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Transubstantiating *Miserere*: James MacMillan's Compositional Theology

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Abstract The Scottish composer Sir James MacMillan (b. 1959) is a vocal proponent of contemporary sacred music, yet little scholarly analysis looks beyond the surface to explore how theological themes and language influence his work. This article offers a fresh perspective on the relationship between theology and music via an analysis of MacMillan's characterization of his compositional process as 'transubstantiation'. Far from being merely an evocative description, transubstantiation is a conceptual metaphor that signifies a distinctively eucharistic logic and practice in music. I trace these implications through MacMillan's *Miserere* (2009), which reinscribes past music and rituals as part of refashioning the contemporary imagining of religion.

Discussions of the Scottish composer Sir James MacMillan (b. 1959) inevitably include recognition of his devout Catholicism and its impact on his musical oeuvre. Yet, the very frequency with which this acknowledgement appears belies the often cursory treatment of MacMillan's intertwining of music and Catholic theology – even in a case where the commentator claims, 'It is as a composer of sacred music that James MacMillan […] deserves serious consideration.'[1] In some respects this situation is mirrored in struggles to establish a consistent relationship between Christian theology and music. Despite well-known pronouncements such as George Steiner's characterization of music as 'unwritten theology' and efforts by scholars such as Jon Michael Spencer (who advocates a 'theomusicology') and Jeremy Begbie (who positions music as a unique framework for understanding Christian doctrine), theology and musicology often exist only uncomfortably together in contemporary Anglophone scholarship.[2] The relative lack of theologically orientated scholarship within musicology

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[1]   Andrew Clark, 'James MacMillan: Miserere', *Financial Times*, 12 November 2011.
[2]   Steiner's frequently quoted excerpt is part of a sentence that suggests music as a replacement for theology. Music, he writes, 'has long been, it continues to be, the unwritten theology for those who lack or reject any formal creed'. George Steiner, *Real Presences: Is There Anything in What We Say?* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 218. See also Jon Michael Spencer, *Theological Music: Introduction to Theomusicology* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991); Jeremy Begbie, *Theology, Music, and Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and Begbie, 'Theology', *The Oxford Handbook of Western Music and Philosophy*, ed. Tomás McAuley, Nanette Nielsen, Jerrold

results in a distorted view of theologically informed composers and musical practices. In contrast, this article considers the theological foundations of MacMillan's work as a means of enriching musicological interpretation.

The mixture of copious citation with little deeper engagement evident in commentary on MacMillan's religiosity also extends to some of the more unusual expressions MacMillan uses to communicate his musical goals. These include one of the composer's most striking descriptions of his compositional process, relating it to the theologically charged concept of transubstantiation. In Catholic theology, transubstantiation refers to the moment when the sacramental bread and wine of the Eucharist are changed into the real body and blood of Christ. To use it as a description of compositional practice, as MacMillan does, is to align the poietic process of composition with the sacrament of the Eucharist, and thus with a distinctively eucharistic logic and practice. Together with other signifiers of religious experience in both the promotion and the reception of MacMillan's work, this primes audiences to experience MacMillan's music as theologically significant by positioning both composer and music in a distinctively religious sphere. A lack of critical engagement with this specifically Catholic theological term thus hampers the broader interpretation of the composer's work; beyond a richer understanding of MacMillan's compositions and their reception, resolving the connections between theological and musical transubstantiation points towards a reconsideration of Denys Turner's claim that music is 'proto-typically "Eucharistic"'.[3] Moreover, if transubstantiation is seen as a conceptual metaphor – something we think with and through – rather than a heightened synonym for change, detailing the term's eucharistic implications will shed light on how music and theology are mutually disclosive.

Accordingly, I trace aspects of transubstantiation through three distinct levels: religious rituals, musical materials and the spaces, sounds and paratexts of performance. I position MacMillan's musical transubstantiation both as a facet of reworking compositional traditions via the deliberate resituating of borrowed musical materials and as a redescription and extension of the liturgy within the secular space of the concert hall.[4] Throughout I focus on MacMillan's 2009 choral composition *Miserere* – and especially on its associations with the seventeenth-century composition of the same title by Gregorio Allegri – as an example of how this process is worked out in (and beyond) sound.[5] By lifting the scriptural text from the liturgy and refashioning it for extraliturgical performance, MacMillan invokes religious traditions, while his engagement with Allegri's *Miserere* reinterprets the tradition of confessional performance for a

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Levinson and Ariana Phillips-Hutton (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 345–59. Note also that this interdisciplinary discomfort does not extend to the realm of scholarly explorations of music and religious practice, where the literature is both copious and long-standing.

[3]   See Denys Turner, *Faith, Reason, and the Existence of God* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 115–16.

[4]   For more on music's redescription of religion, see Christopher I. Lehrich, 'The Unanswered Question: Music and Theory of Religion', *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 26 (2014), 22–43.

[5]   Note that throughout this article I use *Miserere* in italics to designate the titles of the musical works and 'Miserere mei' in roman type to refer to the text of the psalm.

secular space. This in turn illuminates how sacred music 'carries the liturgy and theology behind [it]' even as it takes on new layers of meaning in contemporary performance.[6] In the case of MacMillan, *Miserere* might be said to transubstantiate music and rituals drawn from the past and to reinscribe them for the present.

Transubstantiation and transformation in the Eucharist

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the Eucharist was instituted by Jesus Christ at the Last Supper as a memorial of his death and resurrection. Biblical accounts of the institution are found in 1 Corinthians and in the synoptic Gospels, while the second-century writer Justin Martyr describes an early Mass as including elements familiar from eucharistic celebrations today.[7] It is 'the source and summit of all Christian life' and the church's pre-eminent sacrament (itself a term meaning a rite endowed with particular significance as a sign that brings about spiritual grace). In this context, transubstantiation describes the Catholic understanding about what happens during the celebration of the Eucharist, namely 'the change of the whole substance of bread into the substance of the Body of Christ and of the whole substance of wine into the substance of his Blood'.[8] Although there have been subsequent alterations, the doctrine of transubstantiation was fleshed out by Thomas Aquinas, who drew on an Aristotelian metaphysics that conceives of everything as a composite of matter and form (hylomorphism).[9] This allowed Aquinas to distinguish between the ordinary transformation of one substance into another, in which the matter remains while its form changes (for example, flour and water become bread), and transubstantiation, in which the entire matter–form composite becomes another being. In other words, transubstantiation signifies that the substance changes while its accidents ('incidental' features such as appearance and chemical composition) are unchanged.

In the Eucharist, transubstantiation is effected by divine action via the intercession of the priest. By partaking of the eucharistic bread and wine transubstantiated into body and blood, communicants participate in the life and death of Christ in such a way as to

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[6] James MacMillan, 'God, Theology and Music', *New Blackfriars*, 81/947 (2000), 16–26 (p. 17).

[7] *Catechism of the Catholic Church: Revised in Accordance with the Official Latin Text Promulgated by Pope John Paul II* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), §§ 1337–45.

[8] *Ibid.*, § 1376. It is worth noting that transubstantiation remains one of the most contentious aspects of Christian doctrine. While both the Eastern churches and Anglicans teach that there are some aspects of 'change' or 'Real Presence' in the Eucharist, neither subscribes directly to transubstantiation. Protestant denominations generally reject transubstantiation in favour of various positions from seeing the Eucharist as a sacramental union to seeing it as only a spiritual symbol. For a concise overview of the history of the Eucharist, see John Baldovin, 'Eucharistic Liturgy and Theology', *Oxford Research Encyclopedias: Religion*, ed. John Barton, <https://oxfordre.com/religion> (accessed 26 May 2020).

[9] It is worth pointing out that 'form' indicates something more than a characteristic shape (even though Aristotle's use of artefacts as examples can give the opposite impression); it might be better understood as a formal principle, or as a thing's definition or essence. For a more detailed examination of form, see Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, VII.7, 1032b1–2. For more on the connection with transubstantiation, see Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 3.75–7, and Brett Salkeld, *Transubstantiation: Theology, History and Christian Unity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), esp. pp. 78–133.

make real, lasting change in their lives. The mystical process of transubstantiation leads to a personal transformation that is at once spiritual and yet anchored in the material processes of eating and drinking.[10] This is, according to Adam Glover, evidence of a distinctively sacramental logic in which 'the spiritual reveals itself in the material [… and] the material, in its turn, functions as a symbol or sacrament of the spiritual'.[11]

Furthermore, this generation of spiritual life through the materiality of the Eucharist is predicated on its ability to disrupt the temporality of ordinary life by transforming the past: it is

> the memorial of Christ's Passover, the making present and the sacramental offering of his unique sacrifice […] In the sense of Sacred Scripture the *memorial* is not merely the recollection of past events [… but] in the liturgical celebration of these events they become in a certain way present and real … [The Eucharist] … *re-presents* (makes present) the sacrifice of the cross.[12]

As this short excerpt from the *Catechism* suggests, the Eucharist is a repeated process of making the past (once-and-for-all) event of Christ's Passover newly present to participants. For the communicant, entry into the liturgical time marked out by the eucharistic ritual is not only a moment of remembering the past historical moment of Christ's death but also of recognition of his resurrected and continuing life in the present. This is made explicit in the emphasis on the presence of Christ in the transubstantiated bread and wine and the widespread acknowledgement that each celebration of the Eucharist is linked to every other such celebration – or, as Matthew Ward quotes Cardinal Josef Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI): '*The celebration of the Eucharist* is not just *a meeting of heaven and earth*; rather it is also *a meeting of the Church then and now* and *a meeting of the Church here and there*.'[13] This collapsing of time and space imparts to the Eucharist a transcendental quality of timelessness that emphasizes the conjunction of past, present and future within its sacrificial narrative.

