The Heart of Our Music
The Heart of Our Music
Digging Deeper

Reflections on Music and Liturgy
by Members of the Liturgical Composers Forum

edited by John Foley
Publication of this work was made possible in part by a gift in memory of Kathleen M. O’Brien, a dedicated student of liturgy and an accomplished liturgical musician who practiced her ministry in Washington, DC, and at US Air Force bases throughout the world in partnership with her husband John L. O’Brien.
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Preface

In this volume of *The Heart of Our Music* we wanted to dig a bit deeper into the subject of liturgy and music. Not only do we examine how the music we sing comes across to the congregation—especially in light of cultural diversity—but also how the root materials that compose ritual function.

The four composer-authors in this volume have spent considerable time thinking about such questions throughout their careers. Paul Inwood applies insights from disciplines such as anthropology and semiology to help us understand how liturgy is perceived by the community. Ricky Manalo looks at the increasing cultural diversity in Catholic worship—a very important topic in our communities. In my own contribution, I reflect upon how metaphors, images, and especially myths and ritual supply the building blocks of any liturgy. And, finally, Roc O’Connor brings all the above home by suggesting the way in which true liturgical engagement works.

Everything you will find in this series is a product of discussions and sharings at the yearly meetings of the Liturgical Composers Forum (LCF) in St. Louis. I founded this forum in 1998, and I was privileged to oversee it until 2011 as part of my work as director of the Center for Liturgy at St. Louis University. Since stepping down from that position I have remained a happy member of the Forum, now incorporated on its own.¹

In this volume, especially, the material is thought-provoking yet still written for anyone interested in liturgy. These writings should appeal to pastors, deacons, liturgists, musicians, ministers of the liturgy, people in the pews, and last (but definitely not
least), those interested in the future of Christian worship. We believe that liturgy is the “fount and apex of the whole Christian life,”\(^2\) so we are most happy to write for it and about it.

— John Foley, SJ

Notes

1. Membership in the Liturgical Composers Forum consists of persons who have composed a representative body of ritual vocal music that is (1) published by a recognized publisher of liturgical music, (2) intended primarily for the Roman Catholic liturgy, and (3) rooted in participation by the assembly.

How Music in the Liturgy is Perceived and Received

An Anthropological/Semiological Perspective

Paul Inwood

Dipping a Toe in the Water

Between 1981 and 1988, the University of Notre Dame carried out the first comprehensive survey of parish life conducted across an entire nation. During its final phase (1984–89), the study’s findings were analyzed and communicated to church bodies and leadership, scholarly circles, and the media. This third phase also resulted in interpretation and application of those findings in pastoral planning, ministry formation, liturgical creativity, and theological reflection.

What distinguished this survey from others of a similar type was that the results were gathered from extensive field observations by researchers on the ground.¹ Other surveys, such as those conducted by CARA, have relied on results from printed or electronic questionnaires completed by individuals or focus groups.²

The Notre Dame survey included an entire section on liturgy and liturgical music, one of whose most thought-provoking findings was that although 63% were satisfied, 37% were dissatisfied
with the music in their own parish, and although 60% were satisfied with the quality of music and singing, 40% were dissatisfied. It is probable that, were another survey to be carried out today, the results would be broadly similar.

The Notre Dame study examined all facets of parish and community life, not just the liturgy, and it was therefore limited as to the depth to which it could penetrate. The results quoted in the preceding paragraph were no more than raw data, because the study never examined the reasons for parishioners’ opinions. No one asked them why they thought the way they did.

And yet this is crucial for a deepened understanding of how music functions in the rite. Although we are dealing with the intangible phenomenon that is music, it should nevertheless be possible to construct some kind of analytical grid to assist us in evaluating the effect that music in liturgy has upon those who experience it in the pews.

