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Ariel Root Wolpe April 16 2012

Spirit Souds

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Abstract

Spirit Sounds
By Ariel Root Wolpe

In an ever-changing culture, we find music especially rewarding, for music is among the most tenacious cultural elements. Part of every religious tradition, music transcends elements that divide people of faith, instigating alternative religious reflection by introducing a common field of experience. My thesis contends that the recently developed genre of inter-religious music offers an effective form of inter-religious collaboration when it engages the currently definitive categories of Community Reformation, Dialogue, and Religiosity. My Thesis analyzes my senior project *Spirit Sounds: A Collaboration of Inter-Faithful Musicians* through a multi-disciplinary approach of religion, theology, ethnomusicology, music composition and creative writing. Through collaborative song creation and performance, *Spirit Sounds* professionally produced a 12 track CD with artists of various musical, religious, cultural and educational backgrounds, and also includes a documentary of the CD's production with words from all participating artists and synapses of musical pieces, and a CD release benefit concert to raise funds for an Atlanta music program for refugee youth. Inter-religious music pioneers a path for the American seeking reflective, inclusive, and empathetic ways to engage diversity, all in the hopes that beautiful sound can also improve our world.

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Table of Contents

Spirit Sounds

An Undergraduate Honors Thesis on Inter-Religious Music

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March 30th, 2012

Introduction and Methodology

We live in a world where we are forced to encounter a plurality of religions. In a post-911 America, groups of musicians seek to ease strained social relationships through inter-religious collaboration. This emergent genre of inter-religious music cultivates unity across diverse religiosities. My thesis contends that the recently developed genre of inter-religious music offers an effective form of inter-religious collaboration when it engages the currently definitive categories of Community Reformation, Dialogue, and Religiosity.

Chapter One examines the development of inter-religious music collaboration in America, and the categories of inter-religious engagement through community reformation, dialogue, and religiosity. Chapter Two looks at the inter-religious conditions of Emory University that fostered inter-religious music programming and the views of students, faculty and staff. Chapter Three analyzes my senior project "Spirit Sounds" as a model for engaging in inter-religious collaboration, and encompassing the above categories, through music. This chapter includes the CD of Spirit Sounds, which consists of 12 tracks of original, inter-religious music composed with Emory students, faculty and alumni.

When I respond to inquiries about the topic of my thesis with "inter-religious music," I am often received with an inquisitive look. "What do you mean?" I am asked, or "is that even a thing?" It is a thing with a long history, and my first two chapters contextualize this emerging concept in a history of American religious music and Emory's religious life. In the tradition of religious scholarship, this thesis examines the "cumulative tradition" of inter-religious music (W.C. Smith) through American societal development, assuming "no release from the historical" (McCutcheon 7). Ethnomusicologist Philip

Bohlman tells us that issues of history and time are fundamentally linked to music in American religious experience (Bohlman 10). Changing perspectives on pluralism and diversity through America's religious history manifest in musical exchange between communities. A new musical collaboration through inter-religious relationships are a result of these changing ideologies across society and traditions. By examining historical progressions, we better understand individual and group decisions in inter-religious reformation in the present day.

Spirit Sounds: A Collaboration of Inter-Faithful Musicians serves as an ethnographic case study of inter-religious music at Emory University. Through Spirit Sounds, I collaborate with artists of various musical, religious, cultural and educational backgrounds to produce a 12-track CD and live performance concert. My intention behind engaging in this musical collaboration as an ethnographer can be understood through musicologist Theodor Ador's candid remark, "to interpret speech means to understand speech; to interpret music means to make music" (Stockmann 318). Wilfred Cantwell Smith states that alongside a "cumulative tradition" or rituals, literature, and art, understanding a religion requires and engagement with what he terms "faith," the internal experience with transcendence that inspires religious observance. Religious music gives overt expression to the religion of an artist, because internal motivation creates music (W.C. Smith 171-172). Only by creating music can we best comprehend the empathetic and religious influence of the sounds we are studying.

My community aim in creating Spirit Sounds is for participants to express religious commitment and struggles, connect with history, tradition and text, utilize religious musical style, channel spiritual energy, and address concerns of modern religious challenges and questions. Inter-religious musicians and appreciators of inter-religious

music open themselves to some, if not all, of these potential impacts. These performers and listeners are shaped in part by religion, Émile Durkheim defines as a "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to *sacred things*, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden" (Durkheim 44). This conception of religion has guided the work of religious ethnographers for many years. However, inter-religious music complicates, if not outright contradicts, Durkheim's monolithic distinctions by blurring the boundaries of practice and interaction with the sacred. Music engages both the sacred and the secular beliefs and practices, and can do that within a single piece. And when the sacred space of one religion is profane for another, it creates complicated negotiations of boundaries between religious individual and communities.

For this reason, this thesis uses the term "religiosity" as defined by religious scholars Gerald Larson and Christopher Chesnek. Chesnek says that religiosity includes all people who are interested in exploring "meaning, purpose, value and practice"–which is almost everyone (Chesnek 56)[1]. Larson also expands our understanding of religiosity past the boundaries of religion, stating, "[r]eligiosity is the dominant pattern of structuring of nonrational[2] thinking--and the conduct correlated with it--which the individual trusts to establish, extend, and preserve consciousness of his or her identity" (Larson). Because inter-religious music engages individuals who may not fit into traditional categories of religion, this term of religiosity includes them while referring to a construction of reality present in every ideology and practice. Religiosity includes labels of religious, spiritual, and secular as used in American culture and academia. The

[1] Chesnek specifically includes naturalists in religiosity, people who hold the view that natural (vs. supernatural) forces govern the universe (Chesnek 56).

[2] I challenge Larson's claim of religiosity as structuring *nonrational* thinking, as rational thoughts and beliefs also shape religious and nonreligious action. However his focus on thinking, conduct, and the establishment of identity are vital concepts worth including.

expansiveness of religiosity challenges the reductionist mode of religious scholarship which strives to separate out the sacred from the academy, for academia is laden with the values and religious needs of scholars and students themselves (Chesnek 54). Religiosity also the perception of a musical phenomenon, of an ineffable experience of music that persists within and without religious belief.

While this thesis focuses on the already constructed inter-religious community, the case studies of Sacred Artistry and Spirit Sounds more accurately detail the construction of Emory community through what I've termed "musical religiosity." Musical religiosity is an exploration of meaning, purpose, value or practice through music, which informs the consciousness of one's identity. A consciousness of identity is how one places his/herself in the world, and in part dictates how one will react to stimuli in community reformation, dialogue, and religiosity. Musical religiosity describes an intentional engagement within inter-religious music--for the composer, performer and audience member--which can illicit experiences with transcendence via music. However, musical religiosity also includes non-spiritual aspects of inter-religious engagement, such as increased empathy and embodied acceptance and support among musicians, listeners, and composers. This concept informs my approach to case studies in chapters two and three.

No contemporary scholar would claim that boundaries between different religions are impermeable. Jonathon Z Smith long ago declared that the "Map is not Territory," the trail of embodied practice bearing little relation to our blueprint of religious authority (Smith, J.Z.). Throughout history, religious followers have shifted boundaries between the profane and the sacred, borrowing customs from other traditions to fulfill perceived needs (Bohlman 9). This cross-experimentation creates a more fluid reality of religion, one that

may not uphold ideals of a system of beliefs and influence. In any inter-religious collaboration, religious boundaries are necessarily violated in order to create with another religion. Like the ethnographer, inter-religious musicians and appreciators are willing to compromise the "safety" of exclusive community and thought to gain exposure to a foreign religiosity. Joyce Flueckiger stresses the value of engaging religion as it is experienced and practiced. In her study of "vernacular" Islam, she reminds us that religion is lived locally, "shaped and voiced by individuals in specific contexts and in specific relationships, individuals who change over time in social, economic, and political contexts that also shift" (Flueckiger 2). Likewise, qualities of inter-religious music are specific to involved communities and participants, and the results depend on that mindsets and religiosity.

Courtney Bender highlights the importance of exploring religious experience outside of the institutional setting, in what she called a study of "entanglements." Bender demands, "different starting points for analyzing religious life," suggesting that when we examine religious practices in secular or multi-religious contexts, we must "think about how to conduct research on religion in those settings in ways that do not presume that everything is socialized, but that recognize that things are often a bit more complicated than we have made them out to be" (Schneider). These different starting points explore the ways individuals are engaging elements that sit on the boundaries of religious and secular, like the arts. In inter-religious music, both performer and listener sit on the boundaries of multiple beliefs and traditions, as well as the boundaries of musical styles and histories. Like Bender, I serve as an active participant in my ethnography, in which I sit on the "boundary" of inter-religious music, neither insider nor outsider.

Ethnographers have always been concerned with the historically constituted self/other distinction (Vincent), a worldview which Jonathan Z. Smith and Robert Redfield state underlies most forms of cultural and religious comparison**.** While this divide tends to remain unquestioned, ethnographers question how it is possible to communicate across the divide: to dialogue with the "other." Abu-Lughod suggests that the female ethnographer, by identifying herself as a woman, can work with the assumption of difference in sameness, of a self that participates in multiple identifications because of her status as a woman (Abu-Lughod). As the ethnographer of this study, I also move in and out of the religious boundaries of Spirit Sounds' participants by identifying myself as a religious woman and a musician. Instead of hiding my views, my discussions with the participants result in a mutual sharing of thought and feeling. This enables me to engage topics and questions that I deem important for my research, while creating space for further exploration under the direction of my participant's thoughts and interests. We craft more opportunities for mutual exchange than would be available within a typical researcher-subject study. In my experience, musicians can work with assumptions of difference in sameness, by which individuals participate in multiple identifications, merging through the creation of art. In musical religiosity, musicians and listeners recognize the values and meanings that form a collaborator's religiosity through the music created through dialogue and empathetic performance.

In any inter-religious interaction, conceptions of transcendence are central. Due to personal questions and the diverse religiosity among Spirit Sounds participants, I approach explanations of divine connection cautiously. To ease perceptions of judgment, I attempt to shift my personal and the participants' mindsets towards the concept of a shared sacred journey, a predominant metaphor in sacred music (Bohlman). In an

increasingly secular society, questions from a believer of another tradition is more encouraging to religious followers than confrontational, and in my experience, opens up participants to speak more frankly about their religious beliefs and thoughts. My musical knowledge and experience create a sense of commonality between practitioners that aid in negotiating difficult boundaries between religions.

Data on inter-religious music for this paper is collected through literary and web research, qualitative surveys, semi-formal interviews, personal emails, and observations from Emory religious programming and Spirit Sounds collaboration. The surveys and interviews do not contain comprehensive information about a group of people, but instead offer access to the perceptions of Emory students, staff, faculty and alumni. Because of the extent of field research and lack of quantitative data, this paper reaches conclusions based on previous music and religious scholarship as well as inter-religious collaboration. While chapters two and three illustrate models of inter-religious engagement through music, a full comprehension of the effectiveness and reach of these programs would require further surveys and intensive interviews. Comparing aspects of these programs to successful initiatives elsewhere will shed light on the success of specific dimensions of inter-religious music.

Jonathan Z. Smith says that "comparison, the bringing together of two or more objects for the purpose of noting either similarity or dissimilarity, is the omnipresent substructure of human thought" (Smith, J.Z. 240). In the category of inter-religious programming, my paper compares inter-religious community reformation, dialogue and religiosity with and without a musical frame. In any ethnographic work, there are various ways in which one person distinguishes an event or ritual from another. In inter-religious music, followers of different religions may have disparate experiences and understandings

within inter-religious collaboration and concerts. The comprehension of those immediately involved (participating artists) and those observing (audience) will likely differ due to levels of exposure and investment. The most obvious differences lie in different religions. By diverse reflection on a single question or topic, comparisons will naturally shape our understanding of inter-religious collaboration. In this respect, we engage comparison as a hermeneutic device, in which music is a lens of discovering difference and similarity among followers of separate religions (Smith, J.Z. 244). Using music to examine religiosity and culture aligns with the approach of ethnomusicology.

