Studying Congregational Music: Key Issues, Methods, and Theoretical Perspectives

Music Theology as the Mouthpiece of Science: Proving it through Congregational Music Studies

Bennett Zon

Daniel Chua describes music as 'the Mouthpiece of Theology' in an important contribution to a collection of essays edited by Jeremy Begbie and Steve Guthrie called *Resonant Witness* (2011).[1] For Chua writing on music is by definition an act of ventriloquism, but theology is a particularly beleaguered dummy because modern and postmodern musicology is governed by the methodologically hostile precepts of scientific materialism[2] – the 'anti-theological discourses of the ventriloquists.'[3] Chua paints a prophetically bleak picture of science's historical role in the spiritual deracination of music yet he also emplots a narrative full of hope for what has become increasingly known as Music Theology – a method of interpreting music *as* theology: 'After all,' he opines, 'music is inherently relational, both internally in the way its notes are put together and externally in the way in which it is used to communicate in everyday life. A relational discourse on music would replace the gap of alienation native to monistic thought.'[4] Maeve Heaney is more direct, writing in *Music as Theology: What Music Has to Say about the Word* (2012): ''Music as theology' is, I admit, a rather pretentious title . . . [but] If theology is "faith seeking understanding," could music not also be theological? Does it not offer us, at the very least, a form of understanding our faith, and perhaps even an aid in attaining and entering into that faith? The conviction underlying this book is that it can – that music offers a form of approach to or comprehension of faith that

[1] Daniel K. L. Chua, 'Music as the Mouthpiece of Theology', in Jeremy S. Begbie and Steven R. Guthrie (eds.), *Resonant Witness: Conversations Between Music and Theology*, Grand Rapids MI and Cambridge UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011, 137-161.
[2] Chua, 'Music as the Mouthpiece of Theology', 159.
[3] Chua, 'Music as the Mouthpiece of Theology', 159.
[4] Chua, 'Music as the Mouthpiece of Theology', 160-161.

is different to our linguistic and conceptual understanding of the same, and for that very reason is complementary to it, in theological discourse.'[5]

When Chua addresses the role science plays in systemically disempowering theology he touches upon one of many strains of relationality in the history of science and religion, including conflict, independence, dialogue, integration and even necessity,[6] if Michael Hanby is to be believed, and he uses them to illustrate endemic musicological self-deprivation: 'If God relates to the world,' he suggests, 'then the divorce between the natural and the supernatural that has bedevilled modernity cannot be sustained. Indeed, if God *relates* to the world, then knowledge itself ought to focus on the *relational* rather than merely the *rational* in search for reconciliation. Music understood in relational terms would be very different from its modern definition.'[7] But there is a piece missing from Chua's argument that this chapter aims to fill. Chua may consider music the mouthpiece of theology, but he does not consider the possibility that theology – and, as this chapter argues, Music Theology therefore – can ventriloquize science. Indeed, according to the many theologians discussed below theology *is* the mouthpiece of science, and this chapter uses Congregational Music Studies to prove it. Methodologically, Congregational Music Studies is largely ethnomusicological (and therefore socio-anthropological) in disciplinary complexion, but its relation to theology and Music Theology has never been systematically investigated. This chapter is a first attempt, exploring Congregational Music Studies as a branch of Music Theology, and Music Theology as branch of science. Based on the organisational structure of scientific method, broadly imagined through five sequentially related sections, it argues that methodologically Congregational Music Studies is therefore theological science, or what Alister McGrath, Thomas Torrance and others call scientific theology. Section 1,

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[5] Maeve Louise Heaney, *Music as Theology: What Music Has to Say about the Word*, Eugene OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012, 1.
[6] Ian G. Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion: Enemies, Strangers, or Partners?*, New York: HarperCollins, 2000.
[7] Chua, 'Music as the Mouthpiece of Theology', 159.

'Observation', explores theology as science; section 2, 'Hypothesis', Music Theology as science; section 3, 'Experiment', Congregational Music Studies as Music Theology; section 4, 'Analysis', Congregational Music Studies as natural theology; and lastly section 5, 'Findings' concludes with reflections on subtle distinctions in the theological and scientific approaches of Music Theology and Congregational Music Studies for theology and science.

