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Vivian-Lee Nyitray is an Associate Professor of Religious Studies at the University of California, Riverside. Her research interests include the feminist appraisal of Confucian traditions, the cult of the goddess Ma-tsu, and the representation of virtue in religious biographies. During her time at Barnard College, she was the first recipient of the Sears Teaching Award. Since moving to UCR, she has received a student-generated award for outstanding teaching in Religious Studies.

Out in the field, the compelling power of music is manifest. Hypnotic hours of resonant drumming while Taoist temple staff prepare coals for a firewalking, the reedy *sheng* blown at intervals during Confucius' birthday celebration, the muezzin's call to prayer, and the intonation of the doxology — all these sacred sounds have suffused my field experiences and, I hope, brought insight and empathy to my scholarship. Even after the passage of years, the mere hint of a particular chord progression or the timbre of a certain bell, like a musical *madeleine*, transports me back to a particular realm of religious experience that no text or image can approach.

Yet when I reflect upon the course of my own undergraduate years and subsequent graduate training in Religious Studies, the connection between religion and music was one made outside the classroom. The formal study of religion encompassed the examination of thought, texts, and, to a lesser extent, images. In the classroom, apart from music punctuating the occasional documentary, religion was a surprisingly quiet field of study.

How, then, to open this dimension of religion for my own students? The answer would appear to be simple: bring music into the classroom often and in whatever manner possible. In my first year of teaching, I watched my colleague Vincent Harding carry a small boom box with him to class. He used it to set the tone for the hour and to ease students' transition from their previous activities to the present course. He created an aural space wherein the day's discussion could take place. I have since followed his example, playing Vedic chants or Marian masses as students enter the room. I often close a lecture with another selection in order to send students out with a musical summary of the day's material. Yet, for all my meticulous attention to appropriateness and aesthetic quality, to students the music is little more than aural wallpaper in the mental hallway that leads to and from my class. The pervasiveness of music in our lives has dampened our appreciation of its power.

In an essay on the use of music in history education, Jane Adas charts the profound changes that the role of music in our society underwent in the course of the twentieth century. Once, if you wanted to hear music, she says, you had to make some considerable effort to attend a live performance or, more commonly, you had to make it yourself. Musical exposure was limited by geography and tradition, as well as time and financial resources. Advances in communications during the twentieth century enabled people everywhere to hear all kinds of music anytime, anywhere; indeed, as Adas notes, we can hardly escape it. Music provides the accompaniment to all the events of our lives, however dramatic or mundane.

The challenge, then, is how to present music, an invaluable primary source for the study of religion, to individuals whose experience of music itself is largely unexamined, and whose response to the constant presence of music is to ignore it or to keep it in the background. The task is to move students away from habits of passive and apathetic listening to become active, critical, and sympathetic listeners. What follow are strategies that I believe have increased my success in confronting the problem.

The Challenge of the Unexpected

Just as students don't anticipate grammatical corrections on papers outside the English department, so too are they surprised to find structured listening exercises in the Religious Studies classroom. I discuss the *Ramayana* and present a *gamelan* selection from a performance of the epic, or I discuss Zen notions of emptiness and offer an excerpt from Noh theater music. The combination facilitates perception of the influence of religion on other cultural phenomena and underscores the cultural role music can play in reinforcing religion. Musical interludes force discussion of the need to listen and, by implication, to think differently across cultures.

Adas, speaking from a Western music orientation, identifies important cultural distinctions among the basic elements of music: melody, rhythm, and harmony. She notes that whereas harmony plays a minor part in the music of South Asia, melodies are extremely sophisticated and untutored ears "can scarcely take them in." The Western octave comprises twelve tones with nothing smaller than a half step, whereas the Indian octave comprises twenty-three tones, producing microtones that are difficult for novice listeners to distinguish. "In African music," she says, "rhythm is the central component and is so highly developed that it contains subtle complexities unknown in even the most advanced Western jazz or classical music" (16).

Bringing these differences to student awareness is crucial, as such knowledge undoes misperceptions that what is familiar is superior. Indeed, I frequently use music to complicate the familiar. Teaching in southern California, my courses are populated largely by Asian/American students. Often breezily confident of their mastery of family culture, their assumptions are shaken by the Japanese Orthodox Church's *Litany of the Catechumens*, composed by Priest Gregori T. Ogawa, performed by the Japanese Liturgical Chorus.

All students benefit from closer examination of religious music. Is this liturgical or ceremonial music, and what's the difference? Does this music aid contemplation or serve some pedagogical function? Is this music intended for the service of the living, the dead, the divine, or the human? Who performs this music, and who pays for it? And so on. People attend to things out of place, and the study of music in the non-'Religion and Music' classroom is, to our present benefit, unexpected.