Musicologists often employ ethnographic approaches that separate music from religious experience, "secularizing" music (Bohlman 11). This is distinct from ethnomusicology, which studies music in the context of human life, in secular, political, historical and mythical practice and belief (Titon) (Bohlman 9). Ethnographers of religion can examine practices while recognizing a person or community's relationship to transcendence (W.C. Smith). Other scholars maintain that religious scholars should not suggest that there is an "untouchable" truth of religion that cannot be analyzed (McCutcheon)[3]. While this thesis is not written under the assumption of transcendence, it represents the experiences of religious followers as valid reports of what occurs during an inter-religious music concert or collaboration, representing the "faith" of practitioners. My paper treats these accounts as truthful experiences, whether they describe biological or social reactions, or a mystical effect of religious music.

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[3] For a opposing views on the topic, refer to W.C. Smith's *The Meaning and End of Religion* and McCutcheon's *Critics Not Caretakers.* McCutcheon maintains that religion is a social formation, meaning there is nothing specifically religious, spiritual, or mystical about the social grouping we label as religions. In the academic study of religion, McCutcheon argues, every action can be studied. Anything that includes an essence of transcendence or phenomenological experience without analysis McCutcheon designates as a "personal quest" and unscholarly. Smith however, considers this "faith" a key element that only when partnered with the "cumulative tradition" creates comprehensive scholarship on a religious tradition.

Rudolph Otto, a founding father of Phenomenological methodological approaches to religion, is also concerned with the nature of religious consciousness of the believing soul. He seeks to illuminate religious apprehensions, emotional states, and motivations for religious activities. A key method of this illumination is to provide evocative descriptions so that readers experience moments of religious consciousness (Twiss). This form is reminiscent of the musician's attempt to convey meaning through a musical piece via composition and performance. Ethnomusicologists frequently include music recordings so readers can reference the studied music firsthand (Stockmann). By including the final CD of *Spirit Sounds: A Collaboration of Inter Faithful Musicians*, readers will better comprehend the project and its results, and gain their own insight into religious intentions of collaborators. Readers will also experience the abilities of the compositions to affect their senses and spirit, understanding inter-religious music on a level that the written word alone could never convey.

At the risk of rendering my paper extraneous, I must include the poignant words of ethnomusicologist Zoltán Kadály: "To say something substantial about music which music cannot express by itself is either impossible, or superfluous" (Stockmann 318). As I partner scholarship with the creative process of musical collaboration, this truth constantly forces me to question the intentions of an inter-religious musical examination. However, I do believe there is much to discover from an academic journey amidst inter-religious musicians, their thoughts, their spirits, and their creations.

Personal Disclosure

There are an infinite number of reactions to the same song, the same word, the same sound. How could we ever hope for an objective musical ethnography, or any ethnographic scholarship? Historically, anthropologists and ethnographers have believed that a researcher's alternative motivations and personal opinions threaten the legitimacy of ethnographic observations (Twiss). But this is unavoidable, for all facts are constructed though personal interactions in specific social and cultural contexts. Our knowledge is emotionally complicated and transmitted through diverse modes of communication. Research simply cannot be objective as a detached understanding: it remains a point of view, not existing on it's own but situated in some context and influenced by personal values (Abu-Lughod, Brown, Cady, Davaney).

Despite our attempts at bracketing personal beliefs and maintaining objectivity in scholarship, feminist ethnographer Abu-Lughod states, "we are always part of what we study and we always stand in definite relation to it" (Abu-Lughod 27). Since an individual's point of view is biased to some degree, it is necessary to reveal a researcher's cultural context by describing one's background and interest in the topic of study. This disclosure allows the reader to decipher what may be influenced by the author's biases (McCarthy Brown). Since my paper centers on inter-religious music, I consider my religious and music background relevant to my ethnographic approach.

For the last twenty-three years, I have grown up with the identity of an American Jewish woman. With three Conservative rabbis in my father's immediate family, I was raised in the thick of a Jewish culture that stressed wisdom, ethical relationships, egalitarian worship, people-hood, and commitment to *halakha* (Jewish law). Yet half of my family is not Jewish. My mother was raised Unitarian and converted to Judaism. Her

siblings are largely agnostic, but variously affiliated through their marriages with the Catholic and Protestant churches. Spending time with my mother's family instilled an early interest in non-Jewish religious thought.

Following in the footsteps of a creative, musical mother, I explored the relationship of Jewish ritual and ideology with the arts. I began writing songs at age fourteen and performing on guitar and vocals at seventeen. At age eighteen, I studied Judaism in Israel for a year and turned my lyrics towards religious and worship concepts. At the College of Arts and Sciences at Emory University, I declared religion major and music minor, joined the Inter-Religious Council, and began organizing musical and artistic religious events on campus after co-founding "Sacred Artistry." I performed on and off campus and established myself as a rising Jewish musician in the Atlanta community. These activities exposed me to a wide range of musicians from different religions, and to religious music in diverse settings.

From these interactions, I formed an impression of the inter-religious musician as someone who is open-minded to learning from others. Such musicians constantly seek to further their own spiritual values and practices and are strong enough in their own religiosity to embrace different views. All feel overcome by the beauty of music, and appreciate its ability to invoke emotional, physical, and spiritual responses. These musicians, and those who support inter-religious music, foster a sense of compassion and faithfulness towards a common humanity, and seek to improve the quality of our world. I value the positive effects of inter-religious music, and I also support those who craft an inter-religious tradition of inclusive and musical love.

In my personal religiosity, music is the most intimate space for connecting with the divine. Listening and creating music invites connections among the spirit, humanity

and forces of the world, from the Jewish tradition and beyond. This research is inescapably connected to my growing identity as a Jewish musician in the context of American religious music, and my involvement in inventive Jewish understanding and practices. The primary aims of this study are to explore the potential of musical collaboration across religious traditions, enrich personal musical religiosity, and unearth new possibilities of music for the diverse communities that bless my life.

I
A History of Inter-Religious Music

Inter-religious music arose out of a specific context and intricate intersection of culture, developed by the conscious efforts of religious followers and inter-religious advocates. This chapter tracks the American response to religious intolerance through political, social and artistic changes, and through the emerging phenomenon of inter-religious music. The chapter begins by describing current examples of inter-religious music, framing the movement in American religious and music history and then examining the relationship of American pluralism and its role in these creative inter-religious movements. The chapter then analyzes how inter-religious music offers an effective form of inter-religious collaboration when encompassing the currently definitive categories of Community Reformation, Dialogue and Religiosity. The following chapters test this thesis by applying these categories to particular contexts that can serve as initial models for other communities.

Throughout time, music has accompanied religious transformation (Bohlman 238). Religion and music have long been associated – from the ancient goddess traditions through Plato and Hildegard (Boyce-Tillman, *Modern Believing*). Musical sound expresses experiences of religion by articulating the verbal message of Islam, in Quranic recitation and through vernacular devotional poetry, like that of the Sufi Rumi (Qureshi 25). Buddhist chanting alters practitioners' perceptions and physical responses as they ritually reflect on the underlying philosophies of impermanence (Chen). From the Christian tradition, St Augustine stated that those who sing, pray twice, as Don Saliers explains,

"sung texts, especially those repeated with some frequency over time, become part of the body memory of faith" (Saliers, 335).

Through a series of examples in "Music of American Religious Experience," ethnomusicologist Phillip Bohlman shows how music is omnipresent in American culture with a palpable agency, mediating the diverse formations of American religious experience (Bohlman 3). Religious meaning emerges through active participation, so the voices of followers are combined into a communal, multi-dimensional experience, open to possibilities (Sullivan 69). In this way, music can manifest communal identity and can also create a unique space for the individual, where a single voice expresses individual belief while inspiring community cohesion (Bohlman 239). While this occurs organically, religious individuals hold the potential to transform a tradition by challenging norms and introducing new concepts. Musicians in particular have tremendous influence over religious experience, creating communal shifts through musical innovation (Bohlman). Many Americans recognize the centrality of music, some intentionally fostering the development of inter-religious exchange through music.

Inter-Religious Exchange Through Music

Throughout America subtle cross-cultural influences craft a religious panorama filled with inter-religious practices, including music. While distinct from this thesis' concept of inter-religious music, a review of this pattern helps frame inter-religious music as a normative product of a religiously diverse country.[4] In these cases, political and social

[4] . Religious music has played a central role in religious exchange throughout American history, from the music of Native Americans, to European settlers, to African slaves (Hubbard). The music of the native Wabanakki peoples in Maine, whose ancestry traces across New England for twelve thousand years, contains elements that expose the Wabannaki's conversion by seventeenth century European Catholic missionaries.[4] Sephardic Jews in America compose liturgical and social Hebrew songs using popular Arabic

interests influence how music is created and fits into religious practice. Institutions and individuals use music to communicate a normative viewpoint to recipients with the intention of influencing their religiosity. A number of contemporary musicians and musical groups in America overtly promote inter-religious exchange in their work. Philadelphia based Atzilut is a middle-eastern ensemble that features Arab and Jewish musicians in concert. Their collaboration intends to show musicians from different traditions overcoming conflict and celebrating hope and trust through music. ("Atzilut: Concerts for Peace, The Band"). Chicago actor and musician Yuri Lane mixes prayers for Middle Eastern peace into his rap verses, and the Jewish artist has brought his play "From Tel Aviv to Ramallah" to college campuses, community centers and theaters across the country. In collaboration with Egyptian-American DJ Sharif Ezzat, Lane beat-boxes a piece that portrays an Israeli and a Palestinian who face off at a checkpoint between their homelands (Breitman).

In the summer of 2011, I interned for a Jewish musician in Los Angeles who organized an inter-religious concert with a pastor friend, billed as "Are You In the Tent?" Elements of the Jewish Friday night Sabbath service were blended into the event along with "Christian prayers, diverse music and dance in an outdoor amphitheater. The well-known yearly event "The Austin Interfaith Arts and Music Festival" offers "opportunities for people of all faith traditions and nationalities to encounter the transforming beauty of

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melodies (Shelemay, 303) and the Lubavitcher Hasidic[4] movement in Brooklyn, New York, borrows the general musicals styles and melodies of people amongst whom they live (e.g. the Pepsi Cola commercial ditty "There's a Whole New Way of Livin") and creates "traditional" *niggunim*[4] from them (Shelemay, 303). Today, hymns and spiritual songs of the Evangelical Protestant tradition are the most widely used ritual texts in American history. Sacred lyrics like "Amazing Grace! How Sweet the Sound," have been sung by millions since the eighteenth century, and can be heard at events that center around American identity and support.[4] The perennial popularity of these hymns establishes them as a characteristic expression of American religiousness (Marini, 124).[4] American culture is rich with musical exchanges that cross secular and religious boundaries.

spiritually inspired art and music" (Our Mission). In addition to specifically "interfaith" festivals, American cities host various world music events that present diverse religious performers in tandem.

These musicians and religious communities increasingly share values of diversity and of seeking commonality across difference. More and more, Americans frame their inherited cultures as one aspect of complex identities, unthreatened by exposure to diverging perspectives. Conflicts between communities stem from intolerant relationships and the proponents of inter-religious music regard such intolerance as an uninformed state remedied most powerfully by communication and engagement. Inter-religious music serves as a mode of community reformation, as musicians target negative ideas and practices for reform and express alternative values through music.

Inter-religious music movements are flourishing outside of the United States as well and easily find their way to the American public. In 2000, the Pontanima Interfaith Choir completed a 17-day tour through the States, promoting positive ethnic relations in Bosnia and Hercegovina (Heil). In Morroco, the Fes Festival of World Sacred Music is an annual festival that was originally launched in the wake of the first Gulf War as an inter-religious initiative, and was conceived with an American audience in mind (Curtis). An ensemble from the festival entitled "The Spirit of Fès 2006: Paths to Hope" toured in the United States with Muslim, Jewish Christian and Hindu performers (Rappaport). In a documentary about the festival, a female Muslim performer explained the source of the inter-religious community around her, "Music is the essence of life. Music is the sound of the soul, the sound of love and compassion" (Sound of the Soul).[5] At these festivals, inter-

[5] Great Britain in particular boasts a number of inter-religious musical groups and initiatives. English vocal group the King's Singers produced the CD "Sacred Bridges" on a program of Renaissance-era psalm

religious impact extends beyond music, as communities engage in dialogue around a shared experience of music, opening the door for further connections over values and belief.