1. Observation: Theology as Science

If Music Theology is the mouthpiece of science then the science of theology, or theology *as* science, can be observed as an underpinning methodological proposition. The science of theology appears to be a relatively recent trope in literature on the history of debates between religion and science, yet its methodological substance probes the most fundamentally observable facts about the nature and history of nature. Theologian and historian of science Alister McGrath calls it the science of god, or scientific theology. The science of God is observed having several characteristics, first and foremost of which is a fully integrated system of ideas; for McGrath its defining feature is an entire system capable of achievements which 'transcended the capacities of any one element.'[8] As science Christian theology does this by not only claiming ownership of systematic methodologies which can be utilized and self-reflexively interrogated, but by applying them to our understanding of the natural world and creation. The science of theology, in other words, is not a means to an end, nor an end in itself, but a means to a beginning 'with its own sense of identity, place and purpose'.[9] Theologian and philosopher of science Michael Hanby defends the existence of scientific theology by claiming that science itself often fails to recognize the metaphysical – and even theological – underpinnings of its own methodology. He claims that science deludes itself into thinking that nature can be studied objectively

[8] Alastair McGrath, *The Science of God: An Introduction to Scientific Theology*, London and New York: T&T Clark International, 2004, 11.
[9] McGrath, *Science of God*, 13.

when the subject (a scientist) is part of its object (nature); that science, like theology, cannot study nature without tacitly defining what nature is not (i.e., God); and that because, historically, scientists believed they *can* study nature objectively, and *can* practice science without God, modern scientists often lack the kind of theological literacy necessary to make sustainable claims about the relationship of science and theology.[10] A good example, frequently cited, is Richard Dawkins and his emblematic book *The God Delusion* (2006).

The combination of these factors leads to what Hanby calls an extrinsicist, or oppositional, reading of the dynamic relationship between the methodologies undergirding science and religion – not unlike Steven Jay Gould's concept of 'nonoverlapping magisteria'[11] or what Ian Barbour might categorize as 'independence';[12] in other words, science and religion operating in entirely separate, unrelated methodological domains. Conversely, advocates of scientific theology or the theology of science (researchers in congregational music studies, I will later argue) usually find themselves adopting a theory of some kind of 'overlapping magisteria' instead, debunking ideas which diminish or denigrate overlap, integration, dialogue, consonance, mutuality, interdisciplinarity, assimilation and other forms of meaningful commonality. This is more than ideological posturing because it shows that scientific theologians, or theological scientists in as many words, subscribe to complexity theory to explain the relationship between religion and science that 'nonoverlapping' scientists themselves eschew as unscientific. As Simon Oliver observes, the relationship between science and theology 'is very complex. No longer can we assume a straightforward antagonism, but neither is a simple rapprochement appropriate.'[13] Using complexity theory, Oliver makes an astute scientific observation about the limits of scientific observation in the process; namely, that scientific observation fails in its own terms when it

[10] Michael Hanby, *No God, No Science?: Theology, Cosmology, Biology*, Maldon MA and Oxford UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, 17-21.
[11] Steven Jay Gould, 'Nonoverlapping Magisteria', *Natural History* 106 (March 1997), 16–22.
[12] Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion*, 17.
[13] Simon Oliver, Cr*eation: A Guide for the Perplexed*, London et al: Bloomsbury, 2017, 131.

is methodologically predetermined to find teleologically-reinforced explanations of natural phenomenon: the heart beats, for example, in order to pump blood around the body; why it beats is referred to neuroscience. According to scientific theology, efficient causal processes are not only confused for explanations, the explanations themselves inadvertently impose peculiarly unnecessary limitations on 'God's gift of 'freedom' to his creation.'[14] That is not to suggest that scientific method should be abrogated to arrive at theological conclusions, but that, according to scientific theology, the scientific method itself is integral to God's gift of creation.

2. Hypothesis: Music Theology as Science

The gift of God's creation is, arguably, at the very root of Music Theology because music is uniquely placed to *enact* theological wisdom[15] in the same way science is: Music Theology is, in fact, science. Nevertheless, as Daniel Chua so ably illustrates Music Theology is seriously and endemically distrusted by a modern musicology born of a late nineteenth-century scientific (comparative socio-anthropological) mindset. That mindset exhibits methodological presumptions remarkably similar to those criticised by Simon Oliver for teleologically predetermining explanations of efficient causal processes – presumptions, I believe, created by artificially imposing ideological limits on the range of disciplines deemed to be scientifically acceptable.

Post-war musicology described itself in 1955 as 'a field of knowledge, having as its object the investigation of the art of music as a physical, psychological, aesthetic and cultural phenomenon. The musicologists is a research scholar and he aims at knowledge about music.'[16] That definition has changed very little substantively despite an explosion in the use