The Unexpected Challenge

For some time, I have experimented with take-home essay 'music midterms.' Students check out audiotapes that present a musical selection followed by questions requiring them to tie the selection to the historical-textual material covered in class. For example, in testing aspects of Hindu traditions in a Women and Religion course, musical settings of Mirabai's poems function as a prompt for analysis of the gendered aspects of *bhakti*; a *bhajan* ("Jai Durga Lakshmi Sarasvati...") prompts explanation of Devi in multiple manifestations. The same exam might feature contemporary women's folk music to prompt analysis of goddess-centered spirituality movements. My test questions could be posed without the musical preface, but the unique test form catches student imagination and, based on evaluation comments, prods them to 'really think' about our subject matter. Added pedagogical value derives from the underscoring of the ongoing vitality of the religious tradition under study.

I have also enlisted students to the cause of active listening by challenging them to bring me music samples to share with the class. In earlier years, I would create a 'Greatest Hits' compilation tape (for reserve use only to avoid copyright infringement). For my Introduction to Asian Religions course, it has included such favorites as Taoist chants for universal purification and Rg Veda 1.1:

AUM! I sing to Agni, the celebrant of the sacrifice, the resplendent one, the bearer of offerings, the possessor of jewels/Agni — worthy of the praises of the ancient and the new sages, he who convenes here all the gods.

I now digitize musical selections and stream them on the (password-protected) course web-site. Thanks to my students (and their parents), I have a growing collection of tapes of devotional Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, and Hindu music — as well as Kurt Cobain and Nirvana — all suggesting that course content is the subject of conversation at home and in the dorms. In return, my students know that the lyrics to the Beatles' sitar-saturated "The Inner Light" are not, as liner notes suggest, the words of "an obscure Japanese poem" but in fact comprise chapter 47 of the *Tao Te Ching*.

Without going out of your door
You can know all things on Earth.
Without looking out of your window
You can know the ways of Heaven.
The farther one travels, the less one knows.
Arrive without traveling.
See all without looking.
Do all without doing.

In this way, even secular musical appropriations can be catalytic for important conversations about cultural hegemony, Orientalism, and the relation of Asian religions to Euro-American popular culture.

Frequency and Volume

In music, as with texts and images, repetition makes real: it entrains the listener, making the material amenable to examination on various levels. Even linguistic barriers can be breached: once accustomed to listening across languages, students realize that they can, in fact, hear the key words "Buddha, **dharma**, **sangha**" in Pali recitations of the Triple Refuge.

To lesser extent, frequency here refers to the ongoing effort to enhance aural experiences across my own curriculum. Students expect that in any Nyitray course, they will be exposed to recitation, chant, and music. In a Religious Biography course, for example, musical selections provoke discussions of the theological imperatives that drive the construction of religious lives. Anguished lyrics from Jesus Christ Superstar, for example, focus attention on Jesus' humanity and divinity:

(Crowd) Will you touch, will you mend me Christ?
Won't you touch, will you heal me Christ?
Will you kiss, you can heal me Christ?
Won't you kiss, won't you pay me Christ?
I (Jesus) Oh, there's too many of you, don't push me
Oh, there's too little of me, don't crowd me
Heal yourselves!

Evita, another Webber and Rice opera, offers similar opportunities to examine the notion of saintliness, the biographical process, audience reception, folk piety vs. institutional approval, and so forth.

Finally, when using music to set the tone for class, one needs to break the 'wallpaper' barrier. Vincent Harding's conspicuous handling of his boom box and his own obvious listening drew student attention. I have learned to turn the volume up in my cavernous classrooms to make the music noticeable to students over the din of chatter, backpack zipping, etc. After a few days, students begin to enter listening, anticipating later references in class. Once students are accustomed to active listening, I sometimes juxtapose quieter traditional music at the start of a class, such as hymns in Chinese to the bodhisattva Kuan-yin, with some louder modern appropriation at the end of the class, for example, Steely Dan's "Bodhisattva."

In reflecting upon my experiments with musical truth, I find that the physical encounter with music resonates with (and in) students, providing an embodied realization of this salient dimension of religious life. While passive at first, students become active listeners. Their response shifts from expressing preferences for certain genres to discussions of the significance of hearing the voice of a female cantor, or of the symbolic value of particular instruments such as the *vina*, or Chinese bronze chimes. When music is introduced into the classroom, the payoff is clear. The ritual power of sound is suddenly and viscerally understandable: the ritual concept of sound as creating sacred space is appreciable to the group, and the background music of religious life is, I think, forever foregrounded.

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