American Universities serve as launching pads for inter-religious music. In 2005, Counterpart International hosted a concert-seminar program at Harvard entitled, "Transforming Conflict and Deepening Interfaith Dialogue through Arts, Music and Ritual," in which a number of musicians from diverse backgrounds discussed their inter-religious work through music and media ("Transforming Conflict and Deepening Interfaith Dialogue through Arts, Music and Ritual"). In 2001, students of Duke, NC State and Chapel Hill organized an inter-religious music concert called "Abraham Jam." This concert featured three singer songwriters: a Jew, Muslim and Christian, and was held in conjunction with Amazing Faiths Dinner Dialogue Day, which invites people of different religions to share a meal.

An article covering this event in the *National Catholic Reporter* stated, "College students know there are other ways [than dialogue] to communicate, and music may be chief among them" (Shimron). UCLA hosted the 2008 World Festival of Sacred Music–Los Angeles, which presented nearly a thousand artists performing in 41 religious events of music and movement throughout Los Angeles that crossed cultural, religious and ideological boundaries (Bergman). The global mindset of younger generations of Americans contributes to the outgrowth of music and initiatives that engage across

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settings by Jewish, Christian and Muslim composers (Gelfand). Berakah, a world music ensemble featuring musicians from Muslim, Jewish and Christian backgrounds, uses music to bring people together in a spirit of peace, highlighting the importance of culture in building bridges ("Berakah, Jewish, Christian and Muslim Musicians Making Music"). In a cathedral in Winchester, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Sikhs and secular choirs join together in "Space for Peace", an annual inter-religious music event of popular songs from various cultures, including motets, hymns, worship songs, chants and chanting (Boyce-Tillman, *Making Musical Space for Peace*).

cultural boundaries. Universities, which foster expanding worldviews and cultural experiences, as well as artistic expression, are ideal launching pads for inter-religious music.

Today's enthusiasm for inter-religious initiatives through shared music carries behind it a long history of religious conflict and co-existence in America. In *Interfaith Encounters in America*, Kate McCarthy states, "encounters between participants in one religious tradition and those of another are always situated in larger social contexts, in which asymmetries of power and underlying theological assumptions act as powerful regulators" (McCarthy 18). Examining the historical development of religion in America uncovers conflicts that have influenced and been overcome by the exchange of diverse peoples. The contemporary expression of religious music crossing boundaries is rooted in American religious history. An historical review of the role of inter-religious music in inter-religious co-existence is important for illuminating the evolution of performance arts in the inter-religious movement. While current scholarship explores inter-religious development and religious music in the United States, this thesis is to the first to combine an exploration of the two as part of the inter-religious movement of today.

Religious Developments in the United States

Americans remain among the most religiously committed citizens of all industrialized societies, resisting the secularization that has transformed Japan and Western Europe (Eck 2001). Religion is key to American identity. As McCarthy explains, "when Americans talk about difference of religion, they are not just discussing alternative vision of the afterlife or comparing ritual practices, but are talking about what it means to be American" (McCarthy 2). The American Religious Identification survey conducted in

2001 asking for religious affiliation found that 86% Americans self identify with a religion. Only up to 13% of this religious population identified as non-Christian religions, leaving much of the diversity[6] among denominations of Christianity (McCarthy 6).[7] As we will see, the unaffiliated American plays a vital role in inter-religious exchange and music. Many projects include non-religious members of a community, or highlight diversity across economic and racial lines as well as religious. When one considers the range of affiliations of the contemporary American with specific denominations or communities, it reveals the complexity in defining what constitutes the inter-religious.

Ever since European settlers arrived in the new world, Americans have viewed religion as a vital intersection of freedom and passion.[8] Alongside capitalism, the initial Christian diversity set a legislative agenda for America. When delegates gathered in Philadelphia in 1787 to draft a new outline of government, the constitution provided that

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[6] Despite a common use of the term, this paper considers religious diversity as referring to diversity across religious traditions, not across denominations within a faith.

[7] These demographics of individual affiliation are measured by self-identification (McCarthy 5-6).

[8] Persecution from the established church in England led western voyagers to craft a country that ensured freedom of practice. The constitution, which implemented protections for religious expression and prohibited state religions, made possible America's religious diversity that demands inter-religious exchange and cooperation today (McCarthy 1-2). Yet colonization originally reduced, not enhanced, pluralism in America. The religions of indigenous Native Americans, such as the Arapaho, Blackfeet, Chumash, Delaware, Eskimo, Flathead, Ghost Dancers, Hopi, Iowa, Yuma and Zuni tribes, are now condensed from their former diversity to a single "Native American" identity. The wide repertoire of tribal songs, dances and stories that formed indigenous American identity and cosmology are lost amidst the cultural destruction brought by settlers (Gaustad 5-6). When we consider the importance of inter-religious initiatives, these past losses reveal the vitality of preventive inter-religious engagement. The arrival of settlers brought with them tensions between churches of Christian denominations and native tribes (Gaustad 17). Those fleeing from religious persecution, like the English Protestants and Puritans, were met by earlier settlers who had become colonizing missionaries, intent on converting newcomers, heathen natives, and persecuting church heretics. . In the sixteenth century Native Americans rebelled against violent Spanish missionary campaigns, and French Protestants were ruthlessly slain, just as they had been Spain (Gaustad 19, 29). Under the auspices of the West India Company, Dutch churches persecuted Quakers and Jews. In the 1700s, primarily Anglican establishments created barriers to communities of Presbyterians, Baptists and Methodists, provoking religious minorities to challenge what was developing into a civil state religion. However, Quaker endeavors in Pennsylvania promoted religious pluralism and fair dealings with Native Americans (Gaustad, 75, 86) Immigrant minorities that sought equality and justice in this period were more often met with state rulings that favored religious freedom, maintaining a domestic peace that enabled commerce and economic growth (Gaustad 47). This began the trend of immigrants attracted to the financial possibilities in America, who brought with them diverse cultures and music traditions.

no religious test would ever be required of those holding federal office, and those taking office can affirm rather than swear their allegiance. After the document was drafted, Thomas Jefferson pointed out the constitution's failure to provide explicit guarantees for human liberties, listing freedom of religion among them. In 1791, these first ten amendments to the constitution gave liberty its solid base. The First Amendment states, "congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof" (Gaustad 126-127).

The pursuit of liberty of conscience fostered a variety of Protestant denominations and religious immigrants (Gaustad 75).[9] Since the 1800s ethnic diversity from looser immigration laws has brought on religious diversity. Since the McCarren-Walker act of 1952 removed the ban on Asian Immigration—and the Immigration and Citizenship Act of 1965 abolished the immigration quota system—Hindu and Buddhist populations have swelled to the millions. Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Thai, Indonesian and other immigrants have implanted their traditions in American communities. Islam is now one of the fastest growing religions in the United States (McCarthy 6-7).

Bohlman states, "it is through sharing religious and musical practices that a community forms and solidifies itself" (Bohlman 239). New immigrants use religion and music to provide personal security and ethnic cohesion in their new land. In response to a dominant American culture unreceptive to immigrant customs, ethnic communities establish themselves and their beliefs significantly through religious practice. Immigrant music is sustained longer within these religious contexts, for communities depend on

[9] In mid-eighteenth century, the Philadelphia Jewish community swelled and established the Cherry Street Synagogue. (Gaustad 91). Through the 1800s American witnessed the rise of Mormonism, (Gaustad 226) Christian Science and the Theosophical Society, a religion dedicated to blending the ancient wisdom of India with occultist traditions of the west (Gaustad 91).

songs and compositions to carry their ancestry forward. Religious music responds to changing communities and the changing definitions of community, making them also symbols for hybridity and syncretism (Bohlman 4, 9). As one begins to create and sustain an inclusive community, music proves a critically cohesive element.

The Inter-Religious Pursuit in a Pluralist America

William Hutchison's 2003 study, "Religious Pluralism in America," contends that while Americans claim allegiance to the ideal of religious pluralism the meaning of pluralism has shifted over the centuries (Hutchison). From the revolutionary period through the nineteenth century, pluralism took the form of tolerance, permitting groups to live generally free from persecution, but still as outsiders with little access to power. During World War II, the United States military was forced into interactions with foreign religions, initiating a desperate desire to unify religious America against atheist communism and fascism. By mid-century the prevailing sense of pluralism was inclusion, in which Catholics and Jews were formally invited into the new reigning understanding of the American religious identity of "Judeo-Christian," with varying degrees of genuine equality (McCarthy 4-5).

The late 19th century marks a surge of scholarly efforts to understand religious difference (McCarthy 15). Scholarship on non-Christian religions became widely accessible due to colonial and missionary activity and from foreign scripture translation projects such as F. Max Muller's *Sacred Books of the East* series (1879-1894) (McCarthy 15). The Worlds Parliament of Religion established a normative model for inter-religious encounters – that of formal encounters between scholars in spirit of openness and toleration, with goals of promoting mutual understanding and enrichment. This

movement, built on the premise of equal dignity of all religions and value of open exchange, was a product of modernity and a democratic society (King, 45).[10] Parliament promoters used this forum as a site for evangelist comparison, comparing "evolutionarily advanced" religions to demonstrate their superiority.[11] (Wilson 763-764). In America, this created a lasting frame of religious pluralism as another western achievement (McCarthy 17). In any inter-religious initiative, American facilitators must take care to counter-act an imperialist mentality and acknowledge the historically western frame of engagement.

Despite this biased intent, The Worlds Parliament of Religion did inspire more scholarly congresses focused on religion, such as the World Council of Faiths, the Global Ethics and Religion Forum, and the North America Interfaith Network. These independent organizations exist to bring multiple religions into dialogue through inter-religious events and mobilized religious communities for action for social service issues (McCarthy 19). In the past quarter century, a host of other these organizations have emerged, such as the "Pluralism Project" at Harvard University, which gathered information on over five hundred inter-religious organizations in the United States (Pluralism Project 2006). This growth in dialogue and exchange has been influenced by immigration, the emergence of the "spiritual seeker," the increased need for social service

[10] However, the parliament has since come under scrutiny by scholars such as John Burris, who analyzes the organization's ideological roots as an expression of nineteenth century international exposition. Burris views this exposition as linked to presumptions of western cultural superiority, which manifested in distinctions between "primitive" and "civilized" cultural productions. A number of traditions were not considered religions, such as Native American, African and African American traditions, and received no invitation to the parliament (Wilson 763-764).

[11] As expected, other representatives were not easily swayed, several making claims for the superiority of their own religious traditions (Wilson 764).

in light of dwindling public resources and the mounting concern about the role of religion on local and global conflict (McCarthy 84).[12]

Western understandings of the terms faith and religion bias well-intentioned inter-religious scholarship and dialogue towards scientific and Judeo-Christian worldviews. Post enlightenment scholars chose the term "religion" to empirically and neutrally describe the scientific study of people's relation to the holy, creating a field that focuses on observable practice and often ignores internal motivations of followers (Smith 137). By using the Latin derived term "religion," even "the most ardently sympathetic religious pluralist is, from the outset, deeply embedded in the act of intellectual, if not cultural, imperialism or theoretical reduction" (McCutcheon 10). "Faith" holds strong ties to Christianity, as a New Testament term for religion and implicitly references the New Testament's understanding of a religious tradition and community (Robinson 233).

Many religions of the world do not have a term comparable to faith to describe customs and beliefs to their followers in the way that mission-minded sects of the Hellenistic age, led by Judaism and Christianity, do.[13] The term faith was re-introduced into religious studies when biblical categories reentered scholarship after World War I (Robinson 233-234). Due to a history of Christian domination over inter-religious exchange, it is understandable that some followers and scholars view the term faith as inappropriate in inter-religious dialogue. While both the terms religion and faith hold a

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[12] Many of these organizations appreciate the value of inter-religious music as religious representation and connection. The Parliament of World Religions hosts "Sacred Music" concerts that have included South Indian flute, gospel trumpet, Jewish Choirs (Radio National), African drumming, chanting from diverse traditions and Aboriginal and Indigenous traditional dance and songs (Artists and Musicians). Harvard's Pluralism Project includes religious music in their research reports on American trends (American Muslim Music) and initiatives, such as the "Whirlwind Project" which shares music between various religious and ethnic traditions. The Whirlwind Project "gathers people of many faiths and traditions to explore sacred stories through music, dialogue and the arts, fostering mutual respect and understanding in our community" ("Mission Statement" *The Whirlwind Project*).