[14] John Polikinghorne, *Science and Christian Belief: Theological Reflections of a Bottom-Up Thinker*, The Gifford Lectures for 1993-4, London: SPCK, 1994, 79.
[15] Jeremy Begbie, *Theology Music and Time*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 5.
[16] Archibold T. Davidson et al, *[American Musicological Society] Report of the Committee of Graduate Studies* (1955), cited in Bruno Nettl, 'The Institutionalization of American Musicology: Perspectives of

of methodologies understandably critical of the pseudo-authority underpinning critically outmoded approaches. By 2006 it had become cliché, for example, to observe changes in methodological paradigms invoking the language of extra-musicological disciplines, including contingency, plurality, locality, difference, heterogeneity, dissemination, iterability and semiosis,[17] yet in musicological contexts the application of those and more recent terms today simply mirrors the range of methodological determinisms in their source discipline, whatever they might be. In 1991 Joseph Kerman, father of what is called 'the New Musicology', benignly called it 'grafting',[18] but grafting creates its own methodological problems. To paraphrase translation theorist Lawrence Venuti, modern musicology, I maintain, 'domesticates' the foreignness of its disciplinary translations, and creates the illusion that the musicologist (the translator of disciplines) is actually disciplinarily invisible.[19] To use Chua's terminology the musicologist ventriloquizes other disciplines. Of course, doing this creates and reinforces the illusion of egalitarian interdisciplinarity because invisibility creates a sense of disciplinary dis- or un-ownership. Venuti raises an ethical objection to domesticating translation precisely for this reason, but as will be shown below musicology, conversely, seems to embrace – or even excuse – the musicologist's invisibility as a disciplinarily favourable mode of interdisciplinarity. While understandably reducing the presence of boundaries like humanities and sciences,[20] it also comes with an epistemic paradox, however, because musicology is interdisciplinarily selective. The recently founded *Journal of Interdisciplinary Musicology* is indicative, inviting articles utilizing the widest possible selection of musicological disciplines and subdisciplines yet omitting one of the

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a North American Ethnomusicologist', Nick Cook and Mark Everist (eds.), Rethinking Music, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999/2010, 294.

[17] Giles Hooper, *The Discourse of Musicology*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006, 5.

[18] Joseph Kerman, 'American Musicology in the 1990s', *The Journal of Musicology* 9/2 (1991), 132.

[19] See Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, London and New York: Routledge, 1995/2018.

[20] Julie Thompson Klein and Richard Parncutt, 'Art and Music Research', in Robert Frodeman, Julie Thompson Klein, Carl Mitcham and J. Britt Holbrook (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 133.

most incontestably important disciplines of all: theology. According to its website 'the journal accepts original submissions associated with

- all subdisciplines or paradigms of musicology, including analytical, applied, comparative, cultural, empirical, ethnological, historical, popular, scientific, systematic and theoretical, and
- all musically relevant disciplines, including acoustics, aesthetics, anthropology, archeology, art history and theory, biology, cognitive sciences, composition, computing, cultural studies, economics, education, engineering, ethnology, gender studies, history, linguistics, literary studies, mathematics, medicine, music theory and analysis, neurosciences, perception, performance, philosophy, physiology, popular music, prehistory, psychoacoustics, psychology, religious studies, semiotics, sociology, sport, statistics, [theology,] and therapy.'[21]

The present absence – i.e, the systemic disciplinary exclusion – of theology from musicology, and the creeping disciplinary invisibility of a 'pure' disciplinary musicologist goes hand in hand to create a seriously disempowering methodological obstacle for the nascent field of Music Theology. So how can the (Music-Theological) subaltern speak, as it were, if it has no voice within musicology and the voice of disciplinary musicology is itself diminishing in volume? The answer is that Music Theology can speak as science – as scientific theology. Indeed, Music Theology *is* the mouthpiece of science.

If Music Theology is scientific theology it is scientific because it conforms to scientific methodology in three ways: (1) it is a fully integrated system of ideas capable of achievements which transcend the capacities of any one element; (2) it openly interrogates the subjective nature of its own observations; and (3) its hypotheses can be systematically tested. More broadly it conforms to what Thomas Torrance describes in *Reality and Scientific Theology* (2001) as 'a human enterprise working with revisable formulations in a manner not unlike that of an axiomatic science operating with fluid axioms'.[22] As we have seen in the *Journal of Interdisciplinary Musicology*, however, the human enterprise which is

[21] https://musicstudies.org/about/, accessed 20/12/2018. Very recently Thompson Klein and Parncutt largely replicate this list and include 'religious studies' (i.e., the anthropology of music) but not theology (*The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity*, 138).
[22] Thomas F. Torrance, *Reality and Scientific Theology*, Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001, xiv.

Music Theology is also ostricized by scientists (musicologists) for being purely theological, and that is reason enough to ostracize it from disciplinary or even subdisciplinary categories of musicology. But musicology, like the sciences it tries to imitate, bases its own critical hypothesis about Music Theology – that it is theology, not science – on a classic methodological confusion over the theological understanding of efficient causal processes and the disciplinarily embodied action it performs. The heart may beat to pump blood, but Christians do not 'musick' (to use Chris Small's term) to prove that God exists. They 'musick' to praise God in an embodied act of performance – an action – and they theologize to test the nature of that experience. Chris Small implies this when he claims that the interrelationships created by musicking 'model, or stand as metaphor for, ideal relationships as the participants in the performance imagine them to be: relationships between person and person, between individual and society, between humanity and the natural world and even perhaps the supernatural world.[23] Music Theologians effectively musick *through* the scientific performance of theology. Perhaps more accurately they are 'Musick Theologians' – or even Scientifick Musick Theologians – and this is where the source of some musicological disagreement truly lies. Some musicologists probably believe that theology simply cannot be performed and because it cannot be studied as performance it cannot be legitimately studied musicologically (i.e., scientifically). By definition something intrinsically unable to be performed can never be musical – to be musical it must have the capacity to be performed – yet as Philip Stoltzfus so compelling proves in *Theology As Performance: Music, Aesthetics, and God in Western Thought* (2006) not only is there music *as* theology, there is also theology *as* performance; as he opines, 'Music is about a performance taking place, and about each of us playing our part in the performance. And theology, too, is about a

