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Editorial

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Editorial

Robin A. Leaver
General Editor

The launch of a new publication such as the *Yale Journal of Music & Religion* inevitably raises a number of questions. Why *another* journal when there is a plethora of other journals that cover almost every subject under the sun? Indeed, some individual subject areas are served by a whole range of publications. However, most journals are narrowly focused in one way or another. Very often they are either the official publications of specific societies, the organs of individual professions, or the periodicals of particular institutions. In musicology, ethnomusicology, music theory, and the like, many journals are further delineated by subcategories related to chronology, geography, ethnicity, or other criteria. Similarly, there are journals generally devoted to comparative religion, philosophy of religion, various aspects of theology, and so forth, as well as to specific areas of biblical, quranic, and talmudic studies, the nature and content of worship, among others. Some of these journals are interdisciplinary, interreligious, and interconfessional, but in most of them the multidimensional nature of music is rarely explored.

Why *this* journal? There is clearly a need for a publication that explores the historical and contemporary interconnections between music and religion, and does so interdenominationally, interreligiously, and internationally. Existing music journals have clearly defined parameters that make it difficult to encompass nonmusical matters. Take chant, for instance. Articles on chant can be found in journals of musicology, but they are often restricted to musical concerns. However, chant studies cannot avoid the theology expressed in the texts that are sung, the liturgical functions they perform, the ritual actions they accompany, and the architectural context within which they are heard. Of course, there are journals dedicated exclusively to chant studies, but they are not always seen by those who would benefit from the articles they contain. Further, within Christianity there is a variety of chant forms—such as Gregorian, Byzantine, and Mozarabic (see the article by Susan Boynton in this issue)—that are often studied in isolation. And further still, Christianity is not the only religion in which chant is of fundamental importance: chant is heard in synagogue and mosque as well as in church, and has particular ethnic manifestations (see the article by Jeffrey Cupchik in this issue). Some of these chant traditions have significant points of contact, such as the same basic melodic form for Psalm 114 used in both Jewish Ashkenazic chant and Catholic Gregorian chant. But other religious chant forms are very different from each other, while at the same time each musical form expresses similar religious meditation and aspiration.

Why *now*? As historical musicology in the 1970s and 1980s expanded to incorporate the new musicology, in which cultural and aesthetic concerns were pitted against traditional positivist philology, there was a growing interest in the religious contexts within which music was heard.

In the late 1990s, when the new musicology effectively dominated the annual meetings of the American Musicological Society (AMS) and fewer of its sessions were devoted to religious music, an informal late-night gathering was created. In 2002 this was formalized into the Forum on Music and Christian Scholarship, which organized its own conferences and is now known as the Society of Christian Scholarship in Music. This expansion of musicological interests reflected similar study groups in the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM), as well as in other organizations in the AMS and SEM dedicated to sacred music, including Judaism and Islam. In the United Kingdom similar developments can be traced, such as the International Network for Music Theology, founded around 2010. More recently the Mellon Initiative on Religion Across the Disciplines, a work-group that convenes at meetings of the AMS, has a primary focus on music. But long before these movements came into existence, indeed for the past forty years, the Yale Institute of Sacred Music (ISM), through its faculty and students, has taught, researched, and explored the many facets of religious music, whether theoretical or practical, historical or contemporary. It is this continuing background from which the ISM has initiated, sponsored, and promoted the *Yale Journal of Music & Religion*.

In the last twenty years or so, to judge from the steady stream of books and articles in a wide variety of journals, there has been a growing awareness of and research into relationships between music and religion. While the starting point has often been Western Christianity, parallels in non-Western religions, as well as independent studies of the musical traditions of these religions, have been increasingly evident. The *Yale Journal of Music & Religion* is intended to be an ongoing symposium in which the multidimensional relationship between music and religion—both in the broadest terms and in specific details—can be discussed and disseminated. Following the current trend in journal publishing, this is an open-access digital production, which means that, unlike in print journals, audio and visual clips, as well as links to other internet sources, can be used to enhance the presentations.

The exploration begins with this first issue, which, in addition to the chant studies already mentioned, includes Don Saliers's investigation into the selective use of the biblical Psalms; Daniel Melamed's observation that traditional musicology, which prides itself on objectivity, has not always been free of religious (and political) prejudice; and my review of religious music in non-English American colonies. These are the first fruits of what we hope will become a significant continuing forum for all topics relating to music and religion.