[13] In chapter three, W.C. Smith's challenges this claim.

similar history of western theoretical authority, this paper recognizes "inter-religious" as more inclusive terminology then "interfaith" for the scholarship on inter-religious music. This thesis makes a point to use inter-religious while maintaining an awareness of the Protestant hegemony and empirical authority in American inter-religious studies.[14]

Americans have since moved towards a non-assimilative model of pluralism, driven by the effects of liberalized immigration politics and civil rights causes. "Racial and ethnics empowerment movements of the 1960s and 1970s generated new ways of thinking about diversity in which American identity could be hyphenated with other markers, both as expressions of pride and as protests against racism and forced assimilation" (McCarthy 7). These multiple identities were also used to support an American cause, such as Vietnam protests, while representing a minority religious community. Hutchinson calls this a "pluralism of participation" in the sense that it is the responsibility of religious, ethnic and racial individuals and groups to form and implement society's agenda (McCarthy 5). In these structures, religious groups come together to support a cause that has shared moral value across religious traditions. Inter-religious music projects fit into this pluralist structure, as participatory initiatives that utilize musical skills and traditions towards inter-religious efforts. Musicians can vocalize the needs of their religious community and engage followers in pluralist events.

The 1960s also sparked a revival of the American tradition of spiritual exploration and experimentation. Religious scholar Robert Wuthnow defines spirituality as consisting "of all beliefs and activities by which individuals attempt to relate their lives to God or to a divine being or some other conception of a transcendent reality" (Wuthnow *After Heaven,*

[14] Chapter three offers a new term, that of the "Inter Faithful Musician," to include the diverse religiosity of case studies Sacred Artistry and Spirit Sounds. Chapter three will address how the terms faith and religion apply to what musicians bring to an music exchange.

viii). While spirituality can be classified within our category of religiosity, *religiosity extends to any exploration of meaning, purpose, value and practice*. Spiritual exploration resulting from exposure to nonwestern religions, economic growth, social mobility and a cultural mood encouraging challenges to tradition and authority (McCarthy 7).

The attitude towards the expectations of religion has also changed, with Americans commonly believing that "spirituality should result in social and therapeutic benefit" (Porterfield 231). The many Americans who are confident in the therapeutic value of religion seek it widely with minimal ethnic or inter-religious limitation (McCarthy 8). This creates an increasing amount of religious identities that are individual, eclectic and dynamic (Wuthnow *After Heaven*). The twin threats of fundamentalism and homogenizing commodification of culture have not seemed to inhibit this growing trend: 64% of wired Americans have used the internet for spiritual or religious purposes, from sending emails with spiritual content to seeking information about other religions (McCarthy 198, 169). One such resource is the webpage "The Night Lotus Productions," where anyone can read spiritual books, play devotional music and watch videos featuring a host of faiths (Janis).

Wuthnow sees this eclectic spirituality as a new mode of "seeking" for Americans who are uncomfortable in a religious institution (Wuthnow, *After Heaven, "From Dwelling to Seeking"*).[15] Spiritual seekers play a key role in popular music, as music serves as a form of understanding and communication that does not fit into traditional modes.[16] Wuthnow

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[15] The Dalai Lama takes a unifying approach to eclectic spirituality in the western world. In "Ethics for a Whole World" he promotes a secular ethics for both the religious and non-religious seeker. This secular ethics is based on compassion, or alleviating the suffering of others while promoting their wellbeing, an aim that His Holiness argues underlies all religious traditions as well as human nature (His Holiness the Dalai Lama, xiii).

[16] For example, during this time the popularity of the Beatles was influenced by the teachings of a Hindu guru named Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, with whom band members studied in India (Ehrlich).

argues that artists serve as spiritual vanguards and that spirituality increasingly focuses on the inherently ineffable character of what artists refer to as divine mystery. Artists such as musicians often seek a more intuitive sense of the transcendent through symbols and imagery. These artists provide rich insights into social and cultural problems, offering new ways of thinking about the body, mind and spirit (Wuthnow, *Creative Spirituality: The Way of the Artist*).

This trend illustrates a musical religiosity, the exploration and construction of meaning, purpose, value and practice through music that affects a consciousness of one's identity. In a musical religiosity, Americans engage musicians as spiritual leaders offering intellectual and emotional guidance, and recognize music's therapeutic abilities inside and outside of the spiritual sphere as a relaxing or revitalizing practice that reduces stress in many contexts. The expansive use of music in various wellness capacities include medicinal uses of music in emotional therapy (Davis 71), cancer pain treatment (Burns) and physical rehabilitation (Snyder), as well as music treatment methods for marginalized and delinquent youth (Keen).

Globalization and eclectic spirituality offer complications for inter-religious exchange, and bring up questions about identity for inter-religious music. There are countless American communities in work, school and play that contain inter-religious members: if they create music together, does that count as inter-religious? Can you identify someone as a Buddhist musician if he has never met another Buddhist, but abides by his interpretation of Buddhist principles? Can a musician offer Christian music if she was raised Baptist but no longer believes in the Bible or attends church? How does one label a participant who identifies with more than one religious tradition?

One could attempt to sidestep these blurred boundaries by classifying everyone within religiosity, including all people interested in exploring meaning, purpose, value and practice in their lives (Chesnek). Another way to address these questions is to examine the purpose of inter-religious collaboration: if inter-religious music aims to incorporate inter-religious communities, then it needs musicians that the religious community identifies as a representative. If the aim is for the musicians to gain exposure to different thought systems, then an eclectic spirituality and non-affiliated persons may aid this. Music aimed at engaging diverse influences for aesthetic reasons may only consider what musical traditions musicians know. Music intended to elicit spiritual worth could require that participants share the belief in a musical relationship to transcendence.

Varied intentions for inter-religious are influenced by religious concepts of individuality within community, styles of worship, and concerns about ethnic and cultural maintenance. This thesis includes the continuous spectrum from religious to spiritual to secular in inter-religious music through the organizing category of musical religiosity. Musical religiosity includes the institutional affiliate who uses music to worship the divine alongside a spiritual seeker engaging music to access a secular ethics or an intuitive transcendence. Further, it argues for this inclusivity as vital for engaging the American young adult generation.

Community Reformation, Dialogue, and Religiosity in Inter-Religious Music

The last three sections explored the development of the modern realm of inter-religious institutions and music initiatives, and as well as the increasingly complex and individualized religious identity of Americans. The following sections distinguish how inter-religious music incorporates and interacts with community reformation, dialogue

and religiosity, and how a musical religiosity accommodates the diverse representation in inter-religious music. These categories are informed by the historical developments of inter-religious music, and also by this thesis' case studies of Sacred Artistry and Spirit Sounds. The following application and understanding of these inter-religious categories do not apply to all of the wide variety of inter-religious expression that this chapter has referenced.

Despite examples of pluralism in the last section, it is in the public spaces of school, work and the military that real openness to minority religious groups gets tested (McCarthy 9). Religious rights in America are often marginalized purely because they are religious. Activists and academic communities who are assertive in promoting diversity in race, class and gender seldom highlight religion, "as it is often considered part of the traditional structure of social hierarchy and domination that their efforts seek to critique and dismantle, not as another aspect of cultural diversity to be celebrated" (McCarthy 10). Because educators steer clear of religion, the majority of Americans are simultaneously passionate and ignorant about religion, sometimes their own included.

When asked about religious difference, many Americans explain their beliefs with concepts of tolerance, individualism and equality that contradict teachings of their identified religion. This surface-level tolerance shields an ignorance that results in the muting of public religious expression and a population that becomes contaminated with hatred during times of duress (McCarthy 10-11). Fear and discrimination resulting from the September 11th attacks in 2001, for example, led to crimes against Muslims and mosque burnings, and this fear is still apparent in aggressive and unfounded statements about Islamic law and teachings.

To battle this post-911 trend, a number of inter-religious councils surged around the country (Tillman).[17] Theorist Kusumita Pederson assigns these inter-religious efforts into three main motives:

- To focus on solving a shared community problem, like peace, violence or racism.
- To create dialogue aimed at helping different religious groups live together harmoniously.
- To search for religious truth in a pluralist setting (McCarthy 20).

Similarly, Mark Heim distinguishes three categories using the Hindu concepts of *karma* (action or community reformation), *jnana*, (knowledge or dialogue of doctrine), and *bhakti*, (devotion or spirituality).[18] Drawing from these sets of categories, this paper organizes inter-religious programming into categories of Community Reformation, Dialogue, and Religiosity. Community reformation refers to any attempt to improve the world through community engagement. Dialogue is defined as an exchange of knowledge or doctrine aimed at helping different religious groups and individuals live together harmoniously. Religiosity focuses inclusively on inquiries of value and truth, as well as transcendent experience and searching. University campuses, such as Emory University, implement programs that often engage one or more of these dimensions. (McCarthy 20). These categories have distinct qualities of social engagement, although with exceptions and complex intersections. Community reformation serves a public, external engagement; dialogue serves a public or private forum, and can manifest as external speech or internal dialogue with the self; and religiosity serves an internal experience

[17] Times of fear also elicit musical responses. From the Woodstock music festival to gospel singing in Civil Rights movement, American history is filled with music focused on diminishing misunderstanding and promoting co-existence and equality. Music and art are instrumental in the achievement of a social movement, by attracting resources, communicating information, fostering useful emotions, and as a symbol for the movement's identity (Adams). Modern movements like "Playing for Change" and "Music 4 Peace" encourage musicians to break barriers between diverse cultures and backgrounds through their art.

[18] Spiritual, or *bhakti*, can be understood as a personal devotion in community, which in Hindu culture is often achieved through music.

represented through action and speech, and through music. The following subsections examine how inter-religious music serves effectively in the categories of Community Reformation, Dialogue, and Religiosity understood by studies at Emory University. The categories are majorly informed by the student population of Emory University, and by a western academic and mindset of the spiritual seeker.

Community Reformation: Service and Event Networks

In order to improve the quality of life in America, insight and energy must be channeled towards community reformation. The following section examines similarities between community reformation and inter-religious music as embodied practice and promotion of values, and explains how music can further community reformation agendas via events and networking.

On January 12th, 2012, I attended the "Interfaith Leadership Institute," a three-day training session in Atlanta, Georgia, which hosted 160 university students nationwide to discuss inter-religious campaigns on their campuses. The Institute is run by the Interfaith Youth Core, a Chicago based nonprofit founded in 2002, and works in conjunction with President Barack Obama's "The Interfaith and Community Service Campus Challenge."[19] This session helped me understand the role of inter-religious music in the wider movement by exposing me to inter-religious projects all over the country and introducing me to students from dozens of religions and universities. The

[19] In 2011, President Barack Obama issued "The Interfaith and Community Service Campus Challenge," sponsored by the White House Office of Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships and the Corporation for National and Community Service and the Department of Education. In response to this challenge, campus-based religious and non-religious organizations work with community organizations on service projects on campuses throughout the country. Obama explains in an online video, "I know that an act of service can unite people of all faiths – or even no faith – around a common purpose of helping those in need. In doing so, we can not only better our communities, we can build bridges of understanding between ourselves and our neighbors…" (The White House: President Barack Obama).

students I spoke to believed in inter-religious work as imperative to forming better communities and expressed openness to inter-religious music as an avenue of engagement.

Founder and president Eboo Patel believes that inter-religious initiatives must become a social norm in America, like any successful reformation movement, and college campuses are the best places to start this change by modeling inter-religious cooperation and fostering future leaders. To accomplish this students learn to articulate the importance of their religious practice and beliefs to others and to design their own campaigns. Dr. Patel encourages "the young people we work with to connect their inward journey, their reflections upon themselves and their vocation and their mission in the world with the work of interfaith leadership and interfaith service and interfaith conversation" (Patel, *NPR interview*). When I spoke to Patel about my interest in inter-religious music, he encouraged me to continue my work and trust my insights. Patel re-affirms the need for such programming in the following statement:

> America is the most religiously diverse nation in human history and the most religiously devout nation in the West in an era of global religious revival. Every day brings fresh stories of hot religious conflict somewhere in the world, and simmering religious tension here at home. Those religious forces — fueled by youth growing up in an era of profound socioeconomic dislocation and seeking the deep identity that faith provides — could wind up making this a century marked by the clash of civilizations or a century defined by religious pluralism. If the color line was the problem of the twentieth century, the faith line is the challenge of the twenty-first (Patel 2008).