Transubstantiation is thus the driving force behind the transformational aspects of the Eucharist. Through its intimate association with a ritual in which the physical and spiritual co-inhere and Christ's Passion is reinscribed in liturgical time, transubstantiation transforms time and space at the point where divine action and priestly intercession meet.[14] Glover further extends the importance of eucharistic transubstantiation by arguing that through the event of transubstantiation the sign of the Eucharist

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[10] For an in-depth exploration of the material aspects of the Eucharist, see David Grumett, *Material Eucharist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[11] Adam Glover, 'Music, Poetry, and Eucharist', *Journal of Religion and Literature*, 46/1 (2014), 117–36 (p. 128).

[12] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §§ 1362, 1366.

[13] Josef Ratzinger, 'The Eucharist: Heart of the Church', *Collected Works*, ed. Gerhard Ludwig Müller, 11 vols. to date (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2014–), ii: *Theology of the Liturgy* (2014), 249–98 (p. 268; emphasis original). Quoted in Matthew Ward, 'At Mass with Sir James: MacMillan's *Symphony no. 4* and Liturgical Time', *Tempo*, 72/286 (October 2018), 31–41 (pp. 39–40).

[14] For one perspective on the connection between the Eucharist, repetition and time, see Jeremy Begbie, 'Repetition and Eucharist', *Theology, Music, and Time*, 155–75.

comes to be identical with its meaning: 'In the case of the Eucharist […] the material signifier *is* the meaning and does not merely *point* to it.'[15] In Glover's argument, this semiotic convergence provides a connection with music's own coincidence of signifier and signified. While I will not take up the intricacies of Glover's case here, the multiple points of connection he traces between musical practice and the Eucharist nonetheless suggest that the importation of the concept of transubstantiation into music signifies more than simply a descriptive flourish. Thinking of transubstantiation as a metaphor that provides a necessary theological and conceptual backdrop for MacMillan's music suggests a new perspective on how his music comes to share in the term's theological connotations.

The Eucharist in music

As the *Catechism* makes clear, transubstantiation lies at the heart of the Eucharist's sacramental *anamnesis* (recollection) of the Passion, and for MacMillan its theological implications are intertwined with his understanding of musical value. In a 1997 interview with Julian Johnson and Catherine Sutton, MacMillan situates transubstantiation within his compositional practice by claiming:

> The reason I write music has a lot to do with extra-musical stimulus and the big struggle is to bring about a transubstantiation of that stimulus into music, without diminishing either. The two substances, the music and the extra-musical, are still quite clearly what they are but have in some way become each other, have merged, or have a much more integral relationship than they had before the music was written.[16]

More recently, he has connected his use of the language of transubstantiation with a 'mystical concept of reality' and the 'very clear connections, analogies and parallels' between composition and spiritual language.[17] This suggests that for MacMillan there are multiple layers to transubstantiation – at once a theological concept that describes a mystery at the centre of Catholic life and an example of a customary pattern of thinking that allows for transference between processes of artistic creation and mystical reality.

The importance of eucharistic transubstantiation in MacMillan's work has not gone unnoticed in recent years: Ward has written on how the composer invokes in his Symphony no. 4 the 'out of time' quality of the Eucharist to compress multiple timescales into a single, quasi-liturgical musical moment, while Séan Doherty has analysed the same work in terms of a transubstantiation of the Mass liturgy via quotation and allusion.[18] On a more abstract level, Richard McGregor has deconstructed the 'corporality' of the *Veni, veni, Emmanuel* plainchant as the inspiration for

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15 Glover, 'Music, Poetry, and Eucharist', 121.
16 James MacMillan, Julian Johnson and Catherine Sutton, 'Raising Sparks: On the Music of James Macmillan', *Tempo*, new ser., 202 (October 1997), 1–35 (p. 18).
17 James MacMillan and Richard McGregor, 'James MacMillan: A Conversation and Commentary', *Musical Times*, 151/1912 (2010), 69–100 (pp. 76–7).
18 Ward, 'At Mass with Sir James', 40; Séan Doherty, 'The Mass "Transubstantiated" into Music: Quotation and Allusion in James MacMillan's Fourth Symphony', *Music and Letters*, 99 (2018), 635–71.

MacMillan's percussion concerto of the same title.[19] All of these interpretations recognize the connections between MacMillan's music and Catholic sacramental theology, although they do not unfold music's relationship to sacrament in any detail. Yet understanding how music might participate in this theology seems critical for understanding the 'connections, analogies and parallels' between MacMillan's music and the religious language in which it is caught up.[20] One convincing avenue for exploration is through the relationship between music and the liturgy. Edward Foley and Judith Kubicki both argue that liturgical music's function as a symbol for the liturgy's theological realities means that the music is properly understood as sacramental itself.[21] Whether extraliturgical music could be considered sacramental in precisely the same way seems doubtful, but as the analyses by Doherty, McGregor and Ward suggest, the relationship between liturgical and non-liturgical (or sacramental and non-sacramental) in MacMillan's music may be less clear-cut than initially presumed. This is particularly evident in the case of his *Miserere*, as a composition that engages deeply with liturgical traditions, indicating that Turner's claim that music is 'proto-typically "Eucharistic"' must be fleshed out with a contextual analysis of these components in MacMillan's thinking.

Arising from this, transubstantiation within MacMillan's compositional practice signifies three distinct practices of integrating the musical and the extramusical. First, it refers to music's invocation of the timelessness of eucharistic ritual and formal liturgical structures through its re-presentation of older materials. Peeling back the layers of signification that underlie MacMillan's persistent return to the central points of Christian belief reveals a productive juxtaposition of past and present that 'bring[s] together the timeless and the contemporary'.[22] Secondly, and most audibly, it is grounded in his characteristic weaving together of musical materials and influences from diverse sources such that 'within the body of music, within the "stuff" of music there is this continual transformation […] of materials beginning to turn into, not something else but maybe a heightened version of themselves'.[23] This transformational change of physical materials is such that they acquire significance beyond that of their original forms in a process that might be seen as analogous to the transubstantiation of bread and wine. Thirdly, by foregrounding specific rituals and theological positions

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[19] Richard McGregor, '"Transubstantiated into the Musical …": Metaphor and Reality in James MacMillan's *Veni Veni Emmanuel*', *A Companion to Recent Scottish Music: 1950 to the Present*, ed. Graham Hair (Glasgow: Musica Scotica Trust, 2007), 21–42. Note that McGregor has also argued for the importance of transubstantiation, but his characterization of 'the symbolic as referential' is narrower than my approach here. See his '"A Metaphor for the Deeper Wintriness": Exploring James MacMillan's Musical Identity', *Tempo*, 65/257 (July 2011), 22–39 (pp. 31–2).

[20] There is some resonance between my approach here and Jeremy Begbie's work on the relationship between music and theological language in his *Music, Modernity, and God: Essays in Listening* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[21] Edward Foley, *Ritual Music: Studies in Liturgical Musicology* (Beltsville, MD: Pastoral Press, 1995), esp. 107–26; Judith Marie Kubicki, 'Music as Ritual Symbol', *Worship*, 69 (1995), 427–46. See also Anthony Ruff, *Sacred Music and Liturgical Reform* (Chicago, IL: Hillenbrand Books, 2007), esp. pp. 19–53.

[22] MacMillan, 'God, Theology and Music', 19.

[23] MacMillan and McGregor, 'James MacMillan', 76–7.

within a spiritual narrative, musical transubstantiation reinforces the potential for music to effect transformational change in its audiences.[24] This last point is the most abstract, and bears a strong resemblance to the positioning of art as a replacement religion (or, indeed, Steiner's unwritten theology);[25] yet, in this case it makes a claim for the reinvigoration of both religious and aesthetic sensibilities rather than a replacement of one by the other. More importantly, connecting the language of musical transubstantiation and artistic transformation shapes the perception of Mac-Millan as distinctively theologically attuned and his work as especially spiritually efficacious – at least for certain segments of his audience.

MacMillan's metaphorical use of transubstantiation as a term to describe his compositions indicates that his music serves as eucharistic *practice* in the sense that it bodies forth something of the role of the Eucharist in the church, even as it may be seen as practice *for* the Eucharist in that its performance is preparation for the ritual experience of transcendence and transformation that the Eucharist implies. Taken together, this suggests that both the poietic and performative aspects of music can be seen as enacting something of the eucharistic mystery. The equivocation of this wording reflects the challenges attending this analysis. The eucharistic understanding of transubstantiation relies on a distinction between the apparent features of bread and wine and their true nature in the eucharistic moment as Christ's body and blood. It is this change that allows those who fully participate in the ritual to be changed in their turn.[26] Applying this eucharistic model to music runs into difficulty almost immediately: how is matter distinguished from form? What is music's substance? How might consuming music change an audience? Is the composer analogous to the priest? Such a literal approach seems both overly constrained and prone to serious theological misadventure; instead, musical transubstantiation illuminates how the Eucharist serves as a foundational interpretative image for MacMillan. MacMillan's music can bring together the formal ritual structures and musical materials of the Catholic Church and re-present them in ways that interpret music alongside theological concepts.

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[24] See, for example, MacMillan on his Symphony no. 5: 'The whole point of writing a piece like this […] is to address those questions: why is music able to speak to me in the deepest part of my soul and bring about that sense of transformation?' Quoted in David Cheal, 'Turbulent Realms of the Spirit', *Financial Times*, 6 July 2019.

[25] In addition to being a staple of newspaper headlines (see 'Art as Religion', *New York Times*, 30 July 1989, section 2, p. 3; and Francesca Gavin, 'How Art Replaced Religion', *The Guardian*, 30 May 2007, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/artblog/2007/may/30/howartreplacedreligion>, accessed 26 May 2020), the proclamation of art as religion has been associated with philosophers and critics from Matthew Arnold (esp. in *Culture and Anarchy and Other Writings*, ed. Stefan Collini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)) to Alain de Botton and John Armstrong (*Art as Therapy* (London: Phaidon Press, 2013)). One of the most rigorous examinations of the claim for art as religion that includes a discussion of music is Gordon Graham's *The Re-enchantment of the World: Art versus Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[26] Aquinas (and others) make a distinction between physical participation and spiritual participation; for example, a mouse which consumed consecrated bread would partake physically in the body of Christ, but would not participate spiritually. By analogy, it is possible for a human communicant to participate physically but not spiritually.