[23] Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*, Hanover NH: University Press of New England, 1998, 13.

performance taking place, and about each of us finding our voice in the cooperative movement of keeping the song alive.'[24]

3. Experiment: Congregational Music Studies as Music Theology

If are our ultimate aim is to prove that Congregational Music Studies is a theological science 'in the cooperative movement of keeping the song alive', we must first test its relationship to Music Theology. In the previous section I hypothesized that Music Theology is the mouthpiece of science because it subscribes to the same methodological principles as science, but because some musicologists reject the idea that theology can be scientific they also reject the idea that theology (and therefore Music Theology) can be performed like music or conducted like a scientific experiment. But how exactly does Music Theology perform theologically, and why is it important for Congregational Music Studies? The forthcoming *Oxford Handbook of Music and Christian Theology* gives us a terminological steer. It defines Music Theology as a methodologically scientific field that *performs* by systematically exploring a range of both theoretical and practical topics *that are themselves theologically performing objects* – objects performed in the same creative spirit any self-respecting performer gives a score, or any scientist an experiment. Theoretical performances might include (1) theological methods like mystagogy or natural theology; philosophical methods like epistemology or semiotics; and musicological methods like analysis or ethnomusicology; and (2) key doctrinal concepts like revelation and the Trinity; philosophical concepts like aesthetics and time; liturgical concepts like sacrament and the heavenly body; or experiential concepts like performance, the voice and instrument. Not unrelatedly practical performances might comprise (1) contextual issues in lived histories like the biblical world or the Reformation; special issues like the city and digital media; and

[24] Philip E. Stolzfus, *Theology as Performance: Music, Aesthetics and God in Modern Theology*, London and New York: T&T Clarke, 2006, x.

issues over movement such as diaspora and mobilities; (2) interpretative communities like Pentecostalism and MegaChurches; institutional communities like national or monastic churches; or issues surrounding communities in practice like choral cultures and leadership; or (3) issues revolving around human action like listening and dancing, inclusion and violence, or worship and prayer.

A representative performance of Music Theology comes in Don Saliers's *Music and Theology* (2007). Saliers observes firstly that 'Each of the human senses plays a constituent role in the formation and expression of a theologically determined spirituality'.[25] He then hypothesizes that 'Synaesthesia (the engagement of several senses, triggered by one of them) is required for spiritual maturation';[26] and finally tests his hypothesis through a systematic theological exploration of musical embodiment – an exploration he himself defines 'as a set of practices— whether in writing or in speech, whether in the systematic setting forth of specific doctrines, or in hymns, sermons, prayers, or formulated creeds and confessions of faith.'[27] Saliers's Music Theology experiment is important not just because it conforms to scientific method, but because the scientific method it exemplifies is itself a type of performance that can, ostensibly, be held musicologically accountable under the universally acceptable rubrics of musicking. Congregational Music Studies performs not dissimilarly, even if its theologically performing objects are differently configured by ethnomusicological practice. Congregational Music Studies, for example, has always embraced theology openly – evidence, for example, the third part of the first book in Ingalls's Congregational Music Studies series, 'Embodied Sonic Theologies' – but because of the methodological centrality it gives fieldwork its performance appears to musicology to be more demonstrably embodied than Music Theology's. Music Theology is like active listening – conceptual and intellectual, less embodied, physically noticeable or verifiable; whereas

[25] Don E. Saliers, *Music and Theology*, Nashville TN: Abingdon Press: 2007, Kindle location 143-144.
[26] Saliers, *Music and Theology*, 274-276.
[27] Saliers, *Music and Theology*, 423-425.

