the old small churches in Georgia where the music can reach into your chest to awaken something innately human.' The chant had indexical significance and a tangible effect, and she thus engaged with it and was mindful of the service. Not everyone was comfortable with such mindfulness, and I was told of disconcerted people who had expected a concert. I will thus end this chapter with a short reflection on my role not as a church singer but as choir director.

Conclusion: God's Implement

In Chapter II, I discussed the Cappadocian Fathers' figurative language about the Holy Spirit, in which it is likened to the conductor, without whom a choir would stop and lose its harmony. In reflections about their experiences rehearsing for and singing vespers, several Ensemble Terirem
members described how central I was in making things work and how I brought them together; how I taught material in an 'uncomplicated' way, which was 'surprisingly efficacious' as it was complicated to acquire; even how everything was, in some sense, 'around' me (I have used a colleague's chosen word for an almost literal reason, which I will soon explain). The Cappadocian analogy or simile is not at all symmetrical, however, since the Holy Spirit is a choir director's director and a choir director, God's instrument. As for the centrality of an ensemble director, such has nothing to do with greater or better ability but rather has to do with the particular type of work that is involved. I can best describe what I mean with a continuation of the earlier weaving metaphor.

A choral director does the work of a weaver's shuttle or bobbin, and one who sings in the group as well, as in my case, also provides a thread. A weaver organises weft threads around shuttles and bobbins, which he then passes through the warp in proper order so that the desired structure and pattern are created. Musical traditions, people, circumstances, spaces, are all like threads, and a choir director, who is likely unaware of many of these things, especially regarding each individual member, is somehow a focus for them all. He or she does not do the complicated thread arrangement but can witness it, co-operate with it, and finally see the weaving progress while doing uncomplicated work, or rather, while being implemented by the Trinity. One is passed from God's hand into the work-in-progress, taken into His hand again, woven back through, and so on. In the midst of the cloth, however, one is not without God since Christ, through His incarnation, has become one of the threads.
Conclusion

We have explored the theology of Orthodox chant traditions as set forth in writings and have looked at several case studies to discover song's effects in action. In concert, church, and folk ritual contexts, we have seen it take on various meanings and functions, all of which resonate with and reflect previously-written theological ideas, illustrating them and showing shared faith and experience across time and place and from many points of view. Clergy, laypeople, students, singers, Orthodox Christians, agnostics, song masters, and others have lent their voices to the discourse and contributed their singing to the performance elements of this research. We have seen how music, like bread, is transfigured and blessed in the liturgy and other church services. It fuels and becomes prayer in worshippers' bodies and hearts. Sung prayer in folk ritual is somewhat like the blessed textiles and foods, apart from vestments and bread for the eucharist, that anyone may create, such as kollyva, paschal eggs and breads, headcoverings, and icon adornments. In concert and classroom settings, information about this ritual context of the music may be made available, but one could compare it to the situation of icons on display in museums. In both cases, however, human interaction with and through these art forms nevertheless takes place, which may be aesthetic. However, when strong semiotic associations are at work, and especially grace and faith, the experience may be liturgical, as if in context, or rather, the new context can be transformed by the music. The same kinds of associations and images, when employed in the transmission of repertoire, can lead to successful performances and may be more effective than practical instruction in helping singers to become vocally and mentally latched on to the sound.

I will now end this study by returning to a theological and poetic approach. In Chapter IV, we explored the logoi in Svan folk songs, and in several places, especially in the last chapter, chant traditions were said to be energies. Returning to the thought of St Maximus the Confessor yet again, as paraphrased by Christoph Schneider, we find that 'it is within the logoi of beings that the nous [mind/heart] discerns the divine presence in the form of the divine energies.' Also,

313 A sweet dish made from boiled wheat grains that is blessed at services for commemoration of the dead. It is also prepared at Christmas time in some places, including Svaneti.

according to the aforementioned Cappadocian St Basil the Great, as Schneider again explains,

'The perception of divine presence in the energies requires the ethical and spiritual purification of the human mind and its illumination ... Faith and knowledge are closely interconnected and form a functional unity. Both approaches are grounded in the energies of God manifest in Creation, and no human faculty or capacity can be thought of without its relation to God. The encounter with God in all its dimensions therefore cannot be reduced to merely conceptual knowledge of the idea of God. Rather, knowledge, faith and worship form the three stages of the relationship with God which are interrelated through the divine energies.\(^{315}\)

Thus, created song, which human beings experience and in which they participate, encompasses these three coexistent levels. We have seen throughout this study that it is believed, understood, and felt to provide purification and illumination, manifest divine energies, and express faith and prayer. For those who do not appropriate such ideas about chant, it can still provide a personal, profound experience. Since it does not depend on 'conceptual knowledge of ideas,' it can do its work in any situation where open perception can receive it.

