

Music: Medicine of the Soul

Josias Morobi

Introduction

Good worship, for me, consists of good music. As we all know, music takes a central place in the worship. Great classical philosophers, such as Plato and St Augustine of Hippo, wrote about the power of music in worship. For instance, Plato understood music as an instrument that permanently influences one's character. He considered music to be "the medicine of the soul."¹ Mike Chaplain, in his article "Augustine's Inner Conflict about Music,"² suggests that music moved St Augustine to greater devotion. He says certain forms of music stirred the saint's emotions and gratified his senses. Augustine believed that there is a legitimate place for music in the church because, on hearing it, "weaker spirits may be inspired with feelings of devotion."³

St Augustine's thoughts on music resonate well with my own experience of music in church worship, in particular, the singing of traditional Anglican Church hymns. I was exposed to that form of music from an early age and for a long time regarded the traditional Western hymns as the only form of music suitable for church worship. Back then we were never exposed to other forms of music. As a result, I struggle to concentrate in the worship today if the music does not include traditional church hymns. I cannot explain for certain why that is the case, but upon hearing and singing the hymns, my spirit is lifted up and I am filled with a sense of devotion. In the following paragraphs I will reflect on my experience of music in the Anglican Church, perhaps that will give a perspective as to why I say music is "the medicine of the soul".

My Early Exposure to Church Music

From as early as two months old, after my mother's death, I lived with my uncle

-
- 1 Hestenes, M. E., *Exploring celebration and worship* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2010), 32.
 - 2 Chaplain, M., *Augustine's Inner Conflict about Music*, 2011, <http://www.internetmonk.com/archive/augustines-inner-conflict-about-music> [Accessed 11 April 2016].
 - 3 Chaplain, *Augustine's Inner Conflict*.

Josias Morobi is a marker at TEE College and member of the Social Responsibility Committee at St Peter's Chains Anglican Church, Katlehong. <morobij@gmail.com>.