This understanding of a musical transubstantiation fits with the commentary offered by the Dominican friar Gilbert Márkus on the nature of art:

> It's about how art transforms, taking the substance of daily life and offering a symbol which transforms and transubstantiates the patterns of human toil and loss. That's very much what goes on in the Eucharist. The bread and wine continue to be white and crumbly and alcoholic, but what is present is something new, a radical new creation. People are still unemployed and their marriages are breaking up and people are dying and everything is the same, and yet everything is different through this ritual transformation, or artistic transformation.[27]

There is evident slippage here (also present in MacMillan's various formulations) between ideas of transformation and transubstantiation that reflect a broader understanding of transubstantiation as making something new, different and – crucially – efficacious. These strong and weak senses of transubstantiation are folded into one another, and keeping these mutually constitutive aspects in view is key for a full understanding of MacMillan's terminology.

Márkus suggests that transubstantiation is part of a general aestheticizing or edifying function of art, but MacMillan's compositions aim to be more than a means of material transformation or an aesthetic experience that offers temporary relief from or reinterpretation of human suffering. The liturgical and theological references they carry assert the composition and performance of music as a moment in which the spiritually efficacious rituals and traditions of the Christian church are reinterpreted and reinscribed within contemporary listening practices. In the remainder of this article I demonstrate how MacMillan's *Miserere* offers a particularly powerful example of how extraliturgical music might participate in quasi-sacramental transubstantiation by bringing the time, rituals, spaces and musical practices of Catholic Christianity into being in new and importantly displaced ways.[28] This displacement offers a deeper understanding of MacMillan's curious theological terminology and its musical import.

Performing rituals and MacMillan's *Miserere*

In his programme note accompanying the percussion concerto *Veni, veni, Emmanuel* (1992), MacMillan sets out two potential avenues for interpretation: 'On one level it is a purely abstract work in which all the musical material is drawn from the 15th century French Advent plainchant. On another level it is a musical exploration of the theology behind the Advent message.'[29] Like this earlier work, his *Miserere* is interpretable on different levels, but separating the musical material and the theology behind it is not as easy as MacMillan seems to suggest, nor are the divisions between interpretations quite

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27 Father Gilbert Márkus, OP, quoted in MacMillan, Johnson and Sutton, 'Raising Sparks', 14.
28 For other interpretations of how sacred sounds instantiate religious practices, see Lawrence E. Sullivan, *Enchanting Powers: Music in the World's Religions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), and *Resounding Transcendence: Transitions in Music, Religion, and Ritual*, ed. Jeffers Engelhardt and Philip V. Bohlman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).
29 James MacMillan, programme notes for *Veni, veni, Emmanuel*, <https://www.boosey.com/cr/music/James-MacMillan-Veni-Veni-Emmanuel/3051> (accessed 26 May 2020).

so neat. In particular, MacMillan's invocation of the Eucharist as part of his compositional process demands further exploration of the relationship between Catholic theology, liturgy and music. Tracing *Miserere*'s heritage through its choice of text, musical allusions and performance traditions reveals how it is anchored in the musico-liturgical context of Good Friday, and thus participates in its sacramental and theological character.

Psalm-setting and the liturgy

The ritual role of text is of particular significance to MacMillan: Patrick Russill considers him to use text 'not as half-understood symbols of some dimly remembered religious cultural phenomenon, but as powerful theological statements whose resonance is increased by their life in continuing ritual activity'.[30] *Miserere* sets the text of Psalm 51 (50), also known from its incipit as the 'Miserere mei'.[31] Together with Psalm 130 (129) ('De profundis'), Psalm 51 (50) is the most famous of the seven psalms known since at least the sixth century as the Penitential Psalms or Psalms of Confession.[32] Traditionally attributed to King David, the psalm's superscription notes that he composed this psalm 'when Nathan the prophet came unto him after he had gone into Bathsheba', but the text does not depict this incident directly, instead presenting a sophisticated and affecting plea for divine forgiveness.[33] Although Psalm 51 (50) shares its first-person perspective with a number of other psalms, it is the only penitential psalm that explicitly portrays the psalmist in the act of confession, giving it a remarkably intimate character.

The psalm can be roughly divided into two sections, with verses 3–14 representing the psalmist's confessions of sin and pleas for pardon (see Table 1).[34] The remaining seven verses evince a distinct change in attitude, with the speaker joyfully anticipating forgiveness. This latter section can be further subdivided into an assured expectation of personal deliverance in verses 15–19 and the collective or national deliverance anticipated in verses 20 and 21. The passion of this supplication gives the psalm a keen

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[30]   Patrick Russill, 'Cantos sagrados', *Musical Times*, 137/1837 (1996), 35–7 (p. 36).
[31]   There are two different numbering systems for the psalms, one derived from the Hebrew Masoretic text and one from the Greek Septuagint. Protestant denominations and many informal Roman Catholic writings use the Masoretic numbers, whereas the Orthodox churches and official Roman Catholic writings use those from the Septuagint. Hereafter, I will follow MacMillan's practice and refer to the 'Miserere mei' as Psalm 51 (50).
[32]   In the Septuagint, these psalms are numbers 6, 31, 37, 50, 101, 129 and 142. A now largely discredited tradition suggested the collection originated with Augustine of Hippo (354–430 AD), but regardless of its origins, by the time of the *Commentary on the Psalms* of Cassiodorus (*c*.485–*c*.585 AD) the psalms of the penitents were an established grouping. For more information, see Clare Costley King'oo, *Miserere mei: The Penitential Psalms in Late Medieval and Early Modern England* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012).
[33]   The reference is to one of the most notorious episodes in the king's life, recounted in 2 Samuel 11–12, in which the king commits adultery with Bathsheba, then orders her husband Uriah murdered in an attempt to cover up his transgression. Although the cover-up is initially successful, when the prophet Nathan confronts David about his actions, the king repents.
[34]   Note that the numbering of verses in the psalm depends on whether or not the superscription is included. Here I follow MacMillan in labelling the verses following the superscription as vv. 3–21.

TABLE 1
PSALM 51 (50), VERSES 3–21 IN LATIN AND ENGLISH
(DOUAY-RHEIMS TRANSLATION)

SECTION 1: CONFESSION OF SIN

[3] Miserere mei, Deus, secundum magnam misericordiam tuam:
et secundum multitudinem miserationum tuarum, dele iniquitatem meam.

[4] Amplius lava me ab iniquitate mea:
et a peccato meo munda me.

[5] Quoniam iniquitatem meam ego cognosco:
et peccatum meum contra me est semper.

[6] Tibi soli peccavi, et malum coram te feci:

ut justificeris in sermonibus tuis, et vincas cum judicaris.

[7] Ecce enim in iniquitatibus conceptus sum:
et in peccatis concepit me mater mea.

[8] Ecce enim veritatem dilexisti:
incerta et occulta sapientiae tuae manifestasti mihi.

[9] Asperges me hyssopo, et mundabor:

lavabis me, et super nivem dealbabor.

[10] Auditui meo dabis gaudium et laetitiam:
et exsultabunt ossa humiliata.

[11] Averte faciem tuam a peccatis meis:
et omnes iniquitates meas dele.

[12] Cor mundum crea in me, Deus:
Et spiritum rectum innova in visceribus meis.

[13] Ne projicias me a facie tua:
et spiritum sanctum tuum ne auferas a me.

[14] Redde mihi laetitiam salutaris tui:
et spiritu principali confirma me.

SECTION 2A: EXPECTATION OF DELIVERANCE

[15] Docebo iniquos vias tuas:
et impii ad te convertentur.

[16] Libera me de sanguinibus, Deus, Deus salutis meae:
et exsultabit lingua mea justitiam tuam.

[17] Domine, labia mea aperies:
et os meum annuntiabit laudem tuam.

[18] Quoniam si voluisses sacrificium, dedissem utique:
holocaustis non delectaberis.

[19] Sacrificium Deo spiritus contribulatus:
cor contritum, et humiliatum, Deus, non despicies.

[3] Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy great mercy.
And according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my iniquity.

[4] Wash me yet more from mine iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.

[5] For l know my iniquity,
and my sin is ever before me.

[6] Against thee only have l sinned, and have done evil before thee:
that thou mayst be justified in thy words, and mayst overcome when thou art judged.

[7] For behold, l was conceived in iniquities;
and in sins did my mother conceive me.

[8] For behold, thou hast loved truth:
the uncertain and hidden things of thy wisdom thou hast made manifest to me.

[9] Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed:
thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow.

[10] To my hearing thou shalt give joy and gladness:
and the bones that have been humbled shall rejoice.

[11] Turn away thy face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.

[12] Create a clean heart in me, O God:
and renew a right spirit within my bowels.

[13] Cast me not away from thy face;
and take not thy holy spirit from me.

[14] Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation,
and strengthen me with a perfect spirit.

[15] I will teach the unjust thy ways;
and the wicked shall be converted to thee.

[16] Deliver me from blood, O God, thou God of my salvation:
and my tongue shall extol thy justice.

[17] O Lord, thou wilt open my lips,
and my mouth shall declare thy praise.

[18] For if thou hadst desired sacrifice, l would indeed have given it:
with burnt offerings thou wilt not be delighted.

[19] A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit:
a contrite and humbled heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

Table 1 (cont.)