It is prayer, which the fourteenth-century St Gregory of Sinai describes as follows:

‘For beginners prayer is like a joyous fire kindled in the heart; for the perfect it is like a vigorous sweet-scented light.
Or again, prayer is the preaching of the Apostles, an action of faith or, rather, faith itself, 'that makes real for us the things for which we hope' (Heb. 11:1),
- active love, angelic impulse, the power of the bodiless spirits, their work and delight, the Gospel of God, the heart's assurance, hope of salvation, a sign of purity, a token of holiness, knowledge of God, baptism made manifest, purification in the water of regeneration, a pledge of the Holy Spirit, the exultation of Jesus, the soul's delight, God's mercy, a sign of reconciliation, the seal of Christ, a ray of the noetic sun, the heart's dawn-star, the confirmation of the Christian faith, the disclosure of reconciliation with God, God's grace, God's wisdom or, rather, the origin of true and absolute Wisdom; the revelation of God, the work of monks, the life of hesychasts, the source of stillness, and expression of the angelic state.
Why say more? Prayer is God, who accomplishes everything in everyone (cf. 1 Cor. 12:6), for there is a single action of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, activating all things through Christ Jesus.\(^{316}\)

As long as people sing, their sound, with their co-operation, is activated thus and, even when sound

\(^{315}\) Schneider, 25-26.

is the thinnest thread, it can wrap the whole world in love. It can become part of the net of grace in which the whole world is caught.\textsuperscript{317} It is a part of the ‘garment of truth’ that is woven of theology by the Church.\textsuperscript{318} Even when prayer is not in the minds of singers, their appropriation of theologically-informed imagery and musical structure can lead to successful and convincing performances, that is, embodiment of repertoire, which may then have effects that are beyond their knowledge.

\textsuperscript{317} See the troparion of Pentecost; a translation can be found in Seraphim Nassar, \textit{Book of Divine Prayers and Services} (Englewood, NJ: Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, 1979): 1000.

\textsuperscript{318} See the kontakion of the Holy Fathers. An English translation can be found in \textit{The Menaion, Volume Two: The Month of October} (Boston: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 2005).
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Appendix A: Ensemble Concert Scores
O gladsome radiance

na te lo mex a ru lo cmi di sa

di de bi sa u keda vi sa ma

mi sa ze ca ta sa cmi di sa ne

ta ri sa o i e su kris te
Behold The Bridegroom Comes
(Byzantine)

Consonants
b = v
g = y
d = th (the)
th = th (think)
t after n = d (door)
ch = ch (German ich)

Vowels
a, e, i, o, and y as in Latin
ai = Latin e
ei = Latin i
ou = oo (loose)
Behold the Bridegroom

Sye zhe-nikh grya-det po-lu-no-shi,

i blazhen rab ye-go zhe o-brya-shet blya-shys:

nye do-sto-in zhe pa-ki ye-go zhe o-brya-shet uni-vyu-shyn.

blyu-di u-bo du-she o-ya.

nye shom o-tya go-ti-sya,

du nye smyertipreda-nabud-dye-shy,

i tsar-tovi-lya vnye za-tvo-ri-shysya.

no vospyani zo-vu-shi:

svyat svyat svyat yesi Bo-zhe,

Bo-go-ro-di-tseyu pom-lui nns.
Behold, the Bridegroom comes the Hymn in tone VIII

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Who hath prophesied the imperishable birth IXIRMOS in TONE VII
The angels in heaven  the Hymn in tone VI

Christ is risen  the Hymn in tone V
Right early let us wake

Vlmos in tone I
სოლომონ სყიდვა დაბლხურვი ქრმა 3

The angels in heaven the Hymn in tone VI

Christ is risen the Hymn in tone V
Christ is risen the Hymn in tone V

* გადაწყვიტა გროვინა თომასგანის უფასო მოგზაური სიმღერე.
Dideba

Dideba da Ghme-ertsa-a da
Mama Ghmerti-is Dze-esá;
madli da misi ts’aloba
aka m’opelta stumrebs da maspi-indzelsa.

Ghmerti ma agvaveso purita da
lešo Kri-istem ghvi-ini-ita
agvishenos maspindzeli stumrebs mouma-arto-os kheli da.

Dideba da Ghme-ertsa-a da.
Ch'ona

[Ch'ona-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-
ch'onas viq'av, ch'onas viq'av, ch'ona vnakhe
[a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a]
Sargebela vera vnakhe a-a-a-a-a,
sarge sargebela vera vnakhe
[a-a-a-a-a-a-a-
Alatasalatasa a-a-a-a-a-
kheli chav(h)kar, kheli chav(h)kar kalatasa
[a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a]
Amovighe da erti kvertskhi a-a-a-a-a-
Ghmti mozvtsens, Ghmerti mozvtsens barakasa
[a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a]
ai ama mshvidoba, ai aka mshvidoba.
Appendix B: Svan Song Transcriptions