The Interfaith Youth Core and President Obama's challenge focus on enacting community reforms to unite students across religions in the name of a shared value, such as helping the poor or educating children. Inter-religious music, a social statement in itself, naturally facilitates community reformation goals. Music can promote a social agenda and galvanize the listener and concerts easily serve as fundraisers and community

engagement events. Music events that partner with service work logistically support a community while offering a musical reward to participants. Musicians engaged in inter-religious music connect their communities, exciting them through their investment in inter-religious causes and the relationships they build through collaboration. Musicians who perform in their local communities often have wide networks with arts and religious communities. If musicians believe that their music has positive properties, they may be willing to aid in the promotion of an inter-religious music event.

Music can further political, social, and personal agendas through the content of a song, its form of performance, the people involved, and how it is marketed. Like social action projects, creating music is an embodied representation of a community value and goal. Martin Luther King Jr. stated, "our goal is to create a beloved community, and this will require a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives" (Shipman *TED Video*). King's beloved community is necessarily all-inclusive, and embraces each difference of its members. Doug Shipman, CEO of the National Center for Civil and Human Rights, believes everyone must acquire empathy for each member of King's beloved community in order to achieve global justice (Shipman). Shipman's approach is echoed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who says that along with a rational mind and symbolic language, humans have an "instinctive capacity for empathy" (His Holiness the Dalai Lama 26).

Empathy is acquired through an ongoing engagement of different cultural communities, and as we will see throughout this paper, this is a particular strength of inter-religious music. Also vital to the growth of a beloved community and empathy is communicating across language and cultural barriers, which requires one, in Shipman's

phrase, to "listen with your heart" (Shipman *TED Video*).[20] Inter-religious scholar Aasulv Lande notes that being solely concerned with community service skirts the depth and curiosity of inter-religious dialogue and can perpetuate the surface-level tolerance mentioned in the last section. Alternatively, a dialogue of experience has the capacity to open new academic perspective and convey fresh dimensions of truth in the contemporary religious world (Lande). In inter-religious music, this dialogue of experience takes place through self-expression in music and dialogue.

Of course not all communities will benefit from this list of formation goals. Yet at this thesis will show, these goals can be realized when approached with a certain population and approach.

Music as Dialogue: Crafting Meaning, Safe Space, Empathy and Individual Identity

The exchange of knowledge between different religious groups and individuals that helps them live together harmoniously occurs in a unique capacity through music. This section analyzes how music goes beyond the reach of inter-religious dialogue by fostering meaning, safe space and empathy, and encouraging individual identity through music.

One concern raised at the Interfaith Youth Core retreat was that a program labeled as "inter-religious" may deter certain people from participating. Inter-religious work aims to include the religious and the nonreligious, because sustainable community building avoids excluding a population. Secular business and non-profits can benefit the inter-religious agenda, however secular members may be hesitant to engage in a

[20] Shipman talks about this concept among amongst grief counselors, for grief is often expressed in one's native tongue. Grief counselors don't ask for a translation, but listen to grief in foreign languages with their hearts (Shipman).

collaboration where they will feel marginalized as non-religious, or may be proselytized, which has been a relevant concern throughout inter-religious history. Just as adverse, inter-religious collaboration can also exclude certain traditionalists. Many religious followers fear that inter-religious programming will promote inclusive ideology, the belief that religious truth can be found in multiple religions. For followers who believe that their religious revelation is exclusively true, inter-religious dialogue appears as a threat to their beliefs by suggesting the validity of other religions.

Exclusivist ideologies remain in prominent orthodox denominations, but this identity need not limit a religion from engaging in inter-religious dialogue, service, or art. While inter-religious work commits to pluralism, it also encourages respective religious commitment within participating communities (McCarthy 25-26, 2000). McCarthy states that inter-religious participants dominantly disavow a syncretistic religious worldview. Inter-religious exchanges deeply nurture religious identity, as McCarthy explains, "encountering another requires us to encounter ourselves, to make conscious the beliefs, values practices, prejudices, fears and hope that define our religious life" (McCarthy 208). Dean of Religious Life at Emory University Susan Henry-Crowe affirms that throughout her experience with inter-religious work, dialogue has always fostered a student's identity with the religion he or she is representing (Henry-Crowe).

It is true that inter-religious learning has the potential to instigate a re-appropriation of one's own tradition in light of the new encounter with the other (Polleyfet, McCarthy). Surely there have been cases of shifting religiosity from exposure to diverse schools of thought. Because of this, some religious communities may resist attending an event or meeting in which they are directly exposed to beliefs of other religions. This is a great challenge for the inter-religious movement, for American

religious history shows that inter-religious exchange is necessary in a country where citizens constantly encounter differing belief systems. If the inter-religious aspect of music is not explicitly stated, inter-religious music could be a method of attracting traditional religious followers.

A musical event promoted as "community music" or "ethnic music" can offer less threatening exchange of inter-religious collaboration and communication. A concert audience is not forced to re-examine its own religion, because the underlying structure and belief system is not explained and defended in a factual manner. Through music, a listener can hear the perspectives and voices of another religious individual without threat. Those who feel safe in this environment take their own initiative to inquire about the meaning and philosophies embedded in the music of another religion, which can lead to a more in-depth understanding of the "other" and empathy. In this chapter, empathy refers to the engagement of another's mindset and emotions that foster understanding and peaceful coexistence.

As any chanter and musician will attest, music conveys meaning in ways that dialogue simply cannot. In the song *Everything in its Own Time*, the Indigo Girls entreat listeners, "the music whispers you in urgency; hold fast to that languageless connection" (Don and Emily Saliers, xi). Music invokes responses through melody, rhythm, tempo, key, and even permeates our skin and organs through sound vibration. Musical communication has been proven to be a valuable tool in dissolving conflict and promoting wellbeing and has been used to reduce crime in public locales.[21] "Lets Talk Music," a research article in A Nordic Journal of Music Therapy, presents a multi-

[21] Critics have long argued that there is a connection between music and criminal behavior, and American has a long history of attempts to regulate vice by regulating certain types of music. (Capers 762). Portland city's pilot program that plays classical music at a MAX stop reduced police calls by 40 percent (Kissée).

cultural group of immigrants and Israeli-born students receiving music therapy techniques based on psychodynamic principles. The study evaluated how immigrants' musical exchange with a group from the host country promoted communication and acceptance of others. Both qualitative and quantitative data show that understanding music is part of our understanding of ourselves and our relationships with other people (Avi).[22] This reflects McCarthy's description of the aim of dialogue's to help different religious groups live together harmoniously.

By creating music, we can craft relationships in our world as we experienced them in the past and as we wish them to be in the present (Avi 3, 8-9). Jewish Kabbalist Dovber Pinson believes that music communicates separate from rational thought. Words, though they are designed to reveal, are actually concealments. Kabbalism, as Judaism's mystical tradition, teaches that forming ideas into words lowers them to a state of rational logic, a confined and restricted place. Thinking through a thought conceals the essence of the thought while revealing its externality. When Kabbalists sing, they find themselves with a pure thought, a deeply felt emotion, and no words to communicate the original feeling (Pinson).

Theologian and music specialist June Boyce-Tillman similarly believes that music seals human cultures less hermetically than language, which makes it a valuable tool for inter-religious communication and fostering respect of multiple identities. She describes this as a "liminal musical space" (*Making Musical Space for Peace,* 5) in which conflicting

[22] Science recognizes the central role of music in affecting our mental and physical development. Psychology shows that music has strong roots in human nature-babies are born with an intrinsic sensitivity to musical parameters, such as rhythm, melody and harmony (Trevarthen & Malloch, 2002) and our first communications with our mothers are musical (Papousek & Papousek, 1981; Stern, 1985). Music is also a fundamental channel of communication (Amir, 1999; Bruscia, 1998) as it provides a means by which people can share emotions, intentions, and meanings (Amir, 2004, 2005; Hargreaves et al., 2002; Scheiby, 1999).

ideas and beliefs can be held without resolution ("liminal" describing an acceptance of uncertainty and multiple identities). She explains that while the verbal propositional processing system deals in discrimination, alternatively the relational or liminal quality of music looks for connection and the whole picture. Therefore, "the encounter with differences externally can lead to an encounter with these alterities[23] within the individual self and a greater sense of inner peace based on the acceptance of multiple identities within the self, like, in religious terms, the co-existence of faith and doubt" (Boyce-Tillman, *Making Musical Space for Peace* 4). Whether our dialogue is with an audience, a partner, or with the self through rational thought that frames our experience, it reduces liminal potential. Boyce-Tillman's thesis claims that liminal music space enables respect for difference, an open-minded encounter with cultural, spiritual and personal differences-a sense of shared community (Boyce-Tillman, *Making Musical Space for Peace*).

Music can also challenge generalizations about a religion by highlighting individual belief and the perspective of participants. Individual voices and instruments communicate unique identity within a performance, particularly through performance of a personal composition. The multi-cultural Israeli immigrant study "Lets Talk Music" explains that our preferred musical style is a cumulative outcome of the music of our childhood, our personal choices, and the music of our ethnic group, our religion, and our culture. Therefore, our choices in musical genre and instrument serve as a social badge of identification; they define to others who we are and to what social groups we belong. Explicitly presenting one's music in a social context is, therefore, quite meaningful, especially if the listeners are of various cultural backgrounds (Avi 8-9).

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[23] Alterities is plural of alterity, a philosophical term meaning "otherness" within the self, strictly in the sense of the other of two. Boyce-Tillman is referring to multiple internal contradicting dichotomies. (Boyce-Tillman).

People presenting their music are actively exposing their inner world of identities. Philip Bohlman stresses the importance of the individual musician in American religious experience, stating "that it is in the dialectical tension between individual and community that American religious experience resides. Music intensifies both that tension and the complex practices of faith that it makes possible" (Bohlman 327). Music creates the space for artists to identify with their religion and to show their commitment through music preparation. By engaging in a shared musical history, artists also display their unique contributions to communal creativity. One of the reasons that inter-religious work tends to be difficult is because religion is a personal topic in America, and religious followers associate their unique identity with the religious experiences and beliefs they have acquired. Philip Bohlman succinctly explains this individuality:

Indeed, religious experience is by no means limited to the sanctuaries of organized religious institutions, nor is it bounded by the strictures of liturgies or professionally sanctioned repertories. Perhaps most important, the experience of religion in the United States and Canada is at base highly personal, starting with individual responses to religion. "Music provides one of the most powerful voices for the expression of the individual's religious experience, not least because music in American religious life more often than not provides an active form of performing one's faith" (Bohlman, 233). As a means of experiencing religion, music in North America engages the individual through performance.[24]

[24] Non-personal factors like culture or social structures surely account for the individual quality of North American religiosity. As historically situated individuals, we are shaped by the cultures in which we are embedded, and part of this socialization is to understand religiosity as an individual project, especially since the late 20th century. It is not necessarily individual at its base, but is often understood as such, and this can mask important larger cultural forces.

Bohlman's observations on American individuality within tradition surely relate to those same trends that created the Wuthnow's "eclectic spirituality." This heightened sense of self-uniqueness creates a need not only to craft practices for one's self, but also to present one's spirituality in a distinctive fashion. Identity is outward-oriented: Americans express the self as unique through practice. Traditional religious communities place emphasis on community cohesion, and this emerges in musical styles as well. Communal chanting and choral singing creates a feeling of oneness and a common spirit between all practitioners, an example of Émile Durkheim's "collective effervescence."[25] However, when examining contemporary choirs and chanting groups, individual expression surfaces. Pi-yet Chen, a Buddhist scholar, observes how Chinese Buddhist individuality has emerged in a "post traditional world." (Chen 226). These daily chanting services traditionally aim to cultivate religiosity and community integration. The new practice of "free chanting" (Chen 231) enables chanters to break away from the chants structure and emphasizes sound in and of itself, outside of melodic progression. This weds music to momentary reflection, the melodic framework becoming adaptable to personal taste. Chanters express self-reflection and interpretation, pursuing sound free from the confines of the chanted music (Chen 230-231). This expression does not use words, but engages distinct vocalizations of sound, unrestricted by the confines of language that structure dialogue.