SECTION 2B: NATIONAL REDEMPTION	
[20] Benigne fac, Domine, in bona voluntate tua Sion: ut aedificentur muri Jerusalem.	[20] Deal favourably, O Lord, in thy good will with Sion; that the walls of Jerusalem may be built up.
[21] Tunc acceptabis sacrificium justitiae, oblationes, et holocausta: tunc imponent super altare tuum vitulos.	[21] Then shalt thou accept the sacrifice of justice, oblations and whole burnt offerings; then shall they lay calves upon thine altar.

edge, often achieved through successive chiastic parallelisms that compound the emotional character of the text. For example, in verse 3 the psalmist reinforces his request for God's intervention: first, 'Have mercy on me, O God', and then 'blot out my iniquity'. This is immediately followed by a twofold entreaty for purification in verse 4. The depth and range of the poetic text have led to the psalm being a frequent part of Christian services centred on penance and forgiveness, and it is especially associated in the Roman Catholic tradition with Ash Wednesday and the Lenten season of preparation that follows. It is centrally embedded in Christian narratives of confession and redemption; any musical setting of this iconic text necessarily partakes in the palimpsest of meanings that have accrued to it.

In addition to the multiple resonances of the text, we must consider the long tradition of musical settings when evaluating the background of Psalm 51 (50). MacMillan's composition exists within a group of settings of this text that includes influential works by Josquin des Prez, Orlando de Lassus, Jean-Baptiste Lully, Wolfgang Mozart, Charles Gounod and Arvo Pärt. These efforts notwithstanding, the musical subgenre of 'Miserere mei' settings is dominated by that of Allegri. Allegri, a singer in the papal choir from 1629 until his death in 1652, would probably have been relegated to a minor footnote in musical history were it not for the pervasive influence of the work that made him a one-hit wonder. He composed his *Miserere* in or before 1638 and it swiftly became a part of the regular rotation within the Sistine Chapel, eventually gaining a semi-permanent place in Holy Week services, especially the Lauds Tenebrae services on Holy Wednesday and Good Friday.[35] The Allegri *Miserere* remains one of the most popular sacred choral works – far outstripping those of other composers in numbers of performances and recordings[36] – and, as we shall

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[35] For a more thorough history of the Allegri *Miserere* including manuscript sources, see Julius Amann, *Allegris Miserere und die Aufführungspraxis in der Sixtina nach Reiseberichten und Musik-handschriften* (Birkeneck: St Georgsheim, 1935). Ben Byram-Wigfield has a briefer overview in English published as 'A Quest for the Holy Grail?', rev. edn (2007), Ancient Groove Music, <http://www.ancientgroove.co.uk/essays/AllegriBook.pdf> (accessed 28 June 2021). Other elements of this history can be found in a range of popular writings on Allegri's *Miserere* including Peter Phillips, 'Hearing Voices', *The Spectator*, 10 March 2007, which debunks the idea that the *abbellimenti* of Allegri's time might have included the 'high C'.

[36] As a rough guide to Allegri's dominance, the Naxos Music Library lists more than 160 recordings of Allegri's *Miserere.* Of the composers I mention, Josquin's is the next most popular with nine, followed by MacMillan's with seven. Internet searches on the same composers reveal a similarly stark division:

see, it serves as a direct model for MacMillan's composition. This means that it is neither solely the Psalm 51 (50) text itself nor the rituals with which the text is associated that MacMillan might be said to transubstantiate: it is also the accumulated traditions drawn from Allegri and the Sistine Chapel that surround *Miserere* as a musical and liturgical work.

Over the past three centuries, the fame of Allegri's *Miserere* has been sustained in part by one of the great moments of musical mythology: the story of Mozart's allegedly illegal transcription of the piece after hearing it in the Sistine Chapel during the Holy Week services of 1770. Scholars have suggested that some of the rhetoric surrounding this feat has been exaggerated, but its place within the wider narrative of Mozart as child prodigy means the composition retains a certain mystique.[37] Beyond its association with Mozart, other potential explanations for its popularity include the delicate improvised ornamentation (*abbellimenti*) created by the singers in the papal choir and the emotional impact of the soaring high C6 in the treble of the familiar modern version (itself probably the result of a mistake in handling Mendelssohn's transcription in the nineteenth century). Against such musico-structural suggestions, Peter Gillgren has argued that *Miserere*'s fame stems from its position within the Good Friday liturgy as celebrated in the Sistine Chapel.[38] In other words, even though the Allegri *Miserere* may be best known today in extraliturgical contexts, it became so owing to its specifically liturgical history.

Gillgren points in particular to the extraordinary multimedia effect of hearing Allegri's *Miserere* performed for Tenebrae services during Holy Week, in which the lights in the chapel were extinguished one by one as the events surrounding Christ's crucifixion were remembered. As an example of its effect, he quotes the French neoclassical painter Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres's account from the first decade of the nineteenth century:

> Finally, at nightfall […] a perfect silence prepares and announces the celestial beginning of those voices that begin the *Miserere.* Everything, at that moment, is in harmony with this music; it is getting dark, and the twilight scarcely permits one to glimpse the terrifying painting of the *Last Judgment*, whose prodigious effect impresses a kind of terror on the soul. Finally, finally, I don't know what more to say to you; telling you this overwhelms me, if it can be told at all, for it must be seen and heard to be believed.[39]

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approximately 784,000 hits for 'Allegri Miserere', but only 63,000 and 87,000 for those by Josquin and MacMillan respectively.

[37] In his book *The Musical Mind: The Cognitive Psychology of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), John A. Sloboda notes that the memorization required is not as great as might be supposed, given that half the work is in (relatively) easy to memorize plainchant. Byram-Wigfield joins numerous others in casting doubt on some of the more exotic details of the story, claiming: 'The details of this story are pure 19th-century invention […] No order of excommunication has been found in papal edicts. Mozart was not the first to copy the work: it had been performed in London twice before he copied it and copies were widely available to tourists, despite the supposed penalty.' 'A Quest for the Holy Grail?', 17.

[38] Peter Gillgren, 'Siting Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* in a Multimedia Context: Art, Music and Ceremony in the Sistine Chapel', *Konsthistorisk tidskrift*, 80 (2011), 65–89.

[39] Letter from Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres to M. Forestier, Holy Week 1807, in *Ingres: Raconté par lui-même et par ses amis*, ed. Pierre Cailler, 2 vols., Les grands artistes racontés par eux-mêmes et par leurs amis, 5–6 (Geneva: Vésenaz, 1947), i, 118–19. Cited in and trans. Richard Boursy, 'The

Ingres was not the only one to be so moved: 75 years later, the Swedish composer Gunnar Wennerberg described a similar experience thus: 'A minute of holy silence follows; And then, as a cry from the depths rises Miserere. Never shall I forget this moment, so moving and solemn. I was ecstatic … and beside myself.'[40] As Richard Boursy has shown, Wennerberg and Ingres are part of a tourist tradition of visiting the Sistine Chapel to experience Allegri's *Miserere* in situ; nevertheless, each points to it as a blend of devotional and aesthetic experience.[41]

More than a century after Wennerberg, hearing Allegri's *Miserere* in the Sistine Chapel is still popular with both tourists and worshippers, but far more are likely to hear the work in film scores, choral concerts and via numerous extant recordings. Yet many listeners continue to note its peculiar power with descriptive language that relies on religious connotation. Hearing a snippet on the radio, one listener is 'transfixed' by its 'limpid, spiritual loveliness with an undertow of passion', while another connects its spiritual purpose to its musical construction, praising the 'sombre and searching spirituality that permeates the music' and suggesting that 'the high piercing notes [recall] the piercing guilt and the pierced Christ'.[42] Even though each of these commentators is describing the experience of listening to *Miserere* in the uniquely modern medium of the recording, the echoes of Wennerberg and Ingres are clearly heard in this twenty-first-century language. It seems that even when performed in a secular context the Allegri *Miserere* retains some proportion of that mystery that occasioned such strong reactions in centuries past.

Of course, the use of spiritual language does not mean that contemporary listeners experience the Allegri *Miserere* as liturgical or potentially sacramental. In the same way, even though MacMillan may see his composition of *Miserere* as a quasi-liturgical act, he did not intend it to be performed as part of a liturgy, and the majority of listeners are unlikely to perceive it as such.[43] Nonetheless, it participates in a similar constellation of connotation that is reinforced by its connection with Allegri's composition. MacMillan's *Miserere* was commissioned as a response to Allegri's *Miserere* by AMUZ (Festival van Vlaanderen Antwerpen) and premièred by the choral group The Sixteen at the Laus Polyphoniae festival in 2009.[44] That year's theme was the Sistine Chapel, and the concert programme set MacMillan as a foil to a panoply of sacred music from Renaissance composers including Felice Anerio, Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina

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Mystique of the Sistine Chapel Choir in the Romantic Era', *Journal of Musicology*, 11 (1993), 277–329 (p. 319).

[40] 'En minut af helig tystnad följer; Och så stiger som ett rop ur djupen Miserere. Aldrig skall jag glömma Denna stund, så gripande högtidlig. Jag var hänförd … utom mig.' Gunnar Wennerberg, 'Allegris Miserere', *Romerska minnen* (Stockholm: J. Seligmann, 1881), 128–36 (p. 133).

[41] Boursy, 'The Mystique of the Sistine Chapel Choir'.

[42] Sid Nuncius, 'Still an Absolute Gem', and Kurt Messick, 'Stunning', reviews of *Allegri: Miserere* by the Tallis Scholars, CD Gimell (2005), 23 April 2010 and 15 July 2005 respectively, <www.amazon.co.uk/Allegri-Miserere-Tallis-Scholars/dp/B000B865AA> (accessed 26 May 2020).

[43] For more on the prevalence of comparing composition to a liturgical act, see Richard McGregor, 'Laus Deo? On Composers' Expression of their Spirituality', *Spirituality and Health International*, 6 (2005), 238–45 (p. 241).