Didebata
Verse 1

10 Verses:

I: ba-ta-i-a ri-li-gva-ia she-da-vo vo-di-vi-vo be-i-a va
II: vo-di-di-de-i-ba-ta-i-a ri-li-gva-ia she-da-vo ho vo-di-vi-vo be-i-a va
III: ba-ta-i-a ri-li-gva-ia she-da-vo o vo-di-vi-vo be-i-a va

Verse 1 (Echo)

I: vo-di-dí-de-
II: ho-i vo-di-di-de-
III: vo-di-di-de-

Verse 2

15 Verses:

I: vo-di-le-li-qé-ra le-di li-shé-dšté
II: ho-i vo-di-le-li-qé-ra le-di li-shé-dšté
III: vo-di-le-li-qé-ra le-di li-shé-dšté

I: ba-ta-i-a ri-li-gva-ia she-da-vo vo-di-vi-vo he-i-a va
II: ba-ta-i-a ri-li-gva-ia she-da-vo ho vo-di-vi-vo he-i-a va
III: ba-ta-i-a ri-li-gva-ia she-da-vo o vo-di-vi-vo he-i-a va

-2-
Barball Dolash

Traditional

Voice

ba - ri - bal - si do - i - va -
i - i - me - gi sgvo - i - va
la - sh - khra - shi vo - i - va
li - m - zw - ri ja - i - va -
ze - i - da - shi so - i - va
se - pi - skue - ri la - mi - va -
e - ch - no - shi lw - mi - va -

Voice

o di-de-ba ghvi va - i ba - ri - bal - si do - i - va -
i - i - me - gi sgvo - i - va
la - sh - khra - shi vo - i - a
li - m - zw - ri ja - i - va -
ze - i - da - shi so - i - va
se - pi - skue - ri la - mi - va -
e - ch - no - shi lw - mi - va -

Voice

ba - ri - bal - si do - i - va -
i - i - me - gi sgvo - i - va
la - sh - khra - shi vo - i - a
li - m - zw - ri ja - i - va -
ze - i - da - shi so - i - va
se - pi - skue - ri la - mi - va -
e - ch - no - shi lw - mi - va -
Ts'khav Krist'eshi

Ts'kha-v kri-st'eshi e-ha
la-ima-i ha di-ho-i
vo-i-di-vo ho

ho-di vo
za-i vo ho
vo-i di-vo i-e ha vo

d.S. al coda

ho i-e ha
ts'khav Krist'e-shi a-ha
o
vo ho ha
Lazghhvash

Verse 1

vo-i-di-li vo-di i-se-gva-mi vo di-dab li-a-o-da ri-li-gva-i vo

vo-i-di-li vo-di i-se-gva-mi vo di-dab li-a-o-da ri-li-gva-i vo

vo-i-di-li vo-di i-se-gva-mi vo di-dab li-a-o-da ri-li-gva-i vo

Verse 2

vo-i-di-li vo-da rai-di-li vo-ho-ho, vo-i-di-li vo-di

vo-i-di-li vo-da rai-di-li vo-ho-ho, vo-i-di-li vo-di

vo-i-di-li vo-da rai-di-li vo-ho-ho, vo-i-di-li vo-di

vo-k'va-ra-shi vo sam-k'al li-a-o-da ri-li-gva-i vo vo-i-di-li vo-da

vo-k'va-ra-shi vo sam-k'al li-a-o-da ri-li-gva-i vo vo-i-di-li vo-da

vo-k'va-ra-shi vo sam-k'al li-a-o-da ri-li-gva-i vo vo-i-di-li vo-da
Verse 3
ra-i-di-li vo-ho-ho. vo-i-di-li vo-di qa-i-na-ri vo
ra-i-di-li vo-ho-ho. vo-i-di-li vo-di qa-i-na-ri vo
ra-i-di-li vo-ho-ho. vo-i-di-li vo-di qa-i-na-ri vo

Verse 4
jir-dakh li-a-o-da sga-shé la-lé-ge-na vo-i-di-li vo-da ra-i-di-li vo-ho-
jir-dakh li-a-o-da sga-shé la-lé-ge-na vo-i-di-li vo-da ra-i-di-li vo-ho-
jir-dakh li-a-o-da sga-shé la-lé-ge-na vo-i-di-li vo-da ra-i-di-li vo-ho-

ho. vo-i-di-li vo-di mu-ché-va-ri wo kha-gan-kh li-a-o-da
ho. vo-i-di-li vo-di mu-ché-va-ri wo kha-gan-kh li-a-o-da
ho. vo-i-di-li vo-di mu-ché-va-ri wo kha-gan-kh li-a-o-da
Ts'mindao Ghmerto 2
Appendix C: Ensemble vespers scores
The Great Litany

Blessed is the man

*Only one voice must be choosen from two version of the same voice given everywhere in the book.*
O gladsome radiance

na te lo mi la ru lo ti di sa di de ri sa u

kuda vi sa ma mi sa ze ca ta sa emi di sa ne

ti ri sa o i e se kris te no srul ni da siva sa mri sa

sa mi ve ni na li sa sa me du xru sa va kret ma ma