Participants with different religious backgrounds will have varied relationships to dialogue and experience in musical exchange. Yet to the contemporary spiritual American which this paper chiefly addresses, the ability to express the self through

[25] These rites are highly emotional collective experiences, states of "collective effervescence," in which humans feel themselves transformed through ritual, which can overcome the divisions among individuals and subgroups (Durkheim xli).

religion is vital. As we will see in the following chapters, inter-religious music encourages this kind of individual expression within community.

Religiosity: Experiencing the Transcendent Through Music

Religions hold countless interpretations of the power of music, and this section explores the emotive, spiritual qualities of music across traditions. For some, the empathy invoking experience through music described in the last section is intricately connected to the transcendent. The first time I heard Mille Regretz by Josqin des Prés (1450/1455 – 1521), my heart cried alongside the resounding voices.[26] I closed my eyes, my breathing slowed, and inside my body arose an unexpected welling of emotion. I did not understand the meaning of the Latin words; Gregorian chant was not a preferred genre of mine, and neither was polyphonic music; I did not listen from an-awe invoking concert hall, but instead sat in the privacy of my room, headphones plugged into YouTube on my computer. I played the piece again and again, that day, the next; and each time I felt the same emotional welling. Even stranger, recordings of other choirs chanting this same piece did not elicit an equal reaction.

Something about this performance created an experience, aided by the singers, the composer, the director and, I believe, from some unnamable source of transcendence. The music embodied my sense of empathy and awe, an experience that occurs in various religious and cultural settings. Recognizing the emotive qualities of music is vital for examining the affects of inter-religious music, because this is a way in which many followers engage transcendence, creed, memories, and communal history of their religions. When a community sings about suffering, joy, or determination, the otherwise

[26] "Josquin des Prés – 'Mille Regretz'" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3GBwbt6hK6c>

unexplainable experience receives a name, and then can be shared in both heart and mind. And this experience of community and of the transcendent, to many followers, is what makes belief matter (Walton 2).

"Today, like every other day, we wake up empty and frightened," noted Sufi mystic Jalaluddin Rumi. "Don't open the door to the study and begin reading. Take down a musical instrument. Let the beauty we love be what we do" ("Sufi Music"). Like so many religious sects, Muslim Sufis recognize the power of music to uniquely access an element of our being. Throughout the world, Sufi traditions use music's emotive and communal power to lose the self in remembering God and draw closer to the divine ("Sufi Music").[27] In the Indian Hindu tradition, the basic element of music, that of sound, is central. By sound gods exist, and with sound they are worshiped. The entire world process of continuous creation and dissolution depends on sound (Rowell, 40).[28] According to Alain Daniélou, producing sound, in musical and non-musical form, enables a glimpse of the nature of the cosmos, of the fundamental reality of creation. Music effects humans at the core of their being, therefore it becomes one of the easiest ways to interact with the supernatural world (Daniélou 17-19).

In Judaism, as in Hinduism and Buddhism[29] and countless other traditions, musical chants connect a community while eliciting the mystical presence of transcendence. Yet it is not only through producing sound, but also through perceiving sound, that the divine emerges. According to Ouaknin, Kabbalah itself is the art of

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[27] The most well known example of Sufi mystical experience through music is exhibited through ecstatic dances of the Turkish "whirling dervishes" ("Sufi Music").

[28] Rowell also expounds on, *nada brahma*, a Hindu concept that the successive gradations of musical sound, both manifest and unmanifest, are identified with the creative vital force by which the entire universe is animated (Rowell 36).

[29] This references devotional Buddhist incantation, such as the earlier stated Tibetan Buddhist communal chant in which chanters improvise melody and emphasize sound (Chen).

"listening to voices from elsewhere, from the great symphony of the celestial spheres to the humble prayer of wet grass and wayside trees, via the rhythm of human hearts, discreet sonatas of tenderness and love" (Ouaknin 10). Through pure intention, music in Judaism can affect the spiritual realms, drawing the healing power of transcendent presence into the physical world ("Songs of Eden").

These mystical experiences result from the potent power of music, yet music does not entirely contain the transcendent. As innumerable spiritual accounts demonstrate, the human understanding of the nature of God is uncontainable in any single set of metaphors. No word, image, or song can adequately describe the transcendent experience of every religious follower, and thus the search for illumination is never-ending (Walton 3). The modern religiously devout American or eclectic spiritual seeker constantly searches for new ways to encounter God. Although not every person will gain a spiritual experience through inter-religious music, religious music plays such a central role in religion--and music holds potency for inspiring feeling--that music is a powerful source of exchanging religiosity, our worldviews and conceptions of the self.

The secular American can also experience an unnamable presence in music. Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Music Director Robert Spano says that like many other unreligious musicians, he experiences music as holy. By this, Maestro Spano means that music points to something that exists beyond the physical world, much like a concept of transcendence. Spano noted that it was not only the music that inspired this reflection, but also the silences during a performance. At the end of a song or musical piece, performer and audience experience a different quality of silence than they do in unintentional quiet moments, and these moments hold the potential for further reflection and stimulating emotion (Spano). This aspect of musical religiosity connects a

transcendent experience of many musicians to that of the religious follower and spiritual seeker.

Musical religiosity, however, does not only refer to the transcendent: it is what one most deeply cares about, one's internal motivations and values, and one's concept of the self. One could argue that musical religiosity includes every piece of music, as every musical creation is impacted by values and practices, and relates to individual consciousness. This could certainly be a starting place of further inquiry in the religiosity of popular American music. In inter-religious music, engaging a foreign religiosity requires enacting one's empathetic abilities in order to access another's worldview through emotions. Some researchers have noted that musicians often have more empathic awareness than non-musicians, perhaps developing empathy through their musical creativity (Odena) (Muir).[30] Online polls show that Americans view musicians as having higher degrees of empathy than the general population ("Do Musicians Have More Empathy?"). These polls do not necessarily reflect a dominant American view, yet show active voices in support of the musical authority. While empathy is integral, and may be developed through composing any type of music, in this thesis musical religiosity refers specifically to inter-religious music.

For the religious listener, a song may invite God into an inter-religious space, thus bringing holiness to everyone present. Yet for the diverse religious and irreligious audience, inter-religious music also brings a transcendent experience unique to music performance. This capacity offers an inclusive inter-religious collaboration with potential to engage a wider American community and creates a space to share spiritual experiences

[30] According to the NewScientist, "Musical training might help autistic children to interpret other people's emotions. A study has revealed brain changes involved in playing a musical instrument that seem to enhance your ability to pick up subtle emotional cues in conversation" (Muir).

of music across religious boundaries. The following chapters show how music solicits emotions, reflection, and a contemplative experience of its own that can be spiritual and religious. Sharing that experience with another community, even if you may reject its belief system, fosters a sense of shared understanding and appreciation of religious worth. As Bohlman states, "it is through sharing religious and musical practices that a community forms and solidifies itself" (Bohlman 239). For the listener unaffiliated with a religion, this experience may even offer an opening into a religious tradition through the common language of music.

Crafting a shared religious experience is a delicate and sometimes difficult project to take on. Inter-religious activity requires compromises from participating traditions, and too many concessions bring the danger of an event that feels inauthentic event and lacks substance. One important element of religious practice and music is location. Inter-religious music can be performed in a public space, such as a non-sectarian university, community center, or concert hall, and also performed from one community's religious space. The location may influence the collective experience of an audience and must be taken into account.[31] Inter-religious worship services events often engage inter-religious music, in which different traditions contribute traditional prayers and practices. From McCarthy's perspective these presentations are often met with inappropriate applause, a

[31] For certain followers, a concert hall with chair seating may connote more of the ambiance of a synagogue or church than a Hindu or Buddhist temple, which may have different architecture and in which practitioners typically sit on the floor. A concert may also feel less like a service to Muslims, who incorporate body movements into prayer and do not have instrumental music during services. However, the American Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim may be more familiar with the secular style of music performance than the Christian or Jewish American would be with the former's embodied religious practices and space. This is due to a higher integration of normative American performance practice with Christian and Jewish institutional religious practices (as well as architectural commonalities between concert halls and Judeo-Christian sanctuaries).

clear miscommunication between the organizers and participants of the service (McCarthy 101).

Different religious traditions view their relationship between music and prayer differently and may be uncomfortable if they feel their tradition is framed in a foreign expectation. This is one of the reasons that Spirit Sounds, the inter-religious music case study of this thesis, is promoted as a concert--and the music as religious--but not necessarily worship. Spirit Sounds is also held in a university chapel designated for inter-religious use. Although there are still sensitivities with any religious performance, the inter-religious space and concert label avoids certain expectations that a worship service might elicit, while maintaining a space that encourages reflection and personal experience.

This chapter has reviewed the expansive inter-religious experience through American life, and the powerfully facilitative role and effect that inter-religious music has on community reformation, dialogue, and religiosity. American religiosities and pluralist ideals have converged in the contemporary values of diverse and inclusive spiritual experience and engagement. All these factors contribute to inter-religious music's models of engagement through social reformation, dialogue, and religiosity. Emory University, an institution that fosters inter-religious music programs amongst its students in the present day, actively furthers American developments in musical religiosity. The following chapter prepares the reader for an examination of student organization Sacred Artistry and case study Spirit Sounds by reviewing the inter-religious development of Emory University.

II

Inter-Religious Music of Emory University

In 1836, a small group of Methodists established a new town called Oxford in the state of Georgia, in honor of the British University attended by the founders of Methodism, John and Charles Wesley. There they founded Emory College, named after an American Methodist bishop with an inspiring vision for education. Emory began quite isolated, in the mountains of Georgia with only dirt roads connecting small settlements and farms. The biggest population in the region was in Savannah, a prosperous seaport with 7,776 residents (Hauk *A Brief History*). In 1914, the Methodist Episcopal Church made plans to create a new university in the Southeast. Asa Candler, the founder of The Coca-Cola Company, funded the new university's establishment in Atlanta, and Emory College trustees expanded their school to Atlanta as the liberal arts core of the university. By 1919 Emory College was joined by the schools of theology, law, medicine, business, and graduate studies, soon followed by nursing and public health to create Emory University (Hauk *A Brief History*). The University Bylaws Preamble states:

> Emory University was founded by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, for the promotion of the broadest intellectual culture in harmony with the democratic institutions of our country and permeated by the principles and influences of the Christian religion. It is designed to be a profoundly religious institution without being narrowly sectarian. It proposes to encourage freedom of thought as liberal as the limitations of truth (University Bylaw).

Emory's Christian beginning is not a distinct one: most American universities have Christian foundation history. And like a host of universities, Emory's religious life developed from a Judaea-Christian centered university to one actively inclusive of a broad range of traditions. This history frames the launch of inter-religious music in

Emory's undergraduate community, and programming that led to the creation of Spirit Sounds.

Emory University's Vision Statement calls for Emory to be "a destination university internationally recognized as an inquiry-driven, ethically engaged, and diverse community, whose members work collaboratively for positive transformation in the world through courageous leadership in teaching, research, scholarship, health care, and social action." (Hauk "A Brief History"). Emory has not always lived up to its current aspiration. In 1917 the first woman had to fight opposition to be admitted to the University, and Emory did not become officially coed until 1953 ("Timeline"). At this time Georgia Law still forbade educating African-Americans alongside white university students, challenged in 1962 when Emory won a suit in the Supreme Court to enroll students without regard to race. While the early Emory student population was exclusively Christian, the university stood by differences of belief within the religion. In 1965, a Thomas Altizer published on the "death-of-God" theology, and affiliated conservative churches demanded his dismissal. To much public acclaim, Emory stood by the Emory professor's academic freedom to express views controversial in the church ("Timeline"). In 1997, Oxford denied an employee use of use of Oxford's Day Chapel for a same-sex commitment ceremony. Thus ensued a debate about balancing rights of gay and lesbian employees while adhering to principles of Emory's affiliated United Methodist Church ("Timeline"). This led to a compromise for use of the chapels: employees are permitted to have same sex commitment ceremonies only if their religious denomination allows it (Henry-Crowe). These landmarks in Emory's history highlight its struggles to adhere to the students and employees rights, and prepared the university for future challenges in embracing an inter-religious community.