[44] Note the religious connotations of the festival's title, which suggests an echo of the phrase 'Laus Deo' ('Praise be to God') alongside the more straightforward 'polyphony's praise'.

and – of course – Allegri.[45] The material accompanying the festival underlined this, declaring: 'The tradition of the papacy and the musical aspects surrounding it are still a quasi-continuous line […] It was an imperative for us to integrate this aspect and to assign it to a contemporary master'; later, it describes MacMillan's setting as a 'contemporary counterpart' to the Allegri in which the composer 'take[s] on a real challenge' in maintaining a referential relationship with 'the famous (or infamous) *Miserere*' while also forging a new direction.[46] Despite the non-liturgical character of the première concert, the surroundings of Antwerp's Sint-Carolus Borromeuskerk, the thematic thread of the Sistine Chapel and the liturgical character of other pieces on the programme suggest that MacMillan's *Miserere* was initially heard in the context of Renaissance liturgical music and – specifically – the Allegri *Miserere* as it might have been heard as part of a liturgy in the Sistine Chapel during Holy Week. Thus, MacMillan's deep engagement with Allegri as an inspiration and a compositional model is augmented and complicated by the ritual traditions that the two compositions share.

Although MacMillan's *Miserere* is not logogenic in the sense of textual structure generating musical structure (as is the case, for example, in Pärt's *Miserere*), neither is it a case of choosing a text for its straightforwardly sonic qualities (as is the case in MacMillan's Symphony no. 5).[47] In setting the text of Psalm 51 (50), MacMillan explicitly draws upon its theological significance as ritually and musically mediated through Allegri's *Miserere* and the performance traditions of Good Friday. The text and musical connections set the foundations, while the continual renewal of these associations through subsequent programming, reception and marketing indicates that even when framed by performance in a concert (hall), *Miserere* brings Christian sacramental traditions to bear on the contemporary world.[48] This is not a return to the liturgical setting of Allegri and the Sistine Chapel; rather, MacMillan transubstantiates these traditions in such a way as to suggest that his work may be considered sacramental in character (though not in function). Understanding the composer's invocation of these liturgical moments as well as the way this orientation has been taken up by performers and audiences clarifies the position of *Miserere* as a particular kind of aesthetic experience that is at the same time a reinterpretation of religious ritual and belief.

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[45]   AMUZ concert promotion, <https://amuz.be/?s=2009> (accessed 10 July 2021).

[46]   Festival programme, 'Laus Polyphoniae 2009: Cappella Sistina', 23, 355–6, <https://amuz.be/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Cappella-Sistina.pdf> (accessed 10 July 2021).

[47]   For more on logogenesis in Pärt, see Jeffers Engelhardt, 'Perspectives on Pärt after 1980', *The Cambridge Companion to Arvo Pärt*, ed. Andrew Shenton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 29–48 (p. 39); for MacMillan's description of the 'sound impressions and associations' that shaped his Fifth Symphony, see his accompanying programme note, <https://www.boosey.com/cr/music/James-MacMillan-Symphony-No-5-Le-grand-Inconnu/102048> (accessed 26 May 2020).

[48]   For example, through repeated pairing of the MacMillan *Miserere* with works that accompanied sacramental life (often in religious settings), by describing it in language redolent of a sacralized ritual experience or by constructing it as a space for a distinctively religious experience. I include some specific examples of these processes below.

Words and music: intertextuality in *Miserere*

Integrating music with this extramusical liturgical tradition relies on a series of transformational changes in musical materials which come together to reinterpret the liturgical experience of *Miserere*. Having established the significance of the relationship between Allegri, MacMillan and the liturgy, I now turn to the textual and sonic components of MacMillan's composition to discover how abstract spiritual concepts and rituals become concrete within its musical structures, thereby coming to embody the eucharistic logic and sense of time that are key characteristics of transubstantiation. This leads in the next section to a consideration of the spiritual narrativization of *Miserere* and of MacMillan in general in the wider setting of performance and recording.

From a text-setting perspective, the idea of transubstantiation as signifying thoroughgoing transformational change does not seem to provide any immediate insight into the relationship between the two compositions: both Allegri's and MacMillan's pieces set Psalm 51 (50) in full. Allegri's verse-setting alternates between plainchant and *falsobordone* sections for four- and five-voice choirs, and in many modern performances this pattern is maintained throughout. The constraints of this structure minimize the connection between the text and the musical drama; in the place of a teleological musical structure, the compositional drama is woven into the individual sections in the form of suspensions, unexpected dissonances and the graceful leaps and runs that set off the polyphonic choral sections. In contrast, MacMillan sets the Latin psalm text for eight mixed voices *a cappella*. His sound world encompasses a wider range of harmonic colours and rhythmic variety than Allegri's, yet despite occasional elisions of the breaks between verses, the lack of repetition and graceful lyricism grant the text and its formal structure a peculiar transparency that mirrors the older composition.

More significant for the musical transformational processes underlying this transubstantiation is MacMillan's frequent recycling and borrowing of compositional material. This is congruent with his eclectic style, which, according to the critic Stephen Johnson, encompasses influences from Celtic folk music, Harrison Birtwistle, Ives, Messiaen, Schnittke, Shostakovich and Wagner. These influences, supplemented by occasional quotations, are unified by a 'deeply ingrained feeling for musical storytelling'.[49] MacMillan's embrace of quotation (auto- or otherwise) and allusion is motivated in part by a theological stance that considers the recombination and recovery of musical fragments part of an 'eternally regenerative creative process' analogous (if subsidiary) to the act of divine creation.[50] In *Miserere*, the attempt to bring the rituals of confession and the text of the 'Miserere mei' to full expression in the music means that by the time the piece reaches its close MacMillan has layered a series of musical fragments – each with its own sets of connotations – that richly intertwine to transform the material from the opening phrase through to the final chord.

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[49] Stephen Johnson, 'Introduction to the Music of James MacMillan', <www.boosey.com/pdf/brochure/2799_En.pdf> (accessed 26 May 2020).

[50] MacMillan, 'God, Theology and Music', 22.

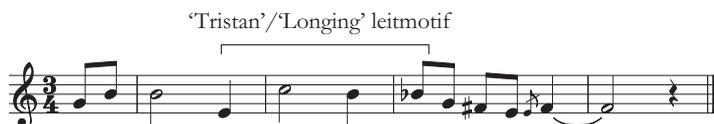Example 1 'Tryst' theme from James MacMillan's *Miserere* (2009).

There are six key melodic elements that make up *Miserere*; all except one are borrowed from other works and some have appeared in many instances throughout MacMillan's oeuvre. For example, *Miserere*'s opening phrase sets a mood of reflective quietude with the *piano* entrance of all tenor and bass parts sounding 'desolate and cold' as the familiar plea of 'miserere mei' rises from the depths (see Example 1). Listeners closely acquainted with MacMillan's compositions might recognize this theme as a minor-key version of the melody from a Scottish folk ballad that he wrote in 1984. The ballad, which sets William Soutar's love poem *The Tryst*, appeared in different guises in MacMillan's works throughout the 1980s and 1990s, including the congregational portion of the Sanctus in *St Anne's Mass* (1985), the violin-and-piano miniature *After the Tryst* (1988), the 'Credo' section of *Búsqueda* (1988) and both orchestral and chamber ensemble settings of the ballad entitled *Tryst* (1989) and *Scots Song* (1991) respectively. The multiple contexts in which this melody occurs lend it a richness of inference evident in MacMillan's claim (in describing it as the 'emotional core' of *Tryst*) that, 'Its melodic characteristics […] seem to imply many very strong associations – commitment, sanctity, intimacy, faith […], love, but it is also saturated with a sadness as if all these things are about to expire.'[51] Far from the 'Tryst' melody becoming muddied by this multiplicity, it is the 'transformation of tradition, religion and heritage', as Phillip Cooke notes, that gives it such 'longevity' within MacMillan's compositional practice.[52]

More recently, the same melody has appeared in the final – instrumental – movement of the *St John Passion* (2008). This appearance is particularly resonant for this discussion because, as Hugh Pyper suggests, a concert performance of the

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[51] James MacMillan, programme notes for *The Tryst*, <www.boosey.com/cr/music/James-MacMillan-Tryst/5742> (accessed 26 May 2020).

[52] Phillip A. Cooke, *The Music of James MacMillan* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2019), 26–7. James Rohde considers the 'Tryst' melody as evidence of the deep connection between Scottish culture and (Catholic) faith in MacMillan. See 'James MacMillan's "Seven Last Words from the Cross" and "Stabat Mater": Analysis and Approach' (DMA dissertation, Boston University, 2017), 45.

Example 2 Alto theme with interpolated reference to 'Tristan' or 'Longing' leitmotif.
MacMillan, *Miserere* (2009).