**What are we trying to do?**

Universa Laus, an international study group for liturgical music, outlined the need for such research in its first document, entitled *Music in Christian Celebration*:

> Without claiming to have an exhaustive knowledge of the reactions of the faithful (reactions which are generally implicit rather than explicit, and which are usually badly-formulated), musicians who want to place themselves at the service of their assemblies cannot totally ignore these reactions or neglect them. It is useful for musicians, for example, to know which forms their people consider to be archaic or modern, or unfashionable; which they consider to be popular or elitist or common; which ones are familiar or esoteric; which are good or bad in the view both of the experts and the ‘consumers’; which ones are sentimental or austere, prayerful or distracting, etc. It is also important to notice how large are the proportions of the assembly involved in
these reactions, and also to find out if such reactions are occasioned by the work itself or by the way in which it is performed.³

The aim, then, is to get behind general impressions such as those cited in the Notre Dame study and delve more deeply into the whys and the wherefores that generate these reactions. To do this, we need some analytical tools, while recognizing that in an area dealing with human emotions and gut reactions there can never be anything approaching absolute precision. A certain nebulousness will be inevitable.

Semiotics

Universa Laus had been well aware of the need for this kind of analysis for many years. When the present author first started attending its international meetings in the mid-1970s, the focus of its work was already on what was called the semiotics of music in the liturgy—that is, how things are perceived by those on the receiving end. This work was spearheaded by Professor Gino Stefani of the University of Bologna.⁴

Semiotics, sometimes known as semiology (the two terms tend to be used interchangeably), is the science of perceptions. It is a field of research that investigates the emergence of meaning and symbolic systems. As such, it is important for a system such as liturgy, in which symbol and meaning play such an important part. Deriving ultimately from ancient philosophy, it became an academic discipline for teaching and research in the 1960s.

Semiotics has traditionally been applied within the humanities, particularly in the study of language, culture, and the arts. More recently it has been applied to other fields in the humanities, such as the study of the mind and mental phenomena (psycho- and cognitive semiotics), in research on communities and societies (socio-semiotics), science, technology, economics, and even in the study of animals and other organic systems (bio- and zoo-semiotics).
The four main lines of development within the history of semiotics are

1. the philosophical study of symbols,
2. the analysis of language,
3. empirical research on communication, and
4. the semiotics of culture.

While the liturgy and its music does not fit neatly into any one of those categories but rather spans several of them, we can still study it using the same kind of processes. Traditionally, work in semiotics has been divided into three areas:

1. **semantics**: the relationship between signs and the things to which they refer (sometimes referred to as their *denotata*);
2. **syntactics**: the relationships between signs in formal structures;
3. **pragmatics**: the relationship between signs and their effects on those who use them.

For the purposes of studying the phenomenon of music in the liturgy, the third area—pragmatics—will be especially useful for the present essay.

**Two Triads**

Much of the early work of Universa Laus revolved around two triads and the differences between them.

The first triad is “Function–Form–Signification.” One may define the *function* of a particular element in the liturgy, but then the task is to find an appropriate *form* to mediate it. The form in turn conveys the *signification*, or meaning, of what is done. Changing the form, therefore, will have an effect upon the meaning transmitted. In other words, depending on the form used, the signification may be quite different from the intended purpose or function of the rite.
Universa Laus’s “Beliefs Held in Common” section states: “When music takes place within a rite, it always affects both the form and the signifying power of the rite” (23). A number of other “Beliefs Held in Common” are also relevant here:

37. Everything that reaches the ears passes through the medium of an acoustic ‘form.’

38. The effective functioning of every musical rite assumes the use of an appropriate form.

39. Only to be concerned with the form is idolatry; but to neglect the form is to neglect the rite.

(The last one is a warning to those for whom the music used becomes a sort of god in itself.) A further salutary reminder from the same section of the document, “A good repertoire alone is not enough to guarantee that music will fulfill its liturgical role” (30).

This takes us immediately into the second triad: “Function–Form–Functioning.” The function may be determined, and the appropriate form may have been found, but how did it work in practice? Or, did it even work at all?

This is where semiotics enters the arena. What is needed is an evaluation of what took place, together with an evaluation of whether the signification was changed at all—this time not by the form used but by the way in which the form actually functioned.