Congregational Music Studies is like active singing – more noticeably embodied, physically obvious and verifiable. Anna Nekola highlights the difference when she describes the synergistic nature of the subject and object of fieldwork underpinning in ethnomusicological methodologies of Congregational Music Studies. Congregational Music Studies extrapolates meaning, she suggests, through the examination of practice in communities, societies and cultures of music-making observed through active (embodied, physical, verifiable) fieldwork observing equally and easily embodied, physical and verifiable action in the field: 'Part of congregational music's meanings', she maintains, 'come from its words and the denotative message it communicates; however, music is also a media form *around which* we create meaning, both individually and socially, and thus music can be a means of mediation and communication.'[28]

The methodological distinction in the way Music Theology and Congregational Musical Studies perform is important because it enshrines an ultimately useful disciplinary dissonance: that, from the standpoint of musicology, as branch of Music Theology Congregational Music Studies can be both science (anthropology) and not science (religion), whereas Music Theology can only and always be theology. Yet if the outcome of our experiment suggests that Congregational Music Studies is genuinely related to Music Theology because it performs like theological science why is there disciplinary resistance to one and not the other? What can't Music Theology be science just like Congregational Music Studies? The answer lies partly in musicology's congenital fear of treating theology as science (as Chua suggests) and partly in its fear of treating theology as performance (as I suggest). But there is another, possibly even greater prejudice-producing anxiety: the fear that Music Theology is actually trying to proselytise, where Congregational Music Studies is

[28] Anna Nekola and Tom Wagner, 'Worship Media as Media Form and Mediated Practice: Theorizing the Intersections of Media, Music and Lived Religion', in *Congregational Music-Making and Community in a Mediated Age*, Ashgate: Farnham, 2015, 2-3.

trying to explain; that Music Theology is not about understanding but belief,[29] and as such should be systemically excluded from the objectivity-sacrosanct academy, however that might be defined. This is an almost understandable disciplinary response to the fear of religious movements that either passively or proactively conflate understanding and belief, and problematize the performative nature of their work as Christian mission.[30] Paul Neeley's classic definition of ethnodoxology does nothing to alleviate those musicological fears: 'Ethnodoxology is the theological and anthropological study, and practical application, of how every cultural group might use its unique and diverse artistic expressions appropriately to worship the God of the Bible';[31] nor does the biographical description of the Society for Christian Scholar in Music, 'an association of scholars interested in exploring the intersections of Christian faith and musical scholarship. We are an ecumenical association, reflecting the world-wide diversity of Christian traditions, and seeking to learn from scholars outside those traditions. *As scholars of Christian convictions* [author's italics] we are dedicated to excellence in all our work as musicologists, theorists, ethnomusicologists and theologians.'[32] Rather than hindering, however, these tensions actually help forge an opportunity for Congregational Music Studies as a branch of Music Theology – to provide material evidence without the need to give Christian testimony or witness (to let the evidence speak for itself); to study theology as religion, and as such to be musicologically accepted as a ethnomusicological science. If, as the outcome of our experiment suggests, therefore, Congregational Music Studies is a branch of Music Theology – and Music Theology is a theological science – then Congregational Music Studies may just provide the musicologically acceptable face of theological science.

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[29] Clark A. Chinn and Ala Samarapungavan, 'Distinguishing Between Understanding and Belief', *Theory Into Practice* 40/4, Teaching as Persuasion (Autumn 2001), 235-241.
[30] See for example Glenn Stallsmith, 'Worship from the Nations: A Response to Scott Aniol', Global Forum on Arts and Christian Faith, file:///Users/bennettzon/Downloads/25-121-1-PB.pdf, accessed 4 Jan. 2019.
[31] https://www.worldofworship.org/what-is-ethnodoxology/, accessed 4 Jan. 2019.
[32] https://www.scsmusic.org/about/, accessed 4 Jan. 2019.

4. Analysis: Congregational Music Studies as Theological Science

In some respects this kind or reasoning makes Music Theology sound *unscientific*, and Congregational Music Studies more evolutionary adaptable in a materialistically sceptical (scientific) academic environment, but in fact disciplinary subjectivity (prejudice) does nothing to change the fact that both Music Theology and Congregational Music Studies espouse fundamentally performative 'scientifick' methodologies. Unlike Music Theology, however, when Congregational Music Studies engages with theology it is *invariably* at the level of natural human embodiment first, even when embodiment is contained within the mind, as 'Embodied Sonic Theologies' attests. Echoing Nekola's definition, Allan Moore, for example, delves into the nature of embodiment by probing the impact of words which themselves contain metaphors for embodiment. Writing on the impact words have on worship, he critiques Katherine Scott's adaptation of 'All People that on Earth Do Dwell' sung at FocusFest 2008. Scott 'smooths out' the melodic rhythm to create two-bar phrases with words followed by two-bar phrases without words. She then intersperses words in the gaps, which shifts emphasis and meaning from active to static concepts. 'His truth at all times firmly stood' changes emphasis from 'firmly' to 'stood' – from 'the *active* manner in which God's truth works in the world – it operates 'firmly' [in the original version] to 'a presentation of *statis*' on stood.[33] The distinction is significant not simply because emphasis changes the meaning of worship but because action itself becomes an object of deep theological reflection; Moore even goes so far as to suggest that worship is 'an 'activity', a dynamic *state*'.[34]