Passion re-presents 'not only the text of the Gospel but the liturgical experience of the
Good Friday liturgy', and is thus a model for *Miserere*.[53] Despite having no sung text,
this movement is the apotheosis of the *Passion*'s sacrificial narrative, leading Cooke to
suggest that the melody serves to 'ameliorate previous transgressions'.[54] If this were not
a clear enough indication of the *Passion*'s winding together of musical and religious
implications, the last movement is subtitled 'Sanctus immortalis, miserere nobis'
('Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us'). This fragmentary title is itself the closing
line of the Trisagion prayer, sung in the Catholic Good Friday liturgy during the
Adoration of the Cross. The movement of this love-song melody through these musical
contexts thus culminates in Good Friday: re-emphasizing the role of ritual practices in
informing MacMillan's compositions, but also offering a glimpse into how Soutar's
love poem is transubstantiated into a love song between Christ and the church.[55]

The next compositional borrowing is much better known: the opening four notes of
the Prelude to Richard Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, or what has come to be known as
the 'Tristan' or 'Longing' leitmotif (see Example 2).[56] This is another of MacMillan's
frequent borrowings; like the 'Tryst' melody, it connotes both human love and
sacrifice.[57] In *Miserere*, the alto's ascending minor sixth followed by a chromatic
descent disrupts the previously third-orientated melodic movement, but before the
implications of the appearance of 'Tristan' can be fully absorbed, it is replaced by a
rhythmically complex soprano line marked 'keening, crying'. This description imme-
diately suggests comparisons with the ancient Gaelic practice of mourning, but
Dominic Wells notes that this particular melody also has a history within MacMillan's

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[53] Hugh S. Pyper, 'Crucifixion in the Concert Hall: Secular and Sacred in James MacMillan's *Passion of
      St John*', *Literature and Theology*, 23 (2009), 344–55 (p. 344).
[54] Cooke, *The Music of James MacMillan*, 180.
[55] The most recent incarnation of the 'Tryst' melody is in MacMillan's 2016 sonata for violin and piano
      Before the Tryst. This completes the Tryst triptych begun in the 1980s and complements the
      1988 miniature *After the Tryst*.
[56] Dominic Wells notes that this fragment is also prominent in Olivier Messiaen's work and quotes
      Messiaen on the connection between Catholicism and the story of Tristan and Isolde: 'They are
      united in one and the same idea: divine love!' Wells, 'James MacMillan: Retrospective Modernist'
      (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Durham, 2012), 95.
[57] Several authors (including MacMillan himself) point to Roger Scruton's work *Death-Devoted Heart:
      Sex and the Sacred in Wagner* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) as a formative influence on
      MacMillan's connection between love and sacrificial-redemptive narratives. Dominic Wells suggests
      that it is in this importation of *Tristan* into *Miserere* that MacMillan 'develops the eros–death
      relationship of *Tristan* into a Christian, *agapé*–death relationship'. Wells, 'Sacramental Passions',
      Contemporary Music and Spirituality, ed. Robert Sholl and Sander van Maas (Abingdon: Routledge,
      2017), 37–53 (p. 48).

oeuvre, highlighting its appearances in the final movement of the *St John Passion*, at the close of *The Birds of Rhiannon* (2001) and in Act 3 of MacMillan's opera *The Sacrifice* (2005–6).[58] With respect to the opera, Wells comments that the web of connotations 'is by no means arbitrary […] The resemblance between the psalm's penitential text and the General's pleading for forgiveness [in *The Sacrifice*] is clearly evident: in each case, the sinner is aware of his guilt and wants to be washed clean of his fault.'[59]

The final three melodic themes appear between verses 7 and 10, beginning in verses 7 and 8 with a forceful descending subject also heard in both the *St John Passion* and Act 3 of *The Sacrifice.* This leads up to a turning point at the opening of verse 9 ('Asperges me'), when for the first time we have a melody that seems to be unique to *Miserere.* This verse opens after a single rest, with the choir entering on a B major chord, before pushing forward into resolution onto the tonic of E minor. Marked 'pleading' in the score, the ascending semitone resolutions in the tenor and soprano sound particularly plangent. MacMillan follows this with a series of dominant-function chords built on top of a descending scalar pattern. As the voices steadily descend in range they also decrescendo until the dynamic and harmonic structures come to rest at *piano* on two ambiguous chords anchored on E3 in the bass.

This harmonic ambiguity allows MacMillan to make an astonishing textural, tonal and temporal shift from four-part harmony on E to responsorial chant in the key of B minor. It is here that the final and most significant musical borrowing appears: namely, a plainchant used in the liturgies of both Holy Thursday and Good Friday (see Example 3). This is in fact a double reference, first to the general tradition of plainchant and second to the use of this specific chant in many modern versions of Allegri's *Miserere*, though MacMillan here disguises the reciting tone within lush four-part harmonization reminiscent of Allegri's own *falsobordone* style.[60] The alternating phrases of the chant are passed between the basses/tenors and the altos/sopranos, ending with the psalmist's near-desperate request, 'Cast me not away from thy face; and take not thy holy spirit from me.' The full bar of silence that follows is both the longest

Example 3 Psalm tone used in *Miserere* (transcription).

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58   Cooke traces the allusions to keening in MacMillan's work back to his early, unpublished compos-
     ition *The Keening*, written while the composer was a Ph.D. student at Durham. Cooke, *The Music of
     James MacMillan*, 15–16.
59   Wells, 'James MacMillan', 115–16.
60   *Liber usualis* suggests this psalm tone (2D) for use during Holy Communion on Maundy Thursday
     and during the afternoon liturgy on Good Friday, but VIII/1 and VII/2 are also used for Psalm
     50 (51) at Lauds. *The Liber usualis*, ed. the Benedictines of Solesmes (Tournai: Desclée Co., 1961),
     680–4, 723, 727–8. The current association of this chant with *Miserere* is at least partially due to the
     influence of David Willcocks's 1963 recording with the Choir of King's College, Cambridge, and the
     soloist Roy Goodman. The oldest surviving manuscripts of Allegri's work do not indicate a precise
     chant tone; it may well be that the verses were chanted simply, in *recto tono*.

period of silence in the entire work and an apt representation of the divine silence in the face of human sin that punctuates the biblical narrative both in the psalm and – most dramatically – at the point in the Passion narrative where Jesus cries out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' This audible break in the flow of the work marks the point at which all of the main themes have appeared, often in quick succession. When the voices do return, it is in an echo of the opening, although this time MacMillan employs the alto and tenor voices in place of the earlier tenor and bass, and the tonal centre has shifted from E minor to A minor. Just as the music seems to confirm that we have arrived at the beginning of the A' section in a large ABA' ternary form, the voices drive forward into a full-throated cry for deliverance using the 'keening, crying' motif from the first section to exclaim, 'Deliver me from blood, O God, thou God of my salvation.' Marked 'eruptive' in the score, the punchy vocals of the *tutti* ensemble generate a moment of high drama and tension before dissolving once more into the plainchant – this time as a succession of unison entrances by each voice part that break off into decorative flourishes over a static hummed harmony.

The four verses MacMillan sets in this unmeasured style close on a harmonically rich chord consisting of C♯3 in the basses, A3 in the tenors, B3 and D♯4 in the altos, and G♯4 in the sopranos. From this shimmering harmony, the altos' downwards resolution leads into the re-entrance of the others on a radiant E major chord heralding the transformation of the 'Tryst' melody into a chorale overflowing with warmth. The exaltation of mood thus engendered hinges on the promise of the text: 'Then shalt thou accept the sacrifice of justice.' A repetition of this fragment, accompanied by a conventional dominant–tonic cadential gesture, unites music and text in representing the psalmist's assurance of forgiveness at the piece's close. Thus, from the initial desolation prompted by sin the psalmist/choir is brought back to divine favour, ending with the full chorus singing 'with devotion' of redemption.

From the perspective of music as evidencing eucharistic practice, MacMillan's *Miserere* demonstrates two kinds of transubstantiation. The first, already indicated, is that the complex interweaving of melodic material from a variety of sources imbues both text and music with additional layers of signification – illustrating a peculiarly eucharistic fusion of the spiritual and the material. These compositional borrowings take in a host of influences, but they nonetheless circulate around distinctively spiritual ideas of the transformational power of love and forgiveness. To return to the opening 'Tryst' melody: from a ballad extolling the delights of human love, the melody is progressively reinscribed as signifying praise ('Sanctus'), belief ('Credo') and a wordless plea for absolution (*St John Passion*) before its appearance as a further, voiced cry for mercy in *Miserere*.[61] It is an excellent example of how MacMillan – here using the biblical image of the creation of Eve from Adam's rib – 'take[s] fragments of material, consciously or unconsciously, from elsewhere and breathe[s] new life into them, creating new forms, new avenues and structures of expression'.[62] Likewise, the

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[61] This is a necessarily selective genealogy, but one that illuminates how the melody gains new connotations each time MacMillan uses it.
[62] MacMillan, 'God, Theology and Music', 23.

erotically charged 'Tristan' or 'Longing' motif is resituated as a longing for redemption and, implicitly, a restored union with the divine that is only achievable through penitence and absolution. Even though the origins of some of these sonic fragments are unlikely to be evident to the listener, the piling up of associations is a significant factor in considering how MacMillan's compositional practice might be said to work in *Miserere.* Against Wells's dismissive claim that *Miserere* can be interpreted as 'essentially a choral arrangement of the purely orchestral conclusion of the *St John Passion* (with additional plainchant)', the inclusion of the plainchant frames the themes drawn from Soutar (via *The Sacrifice* and the *St John Passion*) and Wagner within the ritual, liturgical and theological context of Good Friday.[63]

The second point of sacramental logic in this composition is the collapsing of different temporalities occasioned by the entrance of the plainchant into an otherwise twenty-first-century choral style. For listeners familiar with the Allegri, these few notes offer an undeniable link between the two compositions and beyond them to the rituals of Good Friday music at the Sistine Chapel; however, even if the reference to Allegri goes unnoticed, the appearance of unadorned plainchant is an unambiguous signal that a past historical moment has intruded into the present. That the chant is unmeasured further disrupts or suspends the music's (and the listener's) sense of time. Begbie suggests not that this kind of temporal disruption is equivalent to pure timelessness or to eternity, but rather that such moments in music demonstrate a combination of present, past and future that reshapes our experience of ordinary lived time.[64] Extending this argument, Alistair Hardie argues that, 'Chant, as a musically borrowed artifact within music of a clearly defined key and metre, may therefore provide a symbol for God's transcendence.'[65] There are clear parallels between these arguments regarding music and the discourse of the Eucharist as a temporally ecstatic ritual with its own sense of time. Thus, the sudden shift in *Miserere*'s audible timescape reveals the interpenetration of layers of (musical and liturgical) history that lie behind MacMillan's compositional surface.