Space and Music: From Christian to Non-Sectarian

Emory's community has always fostered religiously inspired music, stemming from rich Christian music and religious programs. Since its inception, Emory incorporated music education into its theological studies and extra curricular activities, offering courses on "sacred music" alongside a religious a cappella and choral groups (Bullock). The music department is linked to religion through the courses and faculty interests, as associate music professor Dwight Andrews explains, "Music is a religious expression…it allows us to sonically understand those transcendent aspects of ourselves, whether you are chanting or singing a hymn" (Pidaparthy *Arts & Living*). The Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols has been performed annually since Emory built the Glenn Memorial Church in the 1930s. An Emory tradition, this religious music event attracts the wider Atlanta community and features a number of Emory music groups ("Music at Emory: Calendar of events 1973-74"). Through the 1900s Emory's music department steadily grew, now including undergraduate and graduate studies and a variety of student ensembles, including a World Music ensemble that consists of two sets of Javanese Gamelans (World Music Ensembles)[32]. In 2003 the Schwartz center opened, providing a high-end venue for music performance in Atlanta, and currently hosts 80 concerts a year (Music at Emory). These music programs and spaces have enriched inter-religious music at Emory by training students in music and exposing students to diverse music

[32] According to their website, Emory is one of only a handful of universities in the United States with resources to perform both the gamelan degung and gamelan salendro traditions of West Java. Gamelon is not necessarily a religious instrument, although its performance reflects common Javanese philosophies and beliefs, including concepts of the time. Ensemble members are chosen based first on their ability to work in a group setting, and then with consideration of their musical proficiency, representing a varied cross-section of the Emory community with a strong sense of group identity (World Music Ensembles).

performances. As Emory's diversity grew and religious communities expanded, artistic expression naturally emerged from the pursuit of building community. It was the centrality of musical worship in religious life, rather than Emory's history and music department, which chiefly influenced the university's development of inter-religious music.

In the 1980s University Chaplain Donald Shockley began broadening religious life's Christian music repertoire by supporting the founding of Voices of Inner Strength, a Gospel Choir rooted in the African American Christian tradition (Organizations). Alongside a number of Christian worship groups, this choir affiliates with the Office of Religious Life, and sings primarily in the university chapel. The William R Cannon Chapel, built in 1979, was originally built to serve the Christian and Jewish students, equipped with a removable menorah and cross (Susan Henry-Crowe). Since its erection, diverse Christian denominations hold worship in the chapel, and Emory's Jewish community holds yearly high-holiday services[33]. Dr. Don Saliers, William R Cannon Distinguished Professor of Theology and worship, reflects during *Creativity Conversation* in the chapel, "I've played here for funerals, bar mitzvahs, memorial services, and Sunday upon Sunday for the worship community." (*Emily and Don Saliers Creativity Conversation*). Today, the chapel is used by Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Catholic, and Muslim students for prayer services, and has become a space of inter-religious exchange and collaboration.

[33] The Chapel's use for Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah is significant to the 25% of undergraduates that identify as Jewish (Henry-Crowe).

Growing Diversity and Inter-Religious Commitment

Donald Shockley, Emory's University Chaplain through the 1980s, understood that the cultivation of religious strength required diversity. Shockley helped implement service trips highlighting religious exchange, and planned vigils and memorials that required inter-religious planning (Patterson)[34]. This decade saw other organizations partnering with the chaplaincy in support of diversity, such as Emory's Amnesty International[35] which helped organize a series of inter-religious services in Cannon Chapel. This service, and those to follow, centered around a theme such as water or peace, and incorporated musical worship in prayer[36]. Donald Shockley describes "A Service of Reflection and Gratitude" that he helped implement at Emory's School of Medicine:

> Just at that point in the term when the academic pressures seem unbearable, around 20 per cent of the first-year medical students volunteer to plan the service. They are Christians and Jews of several varieties, an occasional Muslim, and religiously unaffiliated and nonreligious persons. They plan a service that is broadly inclusive and that calls for the active participation of faculty and students. Singers, instrumentalists and poets emerge in the process, and their shared gifts are crucial to the experience (Shockly *online journal*).[37]

In Shockley's account, we see how inter-religious collaboration naturally emerges in a "non-religious" discipline, and how music and art are "crucial" accompaniments to

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[34] One such memorial was the Holocaust Memorial, which brought Jewish and Christians across denominations together in prayer and to honor religious history. Emory currently hosts various vigils and memorials, such as the Tibetan Prayer vigil held on 2/8/2012 in honor of Tibetan suffering in exile (Patterson).

[35] "A large group of dedicated human rights activists, committed to raising awareness locally and regionally. We focus on a myriad of diverse issues…willing to take on collaborative projects and push political and social boundaries to instigate social change." (Emory University-Amnesty International).

[36] The Office of Religious Life currently holds inter-religious services once a semester. Two services were held in honor of visits from the XIVth Dali Lama (Henry-Crowe).

[37] This quote continues, "When the day finally arrives, virtually everyone associated with the course attends the service: students, faculty, technical staff, secretaries and administrators. When people elect to become body donors, they give the last gift of which they are capable, and they do so for the benefit of persons they will never see. Our collective response of gratitude is a deeply spiritual experience that transcends all humanly contrived barriers among us" (Shockley).

this inclusive event. This is because an event that aims to inspire gratitude requires the aesthetics and the emotive qualities of music and art to reach reflection. In an interview about inter-religious music with Religious Life staff Saul Burleson, he referenced author James Cone; "in one of his books he says, in the Pentecostal tradition you can have a service without the word, and what he means by that is without preaching, but you cannot have a service without music, without worship." In religious and secular spheres, music offers an avenue of expression for performer alongside personal engagement and interpretation from the audience.

In the early 1990s the Emory's Muslim population began to grow, and later that decade more Hindu students began enrolling (Henry-Crowe). By 1997 the university had approved the following ministries to work on campus: a Jewish rabbi, a Baptist, a Lutheran, a Presbyterian, a Unitarian and a Methodist minister, as well as an Episcopal, a Roman Catholic, and a Greek orthodox priest, and an Islamic Imam. These religious leaders were not hired by Emory, but supported by their specific religious federations. Emory-founded organizations included the Asian Christian fellowship, Emory Zen group, Hillel, Muslim Student Association, and the Latter Day Saints (Mormon) Student Association ("Religious Life at Emory"). Emory's diversity continued growing, and in 2004 the university began including prayers from Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist representatives at Commencement. In 2006 the Office of Religious Life hired a Muslim and Hindu Religious Advisor, and in 2008 hired an on-campus Reform rabbi, known for her background in inter-religious work (The Editorial Board). For the 2011-2012 year the office hired four Religious Life Scholars, which consist of Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Jewish graduate students who serve as advisors and representatives for

Emory's undergraduate religious communities (Henry-Crowe).[38]

Emory also established a tie to the exiled Tibetan Buddhist community. In 1998, Emory invited the XIVth Dalai Lama to partner with the university in a Tibetan Buddhist Studies program that sends students to Dharamsala, India ("Timeline"). Since then, Emory has become rich with Tibetan Buddhist culture, hosting Tibetan monks to study science and religion, and inviting Emory students to events such as Tibetan mandala making, chanting, and meditation. Former Tibetan monk Geshe Lobsang Tenzin Negi studied at Emory and became a faculty member in 1999, initiating research and courses on Tibetan Buddhism, and facilitated three visits by the Dali Lama. Negi and Associate Professor of Religion Bobbi Patterson co-founded an Emory group that practices meditation regularly and attracts students from multiple Emory schools (Patterson). According to Patterson, these meditations intend the creation of safe space that "stirs compassion across a multi-religious and secular spectrum" (Krimsky).[39] The next section will show how inter-religious music also encourages compassion between individuals and communities. Through musical religiosity, inter-religious music increases a sense of empathy and understanding across diverse Emory students, and supports the Dalai Lama's work towards building compassion in religious thought and practice.

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[38] Emory's website recently published an article in which Harvard Law Professor Mary Ann Glendon lists increases in religious persecution around the world, an erosion of conscience protection for religious individuals and institutions, and the reduction of the influence of religion in society all as troublesome threats to religious freedom ("Religious Freedom Faces Great Challenges, Says Glendon"). This publication indicates religous motivators for the university to focus on religious diversity and collaboration.

[39] In 2010, Emory's Center for the study of Law and Religion hosted the "Interfaith Summit on Happiness," which hosted the Dalai Lama discussing happiness with a Reverend, Rabbi, and Islamic Professor, moderated by Krista Tippett (Interfaith Summit on Happiness). Emory's Rollins School of Public Health runs an "Interfaith Health Program" ("Interfaith Health Program,") that builds networks for learning within and across health and religions systems-local, national, and global. For the purpose of this chapter, we will focus on the inter-religious work of the Office of Religious Life with students in Emory's College of Arts and Sciences, which provides the most extracurricular programming and is the launching pad of Sacred Artistry and Spirit Sounds.

Emory's large Christian population continues to further the university's tradition of musical religious expression and engagement across religions. A series of informal interviews with Protestant students at Emory showed the key role that music and artistic expression play in their lives, many including inter-religious exchange. These exchanges varied from aesthetic appreciation to spiritual experiences. Presbyterian Candler Student Laura Brekke explained that people express the inner spirit of God through music because "art is an expression of the inexpressible" (Brekke). Jenni Seale, Protestant sophomore at Emory's college, said that for her, "all music is really spiritual, because it is a connection with some kind of force that has long preceded you and will follow you all the way until…until whatever." These responses show a transcendent connection with music that engages, but is not restricted to, religious belief. At least five students reported spiritual experiences from religious music of other traditions, such as hearing the Muslim call to prayer (Burleson) and meditating on a Hindu "singing bowl" (Chaffin). Blake Mayes, an Episcopal sophomore at the college depicts his experience in a Jewish service, "What I realized during the service is that in the act of a communal singing, the other cease to be other, and you realize that he's a brother, and she's a sister, and they become mirrors for reflection instead of comparison and difference." Blake explains that his experience arose from the music itself, stating that "music is sometimes an articulation of the transcendent, and it draws us into an awareness that there is something greater then ourselves at work, and that the other person is seeking that same experience of community and of belonging" (Mayes 2012).[40] Music's ability to create a sense of the self in others, or empathy, is a key strength of a musical religiosity. Fostering empathy, or in

[40] Blake, Seale, Brekke, Burleson and Chaffin have all participated in Emory's Inter-Religious Council described in the following section.

the Dali Lama's words "compassion," through music develops the capacity to care about the person one sees oneself in. From this, one opens one's self to a common humanity that resists hatred and fear.

In these accounts, Emory students describe music as spiritual (Seale), and refer to the "spirit" of God (Brekke). Through the remainder of this paper, students refer to spiritual beliefs, spiritual music and poetry, and spiritual experiences. Many Americans use spiritual in similar capacities, some identifying themselves as spiritual but not religious. Wuthnow says that this term describes a search for transcendence, which people could describe as an immaterial (but natural) presence, or a meaning or purpose beyond human conception (Wuthnow *After Heaven* viii). The term religiosity includes values and practices of the spiritual, as well as the religious and nonreligious. In a musical religiosity, the meaning of spiritual depends upon the user's intention, but implies a valued and self-informing experience from inter-religious music.