In this respect Moore's critique largely conforms to Torrance's concept of scientific theology as 'a human enterprise working with revisable formulations in a manner not unlike

[33] Allan F. Moore, 'On the Inherent Contradiction in Worship Music', *Congregational Music-Making*, 186.
[34] Moore, 'On the Inherent Contradiction in Worship Music', *Congregational Music-Making*, 187.

that of an axiomatic science operating with fluid axioms', but because it interrogates the meaning of meaning (the action of action) it also openly interrogates the subjective nature of its own observations: as he says, 'The very act of speaking enacts the action spoken of'.[35] Moore also questions how performing environments influence the subsumption of a worship leader's identity into their persona, claiming that the 'persona/environment relation thus operates within the sounding object.[36] These are more than metaphysical or theological observations, they are scientific hypotheses that the act of experimentation (conducting or performing an experiment) proves or disproves. The heart may beat to pump blood, and the worship leader may lead to worship God, but for Moore worship is illocutionary: as through a mouthpiece, 'it is the very pronouncement [of worship] that enacts the relationship.'[37]

While this appraisal paradoxically echoes a strongly relativistic proposition in the language of social constructivism, which argues that the substantive results of science are not discovered but 'invented or constructed through organized social behaviour,'[38] it nevertheless maintains as its object a strictly theological locus – 'the mystery of worship, which is God's presence and our response to it.'[39] And it is the *strictly* theological nature of its object which, according to Hanby, keeps theology saliently scientific; for Hanby 'There can be no 'outside' of relation to God because it is through this relation itself – real on the side of creatures, rational on the side of God – that the being of all that is mysteriously not God is constituted.'[40] Whether or not there is such a thing as an 'outside' of God, there is no denying that Congregational Music Studies enlists *natural theological* principles when it

[35] Moore, 'On the Inherent Contradiction in Worship Music', *Congregational Music-Making*, 195.
[36] Moore, 'On the Inherent Contradiction in Worship Music', *Congregational Music-Making*, 195.
[37] Moore, 'On the Inherent Contradiction in Worship Music', *Congregational Music-Making*, 195.
[38] Robert Klee, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Science: Cutting Nature at the Seams*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997, 5.
[39] Kathleen Norris, *Amazing Grace: A Vocabulary of Faith*, Oxford: Riverhead Books, New York, 1998, 72.
[40] Hanby, *No God, No Science*?, 18.

scientifically tests theological hypotheses through the 'humanly organized sound' of normative, ethnomusicological social constructivism. Congregational Music Studies would seem a natural home for natural theology because, accordingly, the design of nature is intrinsically congregational; i.e., the universe (congregation) is ordered; it is an interrelated organism with unity and diversity; and it is anthropic (it must take account of our individual and corporate human presence).[41] Moreoever, theology is itself natural: according to Jeremy Begbie it seeks to attend 'to *the reality of the physical world, the world explored and examined by the natural sciences* . . . to *what is primordially human* . . . to *those constructive activities we designate as human 'culture*' . . . [and] to enlist a *properly functioning human reason*.'[42] As Begbie acknowledges, much of the way we study music revolves around the science of explaining 'the active process of making'[43] – entrainment, for example, or improvisation.

It may be fairer to say that natural theology is a phantom presence in Congregational Music Studies, to the extent that it echoes Hanby's suggestion that there is nothing 'outside' God. Peter Althouse and Michael Wilkinson's 'Musical Bodies in the Charismatic Renewal' (2015) is paradigmatic. The title is itself an expression of the chapter's bodily object, and theories of the body are foregrounded and then used to observe charismatic musical bodies. Yet at the same time Althouse and Wilkinson sedulously avoid theological underpinning. Chris Shilling, for example, provides music psychology: 'embodied analysis of music must include how the body is both and important source for the creative production of music and deeply attuned to musical processes'; Shilling, Csordas and Becker provide social constructivism: 'music is not only a social construction but also rooted in the generative powers of the body'; and Judith Becker, phenomenology, 'religious trancing is an

[41] John Weaver, *Christianity and Science*, London: SCM Press, 2010, 83.
[42] Jeremy S. Begbie, 'Natural Theology and Music', in Russell Re Manning (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Natural Theology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, 572.
[43] Begbie, 'Natural Theology and Music', 577.

ecstatic or alternate state of consciousness that is sensually rich and physically exertive, heightens emotional responses, and is enveloped in musical processes'.[44] When, however,, they arrive at their conclusions over the worshipping body and its place in renewal Althouse and Wilkinson's conclusions are theological in nature and natural in theology, as it were. Their theology is natural because they utilize the resources of the natural sciences; they define what is effectively human; they locate it within cultural contexts; and they themselves embody human reason through their performance of musicking. In other words, the very act of studying congregational music is intrinsically theological because both its subject and object concerns the natural design of the congregational body – again, the mystery of worship 'as the mystical body is renewed through an experience of interactional love.'[45] This is, arguably, what Jeremy Begbie call's 'felicitous culture', the ability to develop and reconfigure God-given materials into an act of praise[46] or what John Polkinghorne describes above as 'God's gift of 'freedom' to his creation.'[47]