One of MacMillan's most evocative depictions of compositional practice (apart from the metaphor of transubstantiation itself) is found in his description of the Soutar love song as 'provid[ing] me with a *cantus firmus* around which I wrapped another layer of musical flesh'.[66] This image of continual transformation gives weight to the argument that connects thematic transformation with a deeper transubstantiation that weaves MacMillan's compositions into the musico-liturgical tradition. Although transubstantiation in MacMillan's work is intimately associated with the recycling of musical materials, its function as a conceptual metaphor places such borrowings within a

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[63] Wells, 'James MacMillan', 113. For more on the significance of chant, see MacMillan, 'God, Theology and Music', 17; and Doherty, 'The Mass "Transubstantiated" into Music', 636.

[64] Begbie, *Theology, Music, and Time*, 150–3.

[65] Alistair Hardie, 'Musical Borrowing as Incarnation: A Theological Reading of Hildegard's *O quam preciosa* in John Adams's *El Niño*', *Contemporary Music Review*, 29 (2010), 291–307 (p. 294).

[66] James MacMillan, 'Creation and the Composer', *Creative Chords: Studies in Music, Theology and Christian Formation*, ed. Jeff Astley, Timothy Hone and Mark Savage (Leominster: Gracewing, 2000), 3–19 (p. 14).

theological frame that in turn changes how audiences perceive musical experience and MacMillan's compositional identity.

Spaces and texts of transformation

So far we have seen how the structural complexity of *Miserere* illuminates one facet of what musical transubstantiation might signify, and how the careful positioning of MacMillan's composition as both partner and successor to the Allegri *Miserere* demonstrates how specific rituals and a sense of the interpenetration of eucharistic time contribute to the transformative aspects of performance. Yet, the framing of the work as connected to eucharistic transubstantiation and practice or as more broadly transformative must acknowledge the contexts in which *Miserere* is performed and perceived by listeners: how the layering of spiritual and ritual signification within seemingly prosaic matters such as concert programmes, recording styles and marketing choices conditions the interpretation of *Miserere* and of MacMillan himself.

Since the 2009 première, the connections between the *Miserere* settings have continued to accumulate, especially through the work of The Sixteen, who toured the two works together in 2013 and 2019.[67] Within the concert format, performance choices can have a strong impact on critical interpretation. Alexandra Coghlan notes in her review of a 2017 performance by The Sixteen in the Temple Church, London, that it began with a procession by members of the choir chanting *Regina caeli laetare*: an act that 'transformed their audience into a congregation, inviting us into music that may have evolved into artful choral sophistication, but which began as a shared, corporate musical gesture'.[68] Even in other settings, *Miserere* seems to incline reviewers towards religiously inflected language, whether by invoking supernatural forces in describing a performance by the Exultate Singers at St George's Bristol as 'nothing short of a revelation' or by portraying The Sixteen's voices as 'seraphic' or as 'shrouded in a halo of incense-laden atmosphere'.[69] This enthusiasm at times extends towards granting the

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[67] The 2013 Choral Pilgrimage combined MacMillan's *Miserere* with a specially prepared performance version of the Allegri based on research conducted by Ben Byram-Wigfield that traces the evolution of the Allegri from various manuscript sources. The performing edition he created with The Sixteen and Harry Christophers begins with a relatively unadorned *falsobordone* version and progresses through various styles of ornamentation before ending on the familiar 'top C' version. This programme was billed as The Sixteen's 'most popular programme of all time' (see the announcement of 2019 concerts at <https://thesixteen.com/events/the-queen-of-heaven-newcastle/>, accessed 26 May 2020).

[68] Alexandra Coghlan, 'Saving Church Music – Then and Now: Palestrina and MacMillan United in a Common Goal', *The Tablet*, 23 November 2017, <www.thetablet.co.uk/arts/11/11779/saving-church-music-then-and-now-palestrina-and-macmillan-united-in-a-common-goal> (accessed 26 May 2020).

[69] David Fay, 'The Divine and the Worldly: Exultate Singers at St George's Bristol', 26 February 2013, <https://bachtrack.com/review-st-georges-bristol-exultate-singers-sense-divine> (accessed 26 May 2020); David Nice, 'MacMillan's Stabat Mater, The Sixteen, Britten Sinfonia, Barbican Hall', 17 October 2016, <https://theartsdesk.com/classical-music/macmillans-stabat-mater-sixteen-britten-sinfonia-barbican-hall> (accessed 26 May 2020). See also Marc Rochester, 'MacMillan Miserere, Strathclyde Motets, O bone Jesu', *Gramophone*, November 2011, <https://gramophone.co.uk/review/macmillan-miserere-strathclyde-motets-o-bone-jesu> (accessed 26 May 2020).

composer himself special status: Coghlan ends her review by suggesting that Palestrina's 'mantle of "Saviour of Church Music" [sits] firmly on fresh shoulders' in MacMillan's music.[70] These reviews and the performances they describe reinforce the implicit connections not only between Allegri and MacMillan, but also between the experience of religious ritual and MacMillan's music.

This sacred sensibility is equally evident in the recording and distribution of the MacMillan *Miserere*. In 2011, The Sixteen recorded *Miserere* for an all-MacMillan collection entitled *James MacMillan: Miserere* in the London church of St Giles Cripplegate.[71] While the use of churches as recording studios is common to both sacred and secular vocal music, the choice of venue indicates an aesthetic that prioritizes resonance and its accompanying sense of aural space. In its creation of a soundscape far removed from the average listener's physical surroundings, this recording style deliberately conjures up the very particular and religiously inflected spaces of large churches and cathedrals within the secular spaces of private listening. Additional religious narrativization of *Miserere* and its listening experience is amply provided in the CD's liner notes, where Roderic Dunnett describes the work as 'a steady progression from guilt and sin to hope and optimism' with a 'sensational' or even 'miraculous' effect of a 'redemptive spiritual journey'.[72]

Finally, the album cover offers yet another possibility for a sacralized interpretative frame. Underneath the names of the composer and performers and the titles of pieces (written in blood-red text), the album cover depicts an oil painting by the Scottish artist Willie Rodger (1930–2018) entitled *Easter Weekend* (see Figure 1). In the painting's foreground, a group of stylized figures mill about in an art gallery, while in the background, extending off the frame, a painting shows Christ's crucifixion. As a piece of art, the painting-within-a-painting is at once the centre of focus and ignored by the crowd. Here, Rodger seems to highlight the idea of art as religion; after all, on the most important day of the Christian calendar his onlookers have come to a gallery rather than to a church, yet the art still draws our attention. Whether intentionally or not, this painting suggests the intersection of the religious and the aesthetic even as it provides a suitable backdrop for accomplishing the cover's central purpose of selling the recording.

These juxtapositions of art and music, or of sacred recorded space and private listening, are not necessarily immediately noticeable to MacMillan's audience, but they nonetheless shape the reception and interpretation of the work just as do the repeated associations between MacMillan's work and religious content, rituals and spaces. The links created between the piece's spiritual character and its affective power construct listening to MacMillan's *Miserere* in terms redolent of spiritual experience.

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[70] Coghlan, 'Saving Church Music'.
[71] *James MacMillan: Miserere* (2011), Coro Records, CD COR16096. Recording available at <https://thesixteen.com>. The CD also includes a selection of the composer's *Strathclyde Motets* (2005–10), *O bone Jesu* (2002) and the *Tenebrae Responsories* (2006). Other recordings have since appeared that use a similar aesthetic, including a particularly reverberant one by the Choir of Clare College, Cambridge, under Graham Ross recorded in the very live aesthetic of the Lady Chapel of Ely Cathedral. *Stabat: Pärt, Vasks, MacMillan* (2020), Harmonia Mundi, CD HM905323.
[72] Roderic Dunnett, liner notes to *James MacMillan: Miserere*, 6.
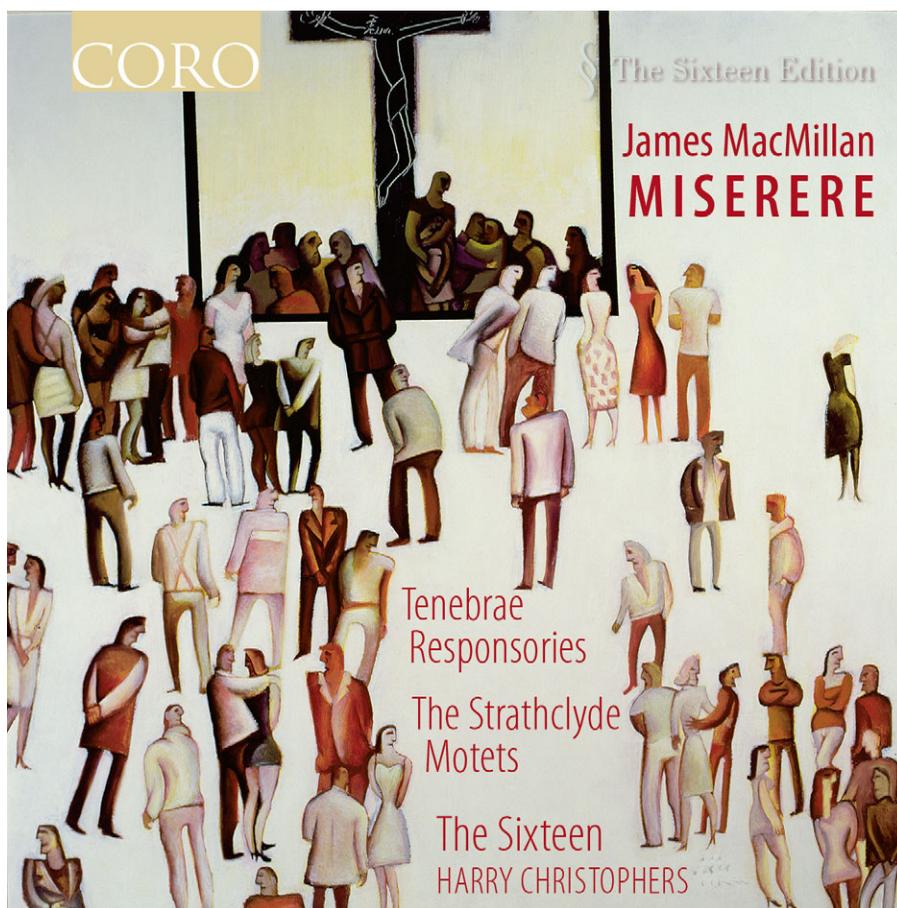
Figure 1 Cover of *James MacMillan: Miserere* (2011), Coro Records, CD COR16096. Image used by permission.

