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The *Journal of the Association for Music and Imagery* is published biennially by the Association. Copies are available from the Association office at PO Box 4286, Blaine, WA 98231-4286. (See last page for an order form.)

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ISSN 1098-8009

Journal of the



Association for Music & Imagery

VOLUME 9
2003-2004

AUDIO DIVINA

INTRODUCING A CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICE FOR CONTEMPORARY TIMES

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ABSTRACT: *This article introduces Audio Divina (sacred listening), a contemplative practice created in response to the needs and desires of contemporary spiritual seekers. The quality of a contemplative silence can be influenced by the sounds that lead into it and the sounds that lead out of it. This music listening experience effortlessly guides listeners into a silence that is inviting yet well contained. Audio Divina has been developed by integrating knowledge from two sources that address interior states of consciousness. Lectio Divina, an ancient Christian prayer form that includes contemplative silence, provides the basic structure. The use of classical music developed in the Bonny Method of GIM is the foundation for creating Audio Divina musical sequences that incorporate periods of silence. Audio Divina has the potential to initiate interest in a regular prayer or meditation practice by providing an easily accessible experience of deep silence.*

Key words: Music and meditation, Lectio Divina, Bonny Method of GIM

In the *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (Wakefield, 1983) under the heading "Music and Spirituality," the question is asked: "On what basis might one claim that some music can bring about an encounter with the divine or the transcendent?" (p. 271). In my understanding, encounter with the divine is an act of grace and not something that can be brought about at will. Therefore, a reconfiguring of the above question might be this: Can some music create the interior environment where encounter with the divine is possible? In attempting to answer in the affirmative, this paper will introduce *Audio Divina* (Sacred Listening) as a form of contemplative prayer that provides the necessary environment for encounter with God through a program of carefully selected music and silence.

Inspiration for *Audio Divina* came from several sources including Benedictine spirituality, the Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music

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(GIM), medieval and Western classical musical, and my own prayer life. This paper will a) describe the cultural context and sources for developing the concept, b) define and describe *Audio Divina*, c) give a beginning analysis of the first music program developed for this prayer form (*Audio Divina Music Program #1*), and d) conclude with some thoughts regarding application.

Cultural Context

Before introducing a new prayer form, it is important to reflect on our contemporary Western culture and ask, "Is there a need for new ways of approaching the divine, and if so, why through music?" The generations that have grown up in a post-Holocaust world have been exposed to the popular concept that "God is dead." Money and technology are often viewed as the sources of ultimate power. For many Westerners, this illusion of ultimate worldly power was shattered in the aftermath of September 11th, and the need to make sense out of life has become urgent. With a steady decline in church attendance over the past several decades, it is safe to say that most people are not conducting their search for meaning within the parameters of organized religion. Reginald Bibby (cited in Emberly, 2002) collected data in 1995 revealing that only 26 percent of the "Baby Boom" generation in Canada were regular church attendees. While most Boomers have left the church, Peter Emberly (2002) reports that many are rediscovering prayer and worship in small groups. These seekers are rejecting creed and dogma in favor of a "lived experience of the sacred" (p. 15). They want a personal, inclusive God, not a discriminating, institutional God.

Many contemporary spiritual seekers have had no formal religious upbringing and adopt a "pick and choose" approach to their beliefs. "Fusion Faith" is what Emberley (2002) names this experimentation with practices that involve multiple faiths. Although Fusion Faith is similar in many ways to the religious ferment that occurred from Asia Minor to the Mediterranean 2,500 years ago, a distinguishing difference is the egocentric point of reference for modern seekers.

Attracted to mystical experience but lacking spiritual discipline, these seekers are often looking for "triggers" that will somehow magically transform their reality. These "triggers" include incense, chanting, celestial music and enchanted gestures. Such seekers prefer *meaning* to truth, *experience* to reality, *ritual* to doctrine, *transformation* to self-discipline (Emberly, 2002). Such an egocentric point of view is inherent in Western culture and needs to be recognized as a starting point for modern encounters with the transcendent.

The spiritual preferences mentioned above include a critique of modern life, and in particular, point to the shortcomings of the church. Peter

Emberley (2002) reported the following from his interview with a past moderator of the United Church of Canada.