Alistair McGrath defines four seams of natural theology today: (1) a movement of the human mind toward God; (2) an argument from naturalistic premises to religious beliefs; (3) a theology of nature; and (4) correspondences between natural and evangelical experience.[48] Althouse and Wilkinson, Allan Moore, Anna Nekola – their brand of Congregational Music Studies could easily represent these same four seams in current thought. But does, for instance, this make Congregational Music Studies – with its emphasis on the nature of human embodiment – a more theological science than Music Theology?

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[44] Peter Althouse and Michael Wilkinson, 'Musical Bodies in the Charismatic Renewal: The Case of Catch the Fire and Soaking Prayer', in Monique M. Ingalls and Amos Yong (eds.), *The Spirit of Praise: Musica and Worship in Global Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity*, University Park PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015, 33-34.
[45] Althouse and Michael Wilkinson, 'Musical Bodies in the Charismatic Renewal', 41.
[46] Begbie, 'Natural Theology and Music', 577.
[47] John Polikinghorne, *Science and Christian Belief: Theological Reflections of a Bottom-Up Thinker*, The Gifford Lectures for 1993-4, London: SPCK, 1994, 79.
[48] Alister E. McGrath, *Darwinism and the Divine: Evolutionary Thought and Natural Theology*, The 2009 Hulsean Lectures University of Cambridge, Malden MA and Oxford; Wiley-Blackwell, 2011, 16.

Debates over the scientific validity of natural theology have been rife and variably corrosive. One criticism suggests that natural theologians write only for their own religious-believing community, to 'encourage the faithful' and confront doubt;[49] relatedly, there is the very widely spread injunction against compatibility theories for being theological in origin, function and purpose – itself a retelling of the materialist anti-theism story.[50] In this respect scientific criticism of Congregational Music Studies could be justifiable, especially, as we have seen, where it invokes Christian musicology or ethnodoxology. Article II.Purposes.B.3, for example, of the constitution of the Society for Christian Scholarship in Music is unapologetic, and claims that the society clearly aims 'To strengthen Christian scholars of music in their understanding of and faithfulness to their vocations',[51] yet the society name is itself more terminologically – and therefore methodologically – inexact. What exactly is *Christian Scholarship* in music: is it Christian scholars testifying faith *through* scholarship (i.e., vocational – religious); or is it pluralistic, humanistic, ecumenistic scholarship *about* Christian topics (i.e., non-vocational – secular/academic)? And what is a Society *for* something – *for* Christian Scholarship in Music? (i.e., is it ad-vocational and mission-based). Inevitably, these questions raise other types of questions critics of natural theology would instantly recognize: is the Society for Christian Scholarship the mouthpiece of theology or musicological science, or both; in other words, is this an academic (scientific) or religious (theological) organization, because, according to scientific materialists – or new Atheists – like Richard Dawkins they simply cannot be both.

Like natural theology, Congregational Music Studies problematizes the relationship between academic (scientific) and religious (theological) knowledge, partly by performing scientifically and partly by *being performed* – being read and interpreted – theologically,

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[49] Philip Clayton, 'Scientific Critiques of Natural Theology', *The Oxford Handbook of Natural Theology*, 508.
[50] See Stephen M. Barr, 'Retelling the Story of Science', *The Believing Scientists: Essays on Science and Religion*, Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016, 3-21.
[51] https://www.scsmusic.org/constitution-and-by-laws/, accessed 8 Jan 2019.

even self-reflexively by itself. The first section of Ingalls, Landau and Wagner's *Christian Congregational Music: Performance, Identity and Experience* (2013) is representative not simply because it recognizes and studies the act of congregational musicking as 'Performing Theology' (i.e., performing scientifically) but because it foregrounds the complex theological ontologies inherent within the culturally constructed musical object it studies (i.e., the being performed theologically): 'Congregational music often operates at the nexus between official and 'lived' Christian theologies, acting variously and unevenly as a source of indoctrination or challenge, complicity or contest.'[52] Unlike natural theology, however, which originates in an unapologetically apologetical theological motivation (i.e., performs theology), Congregational Music Studies tends to eschew the performative nature of its own methodology as theological science – like the Society for Christian Scholarship in Music. Is Congregational Music Studies 'performing theology' when it studies 'performing theology'? Or is it paradoxically performing science? And if it is performing science – natural science in the broadest sense – why can it not also perform theology as a form of natural theology? Why are its two disciplinary strands seemingly incompatible?