Miserere itself might be seen as a theoretical work in the sense that it analyses and interprets religious tradition, presenting it in coherent, intelligible and importantly displaced ways in performance. The cumulation of sacred connotations results in what Victor Turner describes as a 'condensation of meaning' such that *Miserere* might stand at once as a symbol of specifically Christian rituals of confession and absolution on Good Friday, and of a more general sense of penitence and transformation, and indeed as an aesthetic experience that reaches for secular transcendence.[73]

Conclusion: aesthetic and spiritual dimensions of transubstantiation

There are three necessary caveats to the preceding discussion. First is the concern that thinking through the theological implications of MacMillan's descriptive language

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[73]   Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969).

might lead inexorably to what Jeremy Begbie and Steven Guthrie have termed the 'double hazard' of either 'theological instrumentalisation' or 'theological aestheticism'.[74] Second is the extent to which this experience of musical transubstantiation is available to a diverse audience, and third is whether this analysis is limited to *Miserere.* To begin with the first, the initial hazard identified by Begbie and Guthrie is that of an 'over-bearing theology' that appropriates music as a vehicle for theological meanings or sees music as 'secondary and colourful wrapping' for ideas; the alternative counteracts such demands by insisting on music's autonomy such that it may come to offer a 'normative platform to relativize and critique other theological claims'.[75] As they suggest, neither of these approaches preserves the distinctive capacities of music or theology, yet to insist on interpreting MacMillan's compositions through only one suppresses the reality of their interaction in music. Sacred music is in itself a particular 'medium of disclosure'; despite its religious involvement it is not reducible to a kind of *propaganda fidei.*[76] The polysemic relationship between music and theology is key for interpreting sacred music in secular contexts, particularly when 'quasi-liturgic, quasi-theological language or terms of definition' come to encapsulate music's transformative impact.[77] For MacMillan, the conjunction of a eucharistic logic of composition and a ritual sensibility in performance signalled by the theological language of transubstantiation signifies that the theological and musicological frameworks shed light on each other.

The second concern is essentially that of audience enculturation. Although this article focuses on how MacMillan's composition and theology intertwine rather than on this complex issue, a few brief points can be made. *Miserere* stands at the crux of aesthetic and religious frames and an ample interpretation is rooted in a historical Western discourse or imagining of religion, art and their intersections that is not straightforwardly transferable to a global audience. There are those familiar with the psalms, traditions of confession or Catholic eucharistic doctrine for whom *Miserere* may be a profoundly communal and historically situated act; others with an in-depth knowledge of Macmillan's oeuvre and the capacity to recognize references to Wagner and Allegri might delight in identification.[78] MacMillan's rhetorical question in a blog post on his Third Piano Concerto (2011) summarizes the issue: 'Who got more out of

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[74]   Jeremy S. Begbie and Steven R. Guthrie, 'Introduction', *Resonant Witnesses: Conversations between Music and Theology*, ed. Begbie and Guthrie (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 1–24 (pp. 10–12).

[75]   *Ibid.*, 12.

[76]   See, for example, Nicholas Wolterstorff, who argues that music is distinctively disclosive in a way that is analogous to assertoric prose. Wolterstorff, 'Afterword', *Sounding the Depths: Theology through the Arts*, ed. Jeremy Begbie (London: SCM, 2002), 221–32 (p. 228). For more on the relationship between musical and theological language, see Begbie, *Music, Modernity, and God.*

[77]   MacMillan and McGregor, 'James MacMillan', 74.

[78]   Allegri, at least, seems recognizable: several reviewers on Amazon note the work's 'subtle inter-weaving' of the Allegri *Miserere*, whether they construe the MacMillan as an 'answer to' or as haunted by the 'ghost' of the older composition. See Amazon reviews of MacMillan, *Miserere* (2011), by Stephen Whitaker ('Modish but with great feeling', 24 April 2012), Nan Eckardt ('MacMillan – and the Sixteen – in top form', 26 May 2015) and Choirnerd (28 May 2016), at <www.amazon.com/gp/product/B005TK1T3I?pf_rd_p=1581d9f4-062f-453c-b69e-0f3e00ba2652&pf_rd_r=7Y7B0982XB793QNHZ1M8> (accessed 26 May 2020).

the concerto then? The guys who knew their Rosary, or the musicologist who knew nothing about it?'[79]

Of course, audiences are under no obligation to see themselves implicated in the music's narrative. Thus Andrew Clark writes, 'You don't need to be a Catholic to get something from *Miserere*', while Kathy Evans goes a step further in asserting: 'You don't have to be religious to be spiritually uplifted by The Sixteen's soaring version of *Miserere*.'[80] One response to Harry Christophers's claim to 'defy even the strongest atheist not to be moved by James's *Miserere*' is simply to recognize that music's meanings are multivalent and that being moved is not equivalent to having a spiritual epiphany.[81] To speak of musical transubstantiation of experience is thus to acknowledge its potentiality rather than its instantiation.

Finally, extending the framework of transubstantiation would introduce further possibilities; for example, applying this analysis to other MacMillan compositions. Indeed McGregor has alluded to the role of the liturgy in describing *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie* (1990), *Cantos sagrados* (1989) and *Búsqueda* (1988), all of which interweave religiously inflected elements with political statements, and Cooke notes the eucharistic language MacMillan applies to *Triduum* as being 'of utmost importance'.[82] Doherty's analysis of the Fourth Symphony demonstrates another perspective on transubstantiation that might be productively extended. Looking beyond MacMillan, musico-theological transubstantiation suggests a new perspective on the displacement of quasi-sacramental music from a sacred context as well as on the ever-shifting boundaries between religious and aesthetic experiences.

MacMillan's *Miserere* offers audiences a musically transubstantiated ritual mediated through the musico-liturgical tradition of Allegri's own *Miserere* and surrounded by a discourse that argues for the religious character of both composer and music. The music's appropriation and extension of ritual action beyond its ordinary boundaries prefigures the eucharistic moment of transubstantiation even though it takes place in what Jeffers Engelhardt and Philip Bohlman have characterized as the 'unexceptional, ambiguous zone between religion and the secular'.[83] The interpretative instability of

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[79] James MacMillan, blog post, 15 April 2011, <https://jamesmacmillaninscotland.wordpress.com/blog/> (accessed 26 May 2020). The Third Piano Concerto revives a tradition of writing music structured on the rosary. From the remainder of the post, it is clear that MacMillan gives more weight to the understanding achieved by 'the guys who knew their Rosary'. Of course, many listeners may be unfamiliar with both the Rosary and musicology.

[80] Clark, 'James MacMillan: Miserere'; Kathy Evans, 'The Sixteen Performs James MacMillan's Powerful *Miserere*', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 February 2015, <www.smh.com.au/entertainment/music/the-sixteen-performs-james-macmillans-powerful-miserere-20150213-13e8zr.html> (accessed 26 May 2020).

[81] Harry Christophers, liner notes to *James MacMillan: Miserere*, 2.

[82] MacMillan and McGregor, 'A Conversation and Commentary', 84. Cooke, *The Music of James MacMillan*, 114–15. Michael Fuller has also discussed the role of liturgy in relationship to MacMillan's operas in his 'Liturgy, Scripture and Resonance in the Operas of James MacMillan', *New Blackfriars*, 96/1064 (2015), 381–90.

[83] Jeffers Engelhardt and Philip V. Bohlman, 'Introduction', *Resounding Transcendence: Transitions in Music, Religion, and Ritual*, ed. Engelhardt and Bohlman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 1–25 (p. 10).

this liminal space means that it is full of uncertainty ('nothing is being demanded of you, you're not being told to think of anything in a concert'), but also potentiality ('yet you may well have a fantastic experience of a religious nature').[84] This highlights the extent to which the meanings of musical transubstantiation are at once emergent, in that they 'ride on the already existing grids of symbolic and indexical meanings, while also displaying new resonances', and palimpsestic, alternating between transubstantiation as metaphor and as metonym.[85] Through the interpenetration of music and liturgy, performance of the MacMillan *Miserere* can become in itself practice for the Eucharist.

The music critic Wilfrid Mellers defines the function of great art as analogous to the function of scripture, in which 'in being uttered, the Word becomes a life-giving force to men'.[86] In other words, giving voice to the sacred is to allow for the possibility of its becoming spiritually efficacious. The dynamism of Mellers's description suggests a necessary corrective to any analysis that does not allow for the animating and explanatory force of religious language in describing aesthetic transformation. Through *Miserere*, MacMillan reinscribes the rituals of the sacred within the concert hall and the private home. In doing so, he transubstantiates liturgical traditions and reasserts the role of music in refashioning the contemporary imagining of religion.

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[84]   Peter Phillips, quoted in Jonathan Arnold, *Sacred Music in Secular Society* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014), 68.

[85]   Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, 'A Performative Approach to Ritual', Radcliffe-Brown Lecture in Social Anthropology, 28 March 1979, published in *Proceedings of the British Academy* (1980), 113–69 (p. 160).

[86]   Wilfrid Mellers, 'Arvo Pärt, God and Gospel', *Contemporary Music Review*, 12 (1995), 35–48 (p. 48).