When I asked Reverend Phipps how the United Church could retain those who sought mystery--the awesome experience of the infinite and the holy--he appeared at a loss, admitting this was a problem for him. How does one hold the revived need for transcendence together with community, and give people opportunities to find public ways of expressing a life sanctified by grace, rather than leave them to explore mystery in private and in cults? He did not know. (p. 108)

Congregational pastor H. William Gregory (1992) is convinced that the survival of the church depends on encouraging the *experience* of God and supporting individuals on their spiritual journeys.

This is clearly a time when new ways to address deep unmet spiritual needs would be welcome, within both the church and the secular community. Why attempt to meet these needs through music? What is the rationale for incorporating carefully selected music into a contemporary prayer practice? With the introduction of television in the 1950's and the subsequent decline in radio programming, the Western world moved from listening to seeing as the primary mode for gathering information. Listening has become an auxiliary function to seeing what is on the TV or computer screen. According to Joachim-Ernst Berendt (1987), this modern phenomenon of favoring sight over hearing has serious behavioral implications. In the animal kingdom visual acuity is the sense organ required to spy and seize upon prey. The eyes are constantly moving, "piercing," "searching," and aggressively seeking information. An individual who perceives the world primarily through the eyes will tend to be more aggressive than one who gives priority to hearing. Berendt cites television culture as a major contributor to aggressiveness even without taking into consideration the impact of TV violence on viewers. On the other hand, words that describe hearing, i.e. "receiving," "opening up," "listening" imply receptivity.

Hearing begins in the womb with the child listening to its mother's heartbeat and is usually the last sense organ to close down at the time of death. The magnitude and subtlety of our hearing faculty is quite profound.

Experiments have shown that no other sense can register impulses as minimal as those that the ear can register. The amplitude of the vibrations of our eardrum lies in the area of 10 to the minus ninth power. That is smaller than the wave length of visible light and even less than the diameter of a hydrogen atom. The smallest stimuli our ear can just barely perceive, on the other hand, have to be amplified by a

factor of 10 to the sixth power in order to reach the level of the highest volume perceivable, by a factor in the million range. Were we to amplify the smallest impulses our eyes can register by the same factor, we would be blinded instantly. (Berendt, 1987, p. 135).

Except for people who are blind, reading requires the eyes. However, Berendt (1987) describes reading as "an internalized kind of hearing" (p.139). Children who read fairy tales (or have the stories read to them) transpose the words into inner images, using imagination to understand the plot. The fairy tale becomes an enrichment of the child's inner life. Child psychologists have classified fairy tales watched on TV as merely entertainment. The images on television are superficial and over-stimulating, crowding out the need for imaginative engagement (Berendt).

The ability to listen--to receive sound--plays an important role in psychological and spiritual formation. Webster's *New World Dictionary* defines "to listen" as "to pay close attention." The ability to pay close attention and thereby be present for another is a necessary skill for successful interpersonal relationships. Listening well becomes a prerequisite for meaningful connection. It is through the receptive mode of listening that we can encounter divine presence, hear "the still small voice," and receive God's guidance. The Christian contemplative prayer form *Lectio Divina* (Casey, 1996) requires listening on several levels; first to scripture, then to one's own heart, and finally to God in the silence. In this modern era our ability to listen deeply has become atrophied; music listening is a tool that can help us revive our capacity to listen in silence.

Sources for the Concept of Audio Divina

Sound and silence are intimately connected. Just as we perceive light only in relationship to darkness, we hear sound only in relationship to silence. Sound emerges from absolute silence. Igor Stravinsky (cited in McClellan, 1991) said "...all music is nothing more than a succession of impulses that converge toward a definite point of repose" (p. 202).

Maureen McCarthy Draper (2001) expands on this thought with more eloquence:

Music is sound *and* silence. It is the spaces *between* the notes that create rhythm, melody and meaning, and the greater the composer--and the performance--the better the quality of the silence. Legendary pianist Artur Schnabel said that it wasn't the notes but the silences between them he played better than other people. A few seconds more or less at crucial moments in the performance of a piece may mean the difference between a mundane and a transcendent experience. (p. 34)

I find it intriguing that meaning in music is created by the silent spaces between notes, and that the quality of silence varies depending on the skills of the musicians. I have wondered about a possible connection between the rhythm and pattern of Lectio Divina prayer and the shape or pattern of music programs developed for the Bonny Method of GIM (Bonny, 2002). Could a pattern of reading, prayer, and silence; and a program of carefully sequenced music be combined to create a new contemplative practice? Before pursuing this question I will give some background on Lectio Divina and the Bonny Method of GIM.

Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina (Sacred Reading) is a prayer technique and guide to living that is part of Benedictine monastic tradition (Casey, 1996; Hall, 1988). It is a way of finding God by "descending to the level of the heart" (Casey, p. vi).

In the years between 530 and 550 A.D. the Rule of Benedict was written to instruct monks in living the monastic life. It is generally recognized as the most influential rule of monastic orders in the Western Church. The Rule has not been interpreted and applied with any consistency. As far back as the Middle Ages when there were thousands of abbeys across Europe, each one had its own way of living out the Rule. It is only since WWI that the Rule has been studied scientifically, making use of text and source criticism. It is now understood that rather than being a pioneer, Benedict was refashioning ideas from earlier traditions (Kardong, 1988).

Lectio Divina, with its focus on reading scripture and prayer that led ultimately to contemplation, was practiced widely for many centuries. The four classic steps in this way of praying are 1) reading (Lectio), 2) meditation (Meditatio), 3) prayer (Oratio), and 4) contemplation (Contemplatio). Toward the end of the Middle Ages contemplation fell into disfavor and new systems of discursive prayer replaced what had been experiential. Lectio Divina continued to be practiced only in monasteries.

In the decades since Vatican II there has been a resurgence of interest in Lectio Divina within the Catholic Church and in mainstream Protestant denominations. Contemplative practice is no longer considered an extraordinary experience reserved for the elite few. Today many spiritual seekers would agree with these words from author Michael Casey: "Tradition is meant to be a servant of the present and the future, not a tyrant imposing its own preferences on a very different world" (Casey, 1986, viii)

In the spirit of tradition as servant, Macrina Wiederkehr (1990) has developed a practical working model of Lectio Divina that includes a fifth step. A summary of her interpretation would be as follows:

1. Read scripture or inspired writing *until the heart is touched*.
2. Reflect on meaning of phrase that touched your heart. Let it become a mantra.
3. Allow the mantra to flow into prayer.
4. Slowly drop off the words of your prayer-mantra until only one word is left. Finally, let go of even that word and rest in sacred quiet.
5. Use journaling for further integration of your prayer experience and to keep a record of your spiritual journey. (pp. 59-60)

Paraphrasing the words of Julian of Norwich as an example, the pattern or shape of Lectio Divina prayer might look something like the illustration below.

All shall be well and all shall be well and all manner of things shall be well.
 All manner of things shall be well.
 All shall be well.
 All is well.
 Well.

(Colledge and Walsh, 1978)

There is a definite pattern of movement in Lectio Divina from engagement with the text, moving to reflection and prayer, then letting go of words as one drops down into silence. Weiderkehr (1990) adds journaling, which allows for integration and grounding after the period of contemplation. An illustration of this movement might look something like this:

READ
 Reflect
 Pray
 Contemplate
 JOURNAL

The Bonny Method of GIM

At the age of twenty-eight, Dr. Helen Bonny (cited in Clark, 2002) had a mystical experience while playing the violin for a gathering of churchwomen. The beauty of the music that came through her instrument was far beyond what she alone was capable of producing, and the experience opened her awareness to a sense of deep peace and joy that lasted for about two weeks.

Helen understood that somehow this experience could serve others in their spiritual search and she dedicated herself to researching how Western classical music could be used to facilitate a “peak experience.” (Maslow, 1970) (This is Abraham Maslow’s term for expanded awareness or the mystical experience of unity consciousness.) The American composer Aaron Copeland (cited in Bonny & Savary, 1990) had expressed a similar knowing about the potential mystical power in music when he said,

I have been concerned with the creation of music for more than thirty years, with no lessening of my sense of humility before the majesty of music’s expressive power, before its capacity to make manifest a deeply spiritual resource of mankind. (p. 115)

Helen trained to become a music therapist and developed the Bonny Method of GIM in the early 1970s (Clark, 2002). This method for self-exploration creates a pattern of interior movement using carefully sequenced programs of Western classical music. Music programs are designed to elicit various kinds of internal experiences depending on the therapeutic/spiritual issues being addressed. (See footnote¹ for the first published definition for Bonny Method of GIM). Regardless of differences in mood or energy, all the programs have a common shape or pattern. That pattern might be represented as follows:

	Imagery	Exploration	
Music	stimulated	of consciousness	Resolution
engages		through	and
attention		imagery	grounding

I noticed a connection between these two structures for working with interior processes. The “working spaces” in a Bonny Method session² seemed to

¹ (The Bonny Method of GIM) is a method of self-exploration in which classical music is used to access the imagination. It includes listening to classical music in a relaxed state, allowing the imagination to come to conscious awareness, and sharing these awarenesses with a guide. The interaction among listener, music and guide is what makes GIM unique. The GIM experience can lead to the development of self-understanding, the ordering of the psyche, and the achievement of spiritual insights. (Clark & Keiser, 1986, p.1)

² In the Bonny Method “working space” refers to the middle part of the music program. The listener has fully engaged with whatever imagery has been stimulated by the music. There is a verbal dialogue between listener and facilitator regarding what the listener is experiencing. The music selected provides a safe matrix within which inner exploration can occur. This does not necessarily mean gentle music, but it will be music that has a reliable, trustworthy quality (Bonny, 2002).

correlate with the “silent space” or contemplative phase of *Lectio Divina*. The Bonny Method requires active participation while *Lectio Divina* moves toward a passive receptivity. It appeared that these two methods were complementary images of each other—like two sides of the same coin, or opposite ends of a spectrum. I continued to wonder about the correspondences between a method for inner exploration using music and a method for interior prayer using reading and silence.

Discovering Audio Divina

In June 2002 a breakthrough occurred. I was attending a professional development workshop with Linda Keiser Mardis, a Bonny Method trainer, and practitioner. During the lecture Linda shared that she had been experimenting with changing the familiar sequence of musical selections used in one of the standard music programs. She noticed a curious thing. When the sequence of musical selections was changed, not only did this entire program have a different sound and effect, but the individual selections of music sounded very different. In other words, the musical qualities in a particular selection were perceived differently, depending on what music came right before that selection and what music came right after it.

I realized that this might also apply to the quality of a silence. Would the quality of a contemplative silence be affected by what musical sounds came right before it and right after it? And if so, which kinds of music would be appropriate to create a quality of silence that would attract even those unfamiliar with sitting quietly in deep prayer? As if in response to these questions, Linda facilitated a music listening experience later in the day and asked us to critique new selections of music that she was researching for possible use in future Bonny Method music programs.

Choosing music for The Bonny Method of GIM involves having an intuitive sense of the potential in various selections regarding pitch, tempo, melody, harmony, timbre (tone color) and mood (Bonny, 2002). The goal is to find selections that are engaging and evocative of imagery, reliable but not too predictable, with a sense of forward movement. Appropriately chosen music helps listeners bring to awareness and process material from various levels of consciousness.

I began to understand that I was establishing some different criteria for music leading into a contemplative silence. While it would be necessary to find music that engaged and held attention, the sounds also would need to encourage release of imagery instead of stimulating it. The music would need to have a very subtle sense of movement—moving toward quietness. Perhaps most importantly, the music selected to precede silence would need to be a steady, reliable guide—a trustworthy companion to follow into deep silence and back out again.

In the workshop that afternoon I had my first encounter with such a piece of music. When Linda played a track from the CD, *Angeli: Music of Angels* (Van Ness, 1995), I was immediately transported to an inner realm where I was engulfed in and supported by exquisite vocal music. In the weeks that followed I discovered other musical selections, and soon Audio Divina became a reality. Based on the interior movement of *Lectio Divina*, a music program evolved to 1) engage attention, 2) encourage reflection, 3) move toward silence, 4) be in silence, and 5) return to ordinary consciousness. What follows are my beginning attempts to describe the structure of Audio Divina as a prayer form.

Definition: Audio Divina is a music listening experience which leads one into a quality of silence conducive to resting in sacred space (divine presence).

Purpose/Function of Music: To bring one without effort into a conducive silence and gently to lead back out again, bringing some of the quality found in silence back into ordinary consciousness.

Goal: To experience resting in sacred space.

Theory 1: The quality of a contemplative silence is influenced by the sounds that lead into it and the sounds that lead out of it.

Theory 2: The experience of resting in sacred silence is profoundly nurturing for body, mind and spirit.

The columns in Figure 1 delineate similarities and differences between the Bonny Method of GIM and Audio Divina. (Here imagery refers to thoughts, feelings, memories, physical sensations, insights etc. In other words, whatever the listener experiences while listening to selected music in a deeply relaxed state is imagery.)

Musical Background for Audio Divina Program # 1

The first program developed for Audio Divina prayer praxis is eighteen minutes in length and includes vocal and instrumental pieces, with five minutes of silence programmed into the sequence. With the exception of the Adagio (slow) movement from Bach's Cello Sonata in G minor (Bach, 2000), all of the music is from the CD, *Angeli: The Music of Angels* (Van Ness, 1995). These music tracks are the innovative compositions of Patricia

Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music	Audio Divina (Sacred Listening)
Music-assisted exploration of consciousness	Music-assisted contemplative practice
Induction: 1. Relax body lying down 2. Focus image	Preparation: 1. Comfortable body sitting up 2. Focus words
Music engages attention and evokes imagery	Music engages attention and releases imagery
GIM facilitator assists process	Music is the only guide
Open-ended exploration of consciousness	Experience directed toward consciousness "resting in God"
Working assumption: Exploration of consciousness promotes wholeness	Working assumption: Consciousness resting in sacred silence is nurturing for body, mind and spirit
Active process (the in breath)	Receptive process (the out breath)

Figure 1. A Comparison of the Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music and Audio Divina.

Van Ness based on medieval music. Before describing Audio Divina Music Program #1, I will discuss Gregorian Chant, Hildegard Von Bingen's musical style, the compositions of Patricia Van Ness, and Bach's contribution to music history.

Gregorian Chant

It is generally believed that Gregorian Chant evolved from Jewish Chant and developed over many centuries to praise God's glory. It was Pope Gregory I who initiated the collection and preservation of this sacred music between 590 and 604. In the Middle Ages Gregorian Chant assumed the traditional form that we hear today when listening to medieval chant music. A single melody line was developed to accompany a psalm, hymn or prayer. The melody was sung by a soloist, choir, or responsively between cantor and choir. Traditionally there were no instruments and the rhythm was free-form, following the flow of words.

When listening to Gregorian Chant we become aware not only of the blended voices of the monks, but also an almost inaudible echo, an additional dimension of depth to the music. It is the sacred, transcendental quality of the melodic lines chanted in a high-ceilinged oratory that many find so appealing about Gregorian Chant. And it is this depth dimension that is so much like the *now*

dimension of time. For *now* does not occur in chronological time but transcends it. (Steindl-Rast & Lebell, 2002, p. 2)

The call and response, or antiphonal structure is a musical metaphor for listening and responding to the divine and to each other. The structure requires that the singers be present to both sound and silence. The music can be experienced as a call to stop and listen to the message of this moment (Steindl-Rast & Lebell, 2002).

Hildegard Von Bingen

Hildegard Von Bingen made a unique and prolific contribution to medieval music. All of her compositions were intended for use in Mass and the Divine Office (daily services of common prayer practiced in the monastery). Born in 1098 the youngest of ten children, her parents were members of German nobility. When Hildegard was eight years old she was tithed to the Church and began religious life in a Benedictine cloister. The monastic orders of the Middle Ages represented a life of individual freedom and expression for women of noble birth. Hildegard is a singular example of a woman developing extraordinary capacities in the context of twelfth century religious life. Indeed her accomplishments would be considered extraordinary in any age. She was renowned as a visionary, composer, writer, healer, and eventually became abbess of her community (Bobko, 1995).

There are several eccentric features of Hildegard's music. She was familiar with Gregorian chant but lacked formal training and did not attempt to imitate the mainstream musical and poetic trends of her time. Her contemporaries found Hildegard's music challenging to perform but were drawn to its strangeness and beauty. M. I. Ritschers called it "gregorianizing but not Gregorian" (cited in Newman, 1998, p. 28).

Over half of Hildegard's compositions (forty-three chants) are antiphons. She often made extreme use of melismas as a form of musical punctuation at the beginning and end of songs. Melismatic chant embroiders one syllable of the text with several notes. This creates the effect of music dominating the text (Newman, 1998).

Hildegard also favored a wide vocal range of two or more octaves using the limits of upper and lower range for emphasis (Newman, 1998). She employed melodic leaps of ascending and descending fifths. Barbara Newman describes it this way: "Hildegard had a way of scurrying rapidly up and down the octave, like an angel on Jacob's ladder, several times in the space of a word" (p. 29). Her use of a relatively small number of musical motifs, which were repeated in many variations, acted as a counterbalance to her free-flowing construction (Newman, 1998).

Patricia Van Ness

Patricia Van Ness followed Hildegard's lead in creating unconventional compositions. Born in 1951, she is a contemporary composer schooled in the modal concepts of medieval music. (Westerners are most used to hearing major and minor modes/scales. Medieval music used different arrangements of tones and semi-tones). In the Program Notes from the *Angeli* CD (Van Ness, 1995) Monahan explains the composer's approach this way: "Van Ness employs the musical language of the Middle Ages while introducing elements, such as the inclusion of string instruments and the mixing of male and female voices, not found in medieval church music" (p. 6).

These string instruments—lute, harp, and vielle (a fiddle used in the Middle Ages)—although not played in the medieval church, were featured in paintings and sculptures of angel musicians. Van Ness has also written her own texts for chants that have been translated into Latin. Performers of her work are steeped in a love for medieval music while being fully committed to making "...a living music that is fully contemporary in its emotional impact and presence" (Monahan cited in Van Ness, 1995, p. 6). Van Ness's music represents a truly remarkable blending of old and new while preserving the integrity of medieval music.

It would be hard to separate a passion for medieval music from the spirituality it represents. Laurie Monahan, the mezzo-soprano featured on this CD (sub-titled *Chant and polyphony for the Nine Orders of Angels and the Queen of Angels*), articulates beautifully the connection between her music and spiritual life.

In the world of church and cloister from which this music springs, spirituality contemplation was integral to, and indistinguishable from, daily life. Although the place of spirituality in our lives today may be quite different, the music retains its power to engage the full range of human emotion in its spiritual calling. With a clarity of focus and simplicity of texture that is rarely matched in the music of our age, this music offers a brilliantly lit window to a world far removed from the clutter of twentieth-century emotional and spiritual life. That world may sometimes seem distant, but it is never out of reach—so long as there are angels to provide a bridge. (Monahan, cited in Van Ness, 1995, p. 7)

It is reasonable to assume that Patricia Van Ness (1995) is expressing her own connection to the divine through the words and music of her chants. Reverence, beauty, and intimacy with God shine through her music.

Here is an example of her text in its original form. It is translated and performed in Latin on the recording.

Mysterious ones,
 Angels of light;
 Bathed in swirling song,
 Love pours from God's eyes
 And astonishes you.
 You are swept in a river of gold;
 Song flows from you like a thousand suns.
 (*Arcanae: Lucis angeli*, Patricia Van Ness, 1995)

A Word about Bach

"Music owes almost as much to Bach as Christianity does to its founder."

--Schumann

Is there a common link between Patricia Van Ness, a 21st Century American composer grounded in 12th Century music, and Johann Sebastian Bach, the 18th Century German composer who holds a place of central importance in the world of Western classical music? In my opinion, there are two points of commonality: 1) an innovative, highly creative approach to composition, and 2) an expression of religious or spiritual values through the vehicle of music.

One aspect of Bach's genius was his ability to synthesize and absorb all the styles, forms and genres of music in his time. Assisted by his prolific imagination, he developed hidden musical potentialities that had been previously overlooked (Grout & Palisca, 1996). Bach's music is dramatic and emotional but also highly structured, with attention to technical detail. This combination of feeling and precision allows the listener to engage thoughts or emotions within a secure and predictable framework.

As a devout Lutheran, Bach dedicated his work to the Most High God. He did not distinguish between sacred and secular music, viewing all art as "being to the glory of God" (Grout & Palisca, 1996, p. 408). His own words make his position clear: "The aim and final reason of all music should be nothing else but the glory of God and the refreshment of the Spirit" (J. S. Bach, cited in Merritt, 1996, p. 227).

Format of Audio Divina Music Program #1

Two suggestions in preparation for listening to the music program apply to both individual and group settings.

1. Begin by reading a *brief* passage of scripture or inspired writing. My favorites are "Be still and know that I am God" Psalm 46.10, or the famous line from Julian of Norwich, "All will be well" (Colledge & Walsh, 1978, p. 153).

2. A more open-ended focus would be simply to allow the beauty of these sounds to draw your spirit toward its source.

Track 1. Seraphim. [Time 4:48] Swirling layers of sound are created by a wide vocal range and converging/diverging harmonies. The listener's attention is fully engaged during an expansion of inner territory. This music has the capacity to activate energy in the body and create alertness while giving a musical description of spiritual realms. Instead of "reading until the heart is touched" (*Lectio Divina*) this music says "listen until the heart is touched" (*Audio Divina*).

Track 2. Ego Sum Custos Angela. [Time 2:59] The mezzo-soprano solo voice allows for a more introspective and intimate exploration of interior space. The *vielle* (medieval fiddle) accompaniment encircles the vocal line and suggests a protective presence (Monahan, cited in Van Ness, p. 6). The mood is reflective and prayerful, similar to the meditation stage of *Lectio Divina*.

Track 3. Bach: Adagio from Cello Sonata in G Minor. [Time 3:16] There is a quality of gentle conversation between cello and piano. The cello provides a steady reassuring presence, guiding the listener quietly forward. The piano stops and starts, goes off on its own path and ultimately follows the cello. This is much like the prayer stage of *Lectio Divina*. The music allows for the dropping away of thoughts, words etc. as quiet draws near.

Track 4. Silence. [Time 5:00] The cello's final resonating note ushers in a deep quiet that feels protected and supported by the preceding sounds. It can be helpful to recall the final sound or to recall the words from scripture if the mind is unable to rest for the full five minutes. A deep relaxation is possible, knowing the music will return at the proper moment. This is like the contemplative stage of *Lectio Divina*.

Track 5. Lucis angeli. [Time 2:45] Voices summon gently at first, and then more insistently. They echo sounds heard in the beginning track of music but use less ornamentation. As the music moves toward an end, the listener has time to remember and gather what has been experienced in the silence. This is like Macrina Weiderkehr's (1990) journaling stage. There is a brief period to integrate and collect oneself before returning to ordinary consciousness.

Track 6. Chime. A single chime indicates the end and brings closure to the experience.

Application and Future Development

One might ask, "Why only eighteen minutes in length and only five minutes of that time for silent prayer?" My objective in creating this musical sequence was to provide a listening experience to guide listeners into a

quality of silence they would find inviting and yet well contained. I hoped that an aesthetically pleasing invitation into deep quiet through music listening might kindle a desire for more such experiences. I wanted people to know the value of time set aside for "listening." Audio Divina has the potential to initiate interest in a regular prayer practice or spiritual discipline.

Many modern people are so spiritually dry they do not know what it is they seek. Perhaps their plight is similar to that of persons dying of starvation. After a certain point there ceases to be any appetite for food even though food would be life-giving. By stimulating an appetite for the divine and providing spiritual nourishment through the beauty of music, Audio Divina opens the door to an experience of "resting in God." The benefits of contemplative silence can be accessible to all people through the simple act of listening to music.

Audio Divina is designed for use in individual, group, or corporate worship settings. (See Rankin, 2003, for description of a liturgy using Audio Divina.) I hope to develop a series of Audio Divina Music Programs using different kinds of music and silent periods of varying duration. Many forms of prayer and meditation are practiced for approximately 20 minutes once or twice a day (e.g., centering prayer, Transcendental Meditation). My goal is to create programs that would begin with short periods of silence, progressing to programs containing short periods of music and up to twenty minutes of silence.

Audio Divina also could be used by spiritual directors facilitating groups. The method lends itself to a group spiritual direction process with a) reflection on scripture, b) music listening, c) journaling, and d) group sharing. There is a wonderful freedom to relax into the process when silent time is programmed right into the musical sequence on the CD. One need not keep track of time as the music will always return at the appropriate moment signaling reentry into ordinary consciousness. Learning to trust the music in this way is like learning to trust God's guiding presence.

T.S. Eliot (cited in Steindl-Rast & Lebell, 2002) speaks of hearing music so deeply that there is no awareness of hearing at all. The listener becomes the music. He likens this experience to being both in time and out of time simultaneously. It is a process of being present in the moment through the vehicle of music. The concept is very similar to the contemplative idea of "resting in God."

Brother David Steindl-Rast (Steindl-Rast & Lebell, 2002) reminds us that *now* does not occur in chronological time but transcends it. Perhaps music can facilitate what the Sufi poet Rumi invites us to do when he says, "Step out of the circle of time and into the circle of love" (Rumi, cited in Vaughan-Lee, 1999, frontispiece). Audio Divina may help us find that being in the present moment is being in the love of God.

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