The answer may lie in its relationship to Music Theology and its disciplinary orientation, as well as in a certain amount of practical academic caution. In Music Theology there is generally no theological ventriloquism, no dissembling, no disciplinary invisibility. In the same way that, as Schopenhauer suggests, music 'is a *direct* an objectification and copy of the whole *will*',[53] Music Theology speaks theology directly. However scientific theologically Music Theology performs first *as* theology, as Maeve Heaney and more recently Danielle Lynch attest;[54] but however theologically scientific Congregational Music

[52] Monique Ingalls, Carolyn Landau and Tom Wagner (eds.), 'Prelude – Performing Theology, Forming Identity and Shaping Experience: Christian Congregational Music in Europe and North America', in *Christian Congregational Music: Performance, Identity and Experience*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2013, 4.
[53] Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Weld als Wille und Vorstellung,* Dumstadt, 1968, English trans. Haldane and Kemp, *The World as Will and Idea*, London, Kegan Paul, n.d., I, 333.
[54] See Danielle Lynch, *God in Sound and Silence: Music as Theology*, Eugene OR: Pickwick, 2018.

Studies performs first *as* science. According to the first series preface Congregational Music Studies 'explores the role of congregational music in Christian religious experience, examining how musicians and worshippers perform, identify with and experience belief through musical praxis'.[55] Heaney, however, claims that music 'is a means by which we can listen to and receive the Word of God' – that it can be, and is, theological praxis.[56] Heaney, for her part, acknowledges the role sciences play in theological discourse,[57] but in her admittedly honest, testimonial afterward (performing theology – theologicking, if you will) Lynch leaves nothing to our disciplinary imagination: 'The link between the words of the book and the music are that they both speak to 'music as theology.' Both are expressions of what makes meaning in my life, from the depths of who I am as an embodied human being in relation to the infinite mystery I name God.'[58]

5. Findings

This chapter has been argued in effectively two halves. It argued that if theology can be science so can Music Theology – Music Theology can be the mouthpiece of science – and that if Congregational Music Studies is a branch of Music Theology it, too, is science, the type of science closely resembling what today we would call natural theology. Congregational Music Studies responds to this definition because, unlike Music Theology, it focuses intensively on the observable nature of our embodied human experience of music. Of course, many scientists consider natural theology theology, not science, in the same way many musicologists consider Music Theology theology, not science, and there is some good reason for both sets of criticisms. Congregational Music Studies performs scientifically, but can be, and is, performed theologically. Music Theology performs theologically even when it

[55] Series preface, Congregational Music Studies, Routledge.
[56] Maeve Heaney, *Music as Theology: What Music Says about the Word*, Eugene OR: Pickwick, 2012, Kindle loc. 3748 and 7753.
[57] Heaney, *Music as Theology*, Kindle loc. 4369.
[58] Lynch, *God in Sound and Silence*, 195.

performs scientifically because it studies both musick (as it is performed) and music (as it is designed). Perhaps this is where another important – even doctrinal – distinction with Music Theology lies. Like musicology, Congregational Music Studies adamantly disavows the idea that music carries any inherent meaning 'to 'decode' regardless of the varying contexts of its performance'[59] – in natural theology, a meaning akin to 'design'. For natural theologians 'design' is a scientific response to observation, analysis and experimentation with non-revealed (natural, not scriptural) sources, but for scientists it is a categorically theological study of efficient causal processes: the heart beats to circulate blood, but blood circulates because God designed us that way. This may be treating natural theology too simplistically, but it does express a central concern in Congregational Music Studies to reflect a methodology equally accountable to both theology and science in way that exemplifies more than the status of a mouthpiece. Maybe Congregational Music Studies is apophatic theologically but cataphatic scientifically; meaning, that it uses theology to describe what God is not (i.e., his creation), whereas it uses science to describe what He is (i.e., the Creator and Designer). Maybe Congregational Music Studies is the *voice* of theology and the *mouthpiece* of science, whereas Music Theology is always going to be the mouthpiece of musicology and voice of theology, even if it does aspire to the condition of theological science like, as Walter Pater says, all arts aspire to the condition of music. Whatever their status, and whatever their methods, if Congregational Music Studies is the *sound* of Music Theology and Music Theology the *sound* of science, then Chua's concerns will have been addressed by making disciplinary ventriloquism invisible to the point of vanishing altogether. According to Chua: 'The challenge for theology is whether it can articulate the difference while engaging with the modern and postmodern world',[60] but the same could be said of musicology itself. The challenge for musicology is accepting theology

[59] Ingalls, Landau and Wagner, 'Prelude – Performing Theology, Forming Identity and Shaping Experience', 4.
[60] Chua, 'Music as the Mouthpiece of Theology', 161.

as a scientific discipline and Music Theology as its mouthpiece. Perhaps Congregational Music Studies will lead the way.