To sum up so far: the meaning of what is done can be modified both by the form used and by the way in which that form was put into practice. Liturgists and musicians must be aware that the best laid plans can go astray, so they must also be sensitive to what actually takes place. We are very good at putting on liturgy, but not nearly so good at reviewing it postfactum. And yet this is essential in order for us to improve, to grow, and to develop. Learning from experience and from actual errors is vital, but the fact that we live within a church that finds it incredibly difficult (if not impossible) to admit when mistakes are made renders this more problematic than it might otherwise be.
The Heart of Our Music

Analytical Categories and Dissection

The commentary on Universa Laus Document I has these wise words:

If it is sometimes difficult to discern with exactitude the demands that musicians and liturgists make, it is even more difficult to gain a realization of the judgments of the faithful. Nevertheless, comparatively few of them are insensitive to music or indifferent to the musical menu served up for them in their churches. Praise and complaint are often heard, but these judgments are only rarely formulated in a way that is both precise and susceptible of analysis. Normally, rather vague expressions are used: “It was beautiful!” “It was awful!”—without any indication being given as to why this opinion is held. Is it the work itself? Or its melody? Or its text? Its accompaniment? Was it the performance? Or the quality of the voices or instruments? Was it because of the sound system? Or the general atmosphere created by the music?9

Those responsible for celebrations may be tempted to set aside such imprecisely formulated reflections on the part of non-experts. Nevertheless, if they want to be of real service to the community they must force themselves, patiently and persistently, to understand what the members of the assembly are trying to say. They must try to perceive, through the dark glass of vague and stereotyped expressions, the real point that helped or hindered the prayer of those who are speaking.

Very often they will get very different reactions to the same piece in the same celebration. This obviously comes from the diversity of people, from their concentration on one particular element or another, from the overall context which helped or annihilated the use of a musical element at a particular point. It is therefore impossible to arrive at one clear and simple idea representing the reactions of the assembly; but it is in a very humble way, using intuition rather than rigorous deduction,
that they will come to sense what the members of an assembly are comfortable with.

What we are concerned with here, then, are:

1. What things sound like
2. What things look like
3. What things feel like

What Things Sound Like

Some examples of questions that could be asked are:

a. How well does the music reflect the spirit and mood of the liturgy at this point? This question includes consideration of volume, tempo, pace, and so on.
b. Is the word setting good?
c. If the assembly is singing, is the tessitura comfortable for them?
d. Are the melodic contours and rhythms accessible and memorable?
e. If there is accompaniment, does it support and underpin or distract and undermine?
f. If there is choral writing, do the parts work correctly and well?
g. Do the tone-colours, vocal as well as instrumental, appear beautiful and satisfying or ugly and off-putting?
h. Is the form of the music obvious or diffuse and difficult to grasp? This question involves not only the contrast between, for example, strophic settings and through-composed settings, but also whether the music seems to hang together or whether it meanders aimlessly. The use of such devices as repetition and sequence will form part of this discernment.
i. Is the music interesting or boring?
j. If amplification or a PA system is used, does this support what is taking place or is it overassertive? Can the assembly hear itself?

A skilled practitioner can answer some of these questions by looking at the music on the printed page, but all of them will depend to a greater or lesser extent on how the music is performed.

What Things Look Like

Here, the sample questions are about the visual perceptions of what is taking place:

a. If there is a cantor/song leader, is that person visible? How are the sight-lines?

b. Does the cantor look encouraging or serious? This question of course applies to all liturgical ministers.

c. Do the cantor’s gestures have any genuine connection with the music (dynamic, pitch, articulation) or are they just general gestures? Different styles of music, and different musical phenomena, require correspondingly different gestures.\textsuperscript{11}

d. Are choir and/or cantor obviously part of the liturgical assembly, or do they appear to be a separate, even elite, group?

e. Does the presider sing (or at least appear to be singing)?

f. Do other liturgical ministers (e.g. servers, lectors) appear to be singing?

g. Is the choir director (or cantor) an aid or a distraction?

h. Is the lighting adequate for reading the worship aid? And for illuminating the cantor/song leader?

i. Is the worship aid sufficiently legible? Music is often printed at too small a size by parish staff who see music lines merely as graphics and who do not understand what is required for usability.
j. Is the font size of the text underlay sufficient? The ratio of text size to music notation is not good in the products of some publishers.