Sacred Artistry: Inter-Religious Performance Art and Music

Many of Emory's religious events connect to The Office of the Dean of the Chapel and Religious Life, located in Cannon Chapel. Religious Life "seeks to fulfill its role in maintaining a religious, spiritual, ethical and moral presence in and to the University and to the Church."[41] Emory is one of many campuses responding to President Obama's Interfaith and Community Service Campus Challenge, in which campus-based religious and non-religious organizations work with community

[41] Their website continues, "While the office recognizes its Methodist beginnings, it references the United Methodist historic commitment to "provide adequate professional ministry to persons in special situations beyond the local church which calls for an ecumenical ministry to persons of different denominations and faith groups."(1996 Book of Discipline)" (Mission Statement).

organizations on service projects throughout the country.[42] Dean of the Chapel and Religious Life Susan Henry-Crowe attributes Emory's involvement to its "years of commitment to inter-religious work and its religion department being so strong." She noted that Emory is one of many institutions engaged in inter-religious work in the Atlanta community. "Instead of driving apart religious communities, the Challenge hopes to make peace and rebuild what's broken," Henry-Crowe said. "It helps promote inter-religious understanding and builds bridges for peacemaking across the community and across religious lines." (Henry Crowe 2012). Through the office, Emory funds inter-religious programming that supports personal growth among students and employees, as well as community service initiatives.

Henry-Crowe describes the office as an organizing founder of student groups that maintain affiliation or become independent projects. Emory's Inter-Religious Council[43] has maintained strong ties to the office for twenty years. Founded with seven representatives, the council now has 30 undergraduate students representing religions all over campus, and a few members unaffiliated with a religion. These members engage dialogue from a non-institutional religiosity, exchanging values and practices in a religious environment but without representing a community tradition. Once a week the council meets to discuss religious issues and identities, network between organizations, and plan

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[42] In 2011, President Barack Obama issued "The Interfaith and Community Service Campus Challenge," sponsored by the White House Office of Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships and the Corporation for National and Community Service and the Department of Education. President Obama explains in an online video, "I know that an act of service can unite people of all faiths – or even no faith – around a common purpose of helping those in need. In doing so, we can not only better our communities, we can build bridges of understanding between ourselves and our neighbors…While we may not all believe the same things – and we don't have to – we can certainly agree that together, we can make a difference" (The White House: President Barack Obama).

[43] According to their website, "The mission of the Emory University Inter-Religious Council is to foster inter-religious conversation and create a safe space for affirming one's own tradition while understanding the religious practices and beliefs of others. We seek to build bridges through service, education and dialogue to promote a mindset for living peacefully in the global community" ("Inter-Religious Council").

projects that promote dialogue, service, and art. The council assembles next to a coffee-house style lounge named Brooks Commons on the main floor of the Cannon Chapel, called "Common Grounds" by students.

About ten years ago, Baha'i members of the Inter-Religious Council founded an open-mike program named "Café Unity," which invites inter-religious performers to share their work with fellow students in Common Grounds. By 2009 Café Unity had died down, attracting a small crowd once a semester. With the hope of making the event more frequent and engaging, The Office of Religious Life hired two members of the Inter-Religious Council that year to run Café Unity. Those work-study students were Noor Najafi, a Muslim representative, and myself, a Jewish representative. From our efforts, Café Unity began attracting a diverse group of students, invited to perform a few pieces each and fill the audience.[44] Najafi and I both engaged Café Unity as vital space of religious expression, as Najafi explains,

> The sharing of religious art is a holy communion. It is very different from other modes of inter-religious exchange. For example, in inter-faith dialogue, many personalities come together—functioning from a dominant mind/cognitive-level—speaking about, defending, and drawing boundaries to their respective faith traditions. In something like Café Unity, people come simply to share—in the humility of a recent revelation they received, an insight, a new perspective, a vision/hope for the future. Great magic happens in this place of openness, curiosity, wonder, and awe (Najafi).

Because of the popularity of Café Unity, Najafi and I soon incorporated the café into a larger program called "Sacred Artistry," which runs two creative, spiritual, and

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[44] An article from student-run university paper *The Emory Wheel* wrote in 2010, "The Inter-Religious Council (IRC) transformed Brooks Commons into a homey coffeehouse for Café Unity on Thursday, complete with pillows for seating, dim lighting and the aroma of delicious, free desserts. The monthly open-mike night features performances by Emory students, usually spoken word, music and other forms of art following the theme for the night. February's theme was "Unity in Races," which the IRC meant to honor Black History Month" (Woods).

educational events per week. With the help of Assistant Chaplain and Program Associate Saul Burleson[45], we drafted the following mission statement:

> The mission of *Sacred Artistry* is to invite Emory students into spiritual, religious and inter-religious expression through creative performance, artistic displays and traditional events that cultivate imagination. *Sacred Artistry* bring artists and art-appreciators of different backgrounds together for expression at Common Grounds Coffeehouse, a Safe-Space venue located underneath Cannon Chapel on the quad at Emory University main campus.

Najafi and I began planning events that partnered with other campus organizations and facilitated student meetings in Common Grounds. Over the next two and a half years, Sacred Artistry offered panel discussions, meditation and chanting practices, ritual ceremonies, visual art events, and performance art events. However the key identifier remained Café Unity, and events most frequently contained music and poetry performances. Sacred Artistry soon attracted a core group of students, with event attendance ranging from ten to sixty depending on topic, weather, and competing events. By establishing a space and group that supports inter-religious music, Sacred Artistry began socially reforming an absence of inter-religious community cohesion in the Emory University. Looking back after his graduation, Najafi wrote in an email in 2012, "Creative initiatives must not be diminished or under-estimated for their inherent worth or value. It is universally known that expression is healthy for the individual, and Sacred Artistry offers Emory students the opportunity to honor and nurture their spirit of artistic inquiry, whether this be in the form of a powerful narrative, a moving dance, a magical song, or a transformative poem."[46] The artistic inquiry that Noor cites includes a musical

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[45] Saul Burleson supports inter-religious progress, stating, "Our vision is to make Cannon Chapel a place where people of various faith traditions could come and worship in their own way and maintain their distinctiveness, while fostering interactions with people of other faiths" (Tadic).

[46] Najafi also described a transcendent experience through art, "When I experience poetry or music of spiritual or mystical nature, I can feel the nuances flow through me. It is as if my cells vibrate, as they interpret and "feel" the message beneath the words. It can be a powerful experience shaking me to my core.

religiosity, where music serves as a conduit for the transference of information, emotion, and spirit. Sacred Artistry has served as a rich site of musical religiosity since its inception.

Susan Henry-Crowe claims that inter-religious creativity strikes a chord among many students. People in the their young twenties are interested in networking across divides, building community, addressing issues, and being connected to a larger world then earlier generations. Henry-Crowe sees in students a deep yearning and desire to connect, and believes that it is easier to connect around arts and festivals. During our interview, Henry-Crowe told me that music is an effective way to engage diverse followers because "creative energy is part of the fabric of every religious tradition" (Henry-Crowe). Alongside Café Unity's pluralist intentions, its aesthetically pleasing elements attract all comers, a sentiment echoed in an Emory Wheel article: "Far from the stiff and intimidating atmosphere that can invade some venues for artistic expression, the audience and performers seemed to have overwhelmingly positive interactions at Café Unity." (Woods). This "intimidating atmosphere" describes many people's experience in a new religious environment, when attending a foreign religious ceremony, or seated around a table of inter-religious representatives. In fact, non-religious students are more likely to attend a Café Unity then an Open Meeting of the Inter-Religious Council.[47] This is party because music offers an access into religion, exhibited by music's frequent use in attracting followers to an institution. Musical religiosity reaches beyond the boundaries of "the religious," invoking emotional reactions and exposing a common human experience

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For example, when I hear the love poems of Rumi or the alchemical poetry of Almine and simply surrender, I am taken to a felt place—where I can see the images, feel the texture, smell the fragrances, taste the flavors, as I close my eyes. I experience love for the Divine, a Romance with Life, a greater reason to exist, to treasure Existence for the gift that it is." (Najafi 2012).

[47] During "Open Meetings" the Inter-Religious Council opens its doors for the wider student population to engage in discussion and workshops for inter-religious exchange, and are usually joined by 10-15 students, while Café Unity attract an average of 20-45 students.

of the young adult. By engaging in inter-religious exchange through artistic performance, students express deeper levels of their religiosity and personality then would emerge through dialogue with a stranger. Café Unity holds a space for celebratory performances of praise and thankfulness, alongside student expressions of fear, uncertainty, shame, and loss.[48]

Henry-Crowe observed that Sacred Artistry diminishes the divide between what she terms the sacred and the secular. Attendees stretch along a wide spectrum of religiosity, and thus religious music and poetry is lined up alongside secular pieces. Sacred Artistry enables a sharing of religiosity, an exploration of meaning and identity, as normative expression amongst secular and religious students alike. In an academic community that values rationality and research, Sacred Artistry stresses acceptance, community and ensures that performers feel comfortable, fostering a natural respect for religious identity and expression. Showing respect for others is a necessary element of full engagement in musical religiosity, and supports reforming unhealthy interactions between students. Community reformation falls in line with Emory's tradition of non-sectarianism and ethical engagement, which welcome individual expression and spiritual search.

While Sacred Artistry events host performances in dance, story telling, videography, and displays visual art such as photography, sculpture and painting, musicians and poets make up the bulk of performers. The rhythmic quality of poetry delivery (in particular spoken word poetry) and vocalization of music lyrics ties these two art forms together and supports mutual creativity. Sacred Artistry performances mostly

[48] Simran Khosla, a Café Unity regular, describes the performers from her first time attending the open-mike, "They were casual, comfortable. It wasn't so much a performance with any of them, but a conversation, a sharing of who they were and what they really think about the world. Everyone was genuine. So by the time I stepped to the mic in front of those dozen or so people to read, I wasn't nervous anymore. It felt like sharing with friends; I'd gotten to know so much about them as the evening progressed" (Khosla).

focus on manipulating the delivery of words to add a certain dimension to what is articulated. This creates freedom for the performer to frame a verbal expression in an individual way, or in line with an art tradition or religious tradition. By focusing on the artist deliver of a piece, it also gives students a space to articulate issues that they would not feel comfortable just getting up and speaking about. There is a certain safety in art performance, a code of privacy, where one can express personal thoughts and know that they will be appreciated for them with applause afterwards. Sacred Artistry also maintains a space for the observer, for someone who wants to experience musical religiosity but is not prepared to partake publicly.

In February 2012, Sacred Artistry sent out a ten-question survey to its attendees with a number of open-ended questions about spiritual and religious creative expression in its programs. The anonymous responses showed that Emory students experience Sacred Artistry as a safe, inclusive community that encourages cooperation in the face of difference. No student wrote that religious identity or background inhibited his or her experience.[49] Most students appreciated the exposure to other religious expression, one response stating, "I enjoy the Sacred Artistry events in that it gives me the opportunity to explore other religions of thought as well as interact with other individuals who place a significant emphasis in expressing their spiritual beliefs."[50] This student appreciated the potential to engage in inter-religious dialogue through Sacred Artistry, as a venue that introduces diverse populations and encourages socializing.

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[49] One student did write that s/he sometimes feels uncomfortable with overtly religious themes. Cases of discomfort are unavoidable in a venue that encourages freedom of expression, because of people may react negatively to perspectives that they find difficult to engage or offensive. In inter-religious music, exposure to a foreign religiosity is a necessary element. In Sacred Artistry, extreme discomfort rarely occurs.

[50] This was in response to the survey's question, "Does your spirituality or religious affiliation (or lack thereof) influence your experience of Sacred Artistry events? How or how not?"

The question about spiritual experiences through music at Sacred Artistry events received a range of responses.[51] Some students wrote that they felt closer to musicians on a transcendental level; some responded they connected through the artists purely because of the shared medium, and some stated they were unsure whether there were spiritual elementals at play. Whether or not a student experienced the transcendent did not dictate whether they became more connected to others through Sacred Artistry. All of the students felt that they could engage with others through music despite religious differences, one response stating, "I think it's important that we understand ways to communicate across religious boundaries, and music is a safe space for doing that."[52] This concept of a "safe space" is one that Susan Henry-Crowe considers a unique quality of Sacred Artistry. In any inter-religious collaboration, a safe space deters fear of judgment, which inhibits personal connection and expression. When bringing people of different backgrounds together they will necessarily relate and speak in varied styles. A "safe space" encourages otherwise inhibited dialogue, comforts participants in a potentially uncomfortable strangeness, and opens the potential for establishing friendships.

The last two questions of the survey focused on inter-religious music, and asked whether it can increase understanding and appreciation of a religion, and whether that makes a difference in our world today. Every response stated that religious music offers a unique way of communicating religious beliefs across boundaries, