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(<http://www.amazon.com/Adventures-In-Music-Culture-Ethnomusicologist/dp/1620200376>). You can also read his thesis about the use of Vodún song genres in Beninese churches here: <http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/3158/>.

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The discipline of ethnomusicology is by no means limited to the study of non-Western musics. The recent edited volume *Christian Congregational Music* bears testimony to this truly global scope of inquiry, as it examines a range of themes and issues in a mostly Western context, all loosely connected under the theme expressed in its title. Some chapters are more ethnomusicological than others, but all are challenging, stimulating, and inspiring. The book's three sections—*Performing Theology*, *Interplay of Identities*, and *Experience and Embodiment*—comprise twelve chapters covering a diverse range of themes and concepts. From the earthy, graphic descriptions of the crucifixion in Moravian hymnody (Chapter 9) to a somewhat quirky comparison between the Anglican Church and bossa nova music (Chapter 4), this book has something for everyone. It is not a particularly light read, but it is thought-provoking, providing rich insights into a broad range of worship contexts across the globe.

As a specialist in contextualizing the arts and redeeming so-called “worldly culture,” I was particularly fascinated by Kinga Povedák's chapter describing tensions within the Hungarian Catholic Church over introducing rock-based sacred music into its services. Commencing in socialist Hungary in the 1950s, Povedák's narrative vividly describes the political and ecclesiastical environment in which this “Christian popular music” entered the worship life of the church. She gives a balanced view of opinions for and against its usage: the argument of popular music being unworthy or unspiritual, as well as the idea that a new believer should leave behind all worldly musical influences. One Hungarian opponent of popular music in church makes claims familiar to the “worship warriors” of the past two decades, that “Christ . . . attracts sinners, not dancing feet” (Tóth 1969, 102); there is a “lack of theological content” in these new songs; deteriorating musical taste is a means by which “that which is ugly—a feature of the devil!—invades our lives” (Czakó 2009).

While living in West Africa, I researched and wrote a thesis on “The Appropriation of Vodún Song Genres for Christian Worship in the Benin Republic.” I encountered similar viewpoints opposing the use of these apparently pagan song styles. Fears that adopting song genres associated with Vodún would bring evil into the church were spoken by several people, as though the music itself had the power to somehow change the spiritual climate of the church. However, overwhelming evidence from the congregants showed that this music could be purified, redeemed, and used for God's glory, provided certain guidelines were adhered to. Furthermore, the advantages of using this music were clear: many had converted from Vodún to Christianity, often because they had heard the Gospel message communicated in their own “heart music,” and so it made sense to them. Some Beninese churches experienced vast growth and attributed this, in part, to the use of



these contextualized art forms in their services.

We see the same effect at work in Hungary. According to Istaván Kamarás, one evangelistic movement during the late 1960s and early 1970s “was embedded in popular music” and consequently “[t]he number of young people attending catechism classes multiplied in several dozen places” (Kamarás 2003, 90, 94). Kamarás goes on to say that church attendance grew significantly due to the introduction of “guitar masses” and that “[t]here has not been such major activity in church music among the young people in centuries”—a powerful testimony of the role of inculturated worship in encouraging church attendance and a living faith.

Deborah Smith Pollard places these debates in the context of the church in the United States, in her chapter “The Rise of Praise and Worship Music in the Black Church in the US.” This chapter (second in the book) states that praise and worship music is often incorporated “as a ‘new layer’ that enhances rather than replaces the . . . rituals that already exist within the Black Church” (34). Thus, a *mélange* of old and new emerges to meet the needs of the entire congregation, resulting in what Smith Pollard describes as “a devotional mode that meets the spiritual demands and musical needs of many contemporary Black congregations” (34). The chapter begins with an outline of what the term “praise and worship” music means to the Black American church, quoting pastor and author Myles Munroe, who states that praise means “putting God in first place” and that “worship is what praise is all about: seeking God until He graces us with His presence” (Munroe 2000, 62). The author then speaks of the Black church’s West African cultural heritage and the effect this has had on its worship traditions. Spirit possession, ecstatic dance, and ring shouts are just some of the culturally significant practices carried over into North American worship. Another clear example is lining out, where the leader chants a small section of the hymn, which is then echoed by the congregation—a practice which has much in common with West African call and response singing, as well as ties to historical traditions in British Isles hymnody.

There then follow three case studies of Black churches in Detroit, Michigan, which now blend old and new. For a range of reasons, these churches have adopted praise and worship music, but without entirely discarding the more traditional songs. First, at Greater Christ Temple Church, a variety of styles is incorporated, in order to cater for the different musical tastes of those in the congregation. This includes praise and worship, gospel songs, and traditional devotional music. Second, at Saint James Missionary Baptist Church a conscious decision has been made to retain some of the more traditional songs for the sake of the older members who, the pastor believes, “will never become fans of praise and worship” and who “need to be reached where they are” (44). The final case study is Perfecting Church, founded by the renowned Marvin L. Winans, who is determined to keep an eclectic mix of musical genres in the services, provided it is music “that edifies, speaks the truth, exhorts and worships God” (46).

One final chapter I would like to highlight is chapter 10, “Worship, Transcendence and Danger,” in which Martin D. Stringer examines how modern-day churches have become safe places of predictability, blandness, and uniformity, which have lost their sense of mystery, danger and transcendence in God’s presence. This he likens first to a hotel lobby, a concept introduced by Siegfried Kracauer in 1927. He underlines the “uniform blandness” of the lobby, which “does not refer beyond itself” and “does not aspire to the sublime.” In both venues, Kracauer states, “differences between people disappear because these beings all have one and the same destiny” (Kracauer 2004, 36).

Later in the chapter, Stringer brings in a second analogy: a shopping mall, which is designed to “take shoppers away from the real world and focus their attention specifically on the act of shopping.” He continues, saying

that a shopping mall is also “a space that is secure; all the pain and troubles of the world are excluded. It is safe!” The contemporary congregation, Stringer claims, has become like the lobby or the mall, having “gained something from these kinds of environment.” This, he states, is the reason why much of the mystery has been lost in the worship life of mainline churches. This kind of cultural liturgy is also referred to in Ron Man’s review in this journal (Man 2014) of James K. A. Smith’s *Desiring the Kingdom*, which describes the shopping mall as “a place of worship for a particular brand of consumerist religion” and includes in the same category stadiums, film, and television.

One final analogy compares the American Catholic Mass to an urban dinner party, quoting Aidan Kavanagh’s assertion that the church has lost the sense of danger which is felt in the presence of the transcendent. Adam and Eve, the burning bush, the Ten Commandments and the transfiguration are all mentioned as biblical moments of transcendence in which there would have been fear and danger. In practice, however, church has become anything but this. Describing his visit to a Catholic church in Worcestershire, UK, Stringer speaks of “a competent organist and a small choir,” but says that “the music itself is merely background, without any real sonic identity” (178). Furthermore, the hymns “are sung without much enthusiasm,” although there is “a friendly atmosphere” and “a good range of social and extra-liturgical activities” in the church (178). This is the epitome of Kavanagh’s suburban dinner party: “comfortable, secure . . . setting the worship apart from the danger and horrors of the world” (178).

Stringer cites two contexts of worship where he did experience a sense of transcendence—and therefore danger. The first was in a leper colony in Tanzania, where indigenous melodies were sung in a call and response style, and accompanied by local drums. He admits that it may merely have been the novelty and contrast of this kind of worship which caused him to experience a sense of the dangerous. The second example is a church in Kent, UK, which held a somewhat unconventional worship service in which music was provided by a jazz band improvising around the melodies. There were no chairs and no formal structure to the service, which included free prayer, speaking in tongues and people “mov[ing] around the space praising and thanking God” (180). It was dangerous because of its spontaneity, openness, and lack of structure, all of which would allow God to move in powerful and unpredictable ways.

He concludes by warning of the hazards of bringing the shopping mall or hotel lobby effect into the church’s worship. Creating “separated commercialized ‘safe places,’” says Stringer, is not the best way; rather, we need to think about what songs to sing, focus on Christ, and value the human person (182). This goes against what much of modern society is doing, but I see his point. Returning from several years in Africa, I remember being deeply shocked at how safe the UK church seemed in comparison to what I had known in Africa—almost as if the churches were social clubs which occasionally mentioned God, rather than boiler rooms for the Holy Spirit to move, changing hearts and minds.

All three chapters referred to in this review challenge the church to change in order to reach out to the world and to allow God to move. Every church needs to consider the content of its worship, the effect this has on its mission—and then modify its practices accordingly. We have seen how the introduction of popular songs in Hungarian churches had a dramatic and positive effect upon youth outreach and commitment. And bringing new songs into Black churches in Michigan (whilst retaining some of the old) has allowed all members to worship in a more inclusive and meaningful way. And finally, our challenge is to change how we “do church” so that churches do not become clinical, “safe” places where God is unable to move in power.

I recommend Christian Congregational Music to anyone who would like to be inspired with new concepts in church music, and maybe have their current perceptions of worship challenged. From a global point of view, I would have liked to see articles covering a wider geography than just North America and Europe. However, it is an intriguing volume, offering an array of fascinating and thought-provoking articles.

References

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