What Things Feel Like

Often we can perceive things at a subliminal level, without realizing precisely what it is that is causing the way we feel, both good and bad. The following sample questions try to get “underneath the skin” of the assembly.

a. Was the music too long or too short? For example, did the gospel processional end while the procession was still halfway up the aisle? Was everyone standing, waiting for minutes on end, while the choir finished their piece?

b. Did the music start too late? Many musicians never seem to be ready to begin their introductions at the right psychological moment. Just one second too late and the moment can be lost, so that the mood has to be built up all over again. This is one of the most frequent sins that musicians can commit, and they are often completely unaware of it. Sometimes it can mean that they have become over-preoccupied with the rite, while forgetting their own role in making it work.

c. Or did the music start too soon? Rarer than its counterpart, coming in too quickly before the correct psychological moment can convey an impression of things being rushed.

d. Did the musicians appear interested in the rite or just in the music?

e. Did the musicians appear interested in the assembly, not in the sense of an audience that they can perform to but as a celebrating body of which they themselves are a part and in which they exercise a leadership role?

f. Did the music seem to fit in well with what was happening in the liturgy?
g. Was the balance of music to the other constituents of the rite perceived as correct? This is related to the previous question, but the intent here is to find out whether the liturgy felt, for example, a bit like a spiritual concert with incidental prayers and readings. More on this below.

h. Did the assembly feel in any way manipulated by the musicians? That is, “Are they making us jump through hoops?”

i. Did assembly members feel engaged along with their neighbours? Was there a sense of corporate worship through song, not a collection of individuals who happened to be doing something simultaneously?

j. Did things feel uplifting, prayerful, exciting, at one with the text (or other positive attributes) because of the music, or did the music make them feel the opposite—depressed, ho-hum, at odds with the text, etc.?

k. Is it possible to say whether the meaning of the liturgy at this point was preserved by what took place, or was it in some way altered?

Notice that the answers to some of these questions may vary on different occasions. Here is the commentary on “Music in Christian Celebration” once again:

Except in the case of very large gatherings where the complexity of what is available requires a meticulous observance of the planned chain of events, the most carefully planned order of service must always retain a flexibility in its execution. If it does not, the celebration runs the risk of becoming totally dehumanized. Liturgy is not something mechanical, nor pure spectacle, but the action of real people relating to each other.

The unforeseen can be simple human error. However carefully you prepare, you should always be ready to cope with incidents along the way. There are two possible frames of mind: either adapt intelligently with an understanding smile, or freeze in a wrathful attitude which destroys communion.
One feast of Epiphany, the priest at the beginning of Mass could not manage to pronounce the name of the feast: “The Eniphapy, I mean the Ephipany—no, the Phenip . . .” The cantor, beaming broadly, launched straight into the refrain of the Gloria. The day was saved, and the assembly was bonded together even more closely.

Seriously, though, too rigid an unfolding of the sequence of events can kill the Spirit. How can we know in advance how long the silence should be, or how many verses of the opening song will be needed? How can we know if it will feel right to go straight into the psalm after the reading instead of having a silence for reflection? (That will depend on the content of the reading, the quality of the reader, and the way in which the assembly welcomes the proclaimed Word.) So, every minister must be a listener—listening out for God but also listening out for his or her sisters and brothers.

If ministers truly enter into this basic frame of mind, unforeseen alterations in the programme will even be possible: the organist improvising on a well-known refrain which the homily brought to mind; or the cantor at the end of the celebration initiating the reprise of a refrain which seemed to move the assembly particularly; or even piling up Alleluia upon Alleluia, perhaps because they were rather timidly sung to begin with, or because the context seemed to ask for this resounding repetition.

The unforeseen can also be . . . the unforeseen presence of God!12

A Cautionary Note

This relates to question h. in the final list of questions above. While musicians may well be aiming to mould the taste of the assembly in the long-term, there is a limit to what an assembly should be expected to undergo. This continues to be a living question. A musician can say “I know that if I program a particular piece, there will be an extreme emotional reaction in
the assembly. People will weep openly. So do I have the right to program it? Will I be guilty of manipulating the assembly by tugging at their heartstrings in this way?" One answer might run along these lines: if the piece of music is legitimate and integral to the liturgy it is trying to serve, then it can be used. It would also be important to say that sometimes music in the liturgy can have a therapeutic quality. For example, using music in the liturgy to facilitate the beginning of the grieving process for members of an assembly is perhaps not so much manipulation as a service to the community.

The other side of the coin, however, is that there may be a temptation, having discerned the community’s reactions, to adapt the repertoire to what the community seems to be asking for. “Music in Christian Celebration” deals with this point in the following way:

In seeking to understand the effects resulting from the musical forms that they make use of, those in charge of celebrations are not aiming at adjusting to the taste of their public. They are delimiting the parameters within which the signs and rites of Christian faith can unfold. They notice to what extent different meanings are available or not. Then, in company with their fellow-believers, they search for the forms most suited to celebrating in spirit and in truth.

Perceiving or Receiving

There is another point to consider before we mention some particular areas for analysis. It is this: there is a difference between the assembly perceiving what is happening and the assembly engaging with what is happening. In extreme circumstances, the assembly will form an unfavorable impression of the way in which a piece of music is presented and will, in effect, refuse to take part in it. At the other end of the spectrum, persons in the assembly who have a prejudged idea of how something is going to go, often because of the style of idiom or because it’s in Latin
rather than the vernacular (or vice versa), may find themselves pleasantly surprised by what actually happens.

The point of this is that understanding does not necessarily lead to prayerful participation. It is similar to canon law, where if a particular law is “not received” by the people then it is deemed in practice not to be in force. (This may be the case with a new translation, for example!) In a similar way, music may be understood by the assembly but rejected by it in practice. There will also be cases where the assembly does not really understand the music but nevertheless discovers in it a genuine vehicle for prayer.

Some Examples of Interesting Areas for Study or Analysis

Leaving aside such obvious candidates as musical idiom or instrumentation, the following are some areas that would repay thought. They are not placed in any order of importance. Once again, they are also not about abstract study but about what actually takes place and how it may come across.

Structural Considerations

a. The *balance between sung and spoken elements* in a liturgy. Is there too much music or not enough? Are there too many words? Is the alternation of sung and spoken elements satisfying, with good contrast and not too much of one or the other at any one time?

b. Similar questions, this time concerning *different styles and idioms* used, if there is more than one. In some cases, the use of different musical styles or forms can articulate the structure of the rite—for example, the introductory rites using one style, the Liturgy of the Word another, and the Liturgy of the Eucharist yet another. This is often more satisfying than a selection of different styles seemingly scattered randomly across the service.
c. Similar questions, this time concerning the balance between sung elements in a liturgy and those where there is purely instrumental music. A supplementary question might examine the balance between accompanied and unaccompanied singing.

d. Perhaps most important of all: similar questions concerning the balance between sound and silence. It is often silence that is most lacking in liturgies. In part this is because it needs to be created or prepared for, in part because people need to become accustomed to it where it has not been the custom previously. Both these aspects would form the subject of a different extended essay on ‘liturgical technique’ and alas cannot be adequately covered here.

Pacing and Dynamic

Here, under the heading of “pacing” we are looking at the relative speeds of different liturgical elements, spoken as well as sung, as well as at the “gaps” between different elements (with obvious connections to the topic of silence already mentioned above). Do things move quickly or slowly? Is everything done at high speed, interminably slowly, or just at the same, dull, uninteresting plod throughout? Is there sufficient contrast between the pace of those elements that need to keep moving or are upbeat and those that need more time and space and a slower pace to enable them to have their full impact? Are sections of the rite allowed to finish properly before moving on the next section? (Good examples would be the amount of audible space left between the end of the opening prayer of the Mass and the introduction to the first reading, or between the last notes of the Great Amen and the beginning of the introduction to the Lord’s Prayer.)

The question of tempo is obviously related to acoustic considerations (more on this below), but it can also depend on the sensitivity of the musician. To put it very crudely: How are the people feeling? What sort of mood are they in? How have they
been affected by the latest news, good or bad? Or the barometric pressure today? Or the brilliant homily? These and many other factors can require subtle alterations of mood and tempo. They require the musician to be a true servant-minister, tuning in to where people are at any given time.

Similar considerations affect the area of dynamics. Volume may need adjusting along with pace. A celebration where everything is *mezzo forte*—or more often *forte*!—can be a deadening experience. Sometimes this problem will be brought about because of instrumentation: an organist who consistently plays too loudly or an instrumental group where everyone plays the whole blessed time, with no light and shade.

**Subliminal Messages**

This is the area where we do not necessarily perceive the cause of what we experience, but we experience it anyway.

a. The *physical environment* can be a major factor. How is the church arranged? Where are the musicians positioned in relation to the assembly and the sanctuary? What signals are these layouts giving?

b. Another factor can be *acoustics*. We can’t see them, but they are vital to consider. Is the space good for singing? Are there sufficient reflective surfaces? Do the musicians make allowances for differences in acoustics due to variations in the number of people in the building? Many musicians know that in a very resonant acoustic it may sometimes be necessary to take things at a slower tempo to achieve clarity, but often this can be death to the music because it then sags. There is a great temptation to “wallow” in a resonant acoustic, and this must be resisted. All of this can be alleviated by a skilled cantor at a microphone and/or a skilled organist who knows the techniques for keeping assemblies moving. Under such guidance assemblies can generally sing more quickly than one would think, whatever the acoustic, and the music will have life.
But a dry acoustic can cause problems too, especially with music that is more reflective, even contemplative. The acoustic itself cannot provide the “bloom” that the music needs to be truly prayerful. Many musicians do not realize that in a dry acoustic such reflective pieces actually need to be taken at a slower tempo than one would think (but not too much slower!) in order to give the music a chance to “pray.” Failing to do this can once again make things appear to be rushed, even though metronome markings are being scrupulously followed.

c. A third factor that is seldom considered is body language, which gives off strong subliminal signals. What is the cantor’s posture like? (This question applies to all liturgical ministers, of course.) Does nervousness lead to a stiffness that results in a corresponding reaction from the assembly? Unease on the part of the music minister communicates itself instantly to the assembly. Or does overconfidence produce a different reaction? Does the choir look sloppy? What difference does the type of clothing worn by cantors and choirs make? Can a robed choir come across as being an elite group? Facial expressions are crucial. Ministers need “open” faces. Choirs and cantors can be concentrating so hard on their music that their faces become very serious, if not actually forbidding. And that in turn has an effect on the kind of vocal tone that they produce.

d. A fourth area can be what might be termed liturgical double entendres.

One simple example: in its translation of Psalm 19:3, the ICEL Psalter has the following:

Day carries the story to day,
night brings the message to night.15

While this may be fine on the printed page, to the hearer without the text at hand it sounds like:
Day carries the story today,
night brings the message tonight,

which is far from the psalmist’s intention and makes the verse sound like a news bulletin! When sung, it is impossible to articulate this text in such a way that the actual meaning is made clear.

The same kind of thing can happen in musical terms—for example, introductions that mislead people into thinking that a different piece is beginning or that do not clearly and unambiguously show them when to come in. Some pieces contain rather explicit reminiscences of other pieces. But ambiguities can be caused in performance by wrong notes and incorrect rhythms as well as by compositional flaws. They can also be caused by misleading gestures (or lack of necessary gestures) on the part of the cantor or song leader. Double entendres lead to confusion and misinterpretation. We need to be on the lookout for them.

e. A fifth area for consideration would encompass the relationship of music to posture and action. Some music is designed to be sung while seated, other pieces to be sung standing. Yet other pieces are designed to accompany movement or dance, or everyone walking in procession. And yet we tend to use them rather indiscriminately. For example, the kinds of music required for a responsorial psalm after the first reading and a communion procession are distinctly different, even though both may make use of the antiphon + psalm verses form and thus look superficially the same.

Musicians are generally not very aware of this dimension, and they will tend to drop pieces “into slots” because they like them, without thinking about the bodily aspect of what is to take place.

f. Finally there is the whole area of flexibility—leaving room for the Holy Spirit to take charge, if you like.
It can happen that, listening to the homily, it becomes very clear that the hymn or song selected for the presentation of the gifts would be better replaced by another that better reflects where the homilist has in fact taken the community. Being able to do such last-minute substitutions without fuss—and perhaps even without the assembly’s awareness—is part of the art of truly pastoral musicians. A whispered aside to the organist or instrumentalists during the profession of faith or intercessions, provided it is done discreetly and without fuss, is all that is needed. When I was learning to be an altar server at High Mass, one of the skills we were taught was how, while facing the people, to talk to the server standing or sitting alongside without moving the lips or the head. Perhaps this is also a skill for pastoral musicians!

Using a piece of Taizé music is another opportunity. Although the various vocal and instrumental descants may be available and have been rehearsed, it is best not to program them too rigidly but rather to use them as seems appropriate while the piece is in progress. It should not be possible to say how many repetitions of the music will take place; the rule for this music is that it lasts as long as the prayer lasts—and that can be a very long time or a comparatively short time, depending on context, mood, and many other factors.

A growing number of pieces in our repertoire have built-in congregational mistakes, where the people may sing a wrong note or a few and it still fits. It may be a refrain that has two different endings that nevertheless fit together, or it may be a canon or round where if you get lost you simply go back to the beginning and start again. This is the kind of thing that inspires confidence in the assembly. They haven’t come to church for a music lesson; they have come to pray and praise. And when allowances of this kind are habitually provided, it enables them to feel comfortable and not constrained. In this way, music may truly act as a bonding agent for the community.16

In the area of flexibility, the key is not just to program it in but to evaluate it afterwards.
Conclusion

And indeed that is the basic message of this entire chapter: a liturgy without a review post factum is in fact incomplete. For major celebrations such as Christmas, the Holy Week liturgies, patronal feasts, and Thanksgiving, such review should be a sine qua non. Not every liturgy requires such detailed analysis, but it is good to get into the habit of doing it on a regular basis and as a team. Input should be provided from all those responsible for “running” the liturgy, but it should also seek to include input from those in the pews. Starting with major celebrations can establish a good working practice that is easily transferable into the weekly celebrations. This will pay dividends a hundredfold, and it will foster the genuine spiritual growth of our people.

Notes


2. CARA is the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, a research center based at Georgetown University that “conducts social scientific studies about the Catholic Church.”


4. A full bibliography of Prof. Stefani’s work may be found online at: http://www.zam.it/biografia_Gino_Stafani.


6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. It is even proper to question whether the function of a particular liturgical element is actually correct. Sometimes, it can appear that the way the rite has been designed is not the most helpful for the rite’s apparent purpose, or even that the purpose itself is in need of adjustment.
10. Ibid., 103–4.
11. This marks one of the noticeable differences between cantors trained in the United States and their European counterparts. US cantors use one or two basic gestures only; Europeans use a whole range of gestures depending on the specific music being sung.
13. If this adjective seems a little bizarre, read the chapter “Liturgy as Humanizing or as Therapeutic” in James Empereur, *Exploring the Sacred* (Washington, DC: The Pastoral Press, 1987, 85–96), which, while not dealing with the specific point here, does explore a phenomenological model of liturgy that can take us beyond or outside of ourselves.
16. See, for example, GIRM 46–47 concerning the purposes of the introductory rites and the entrance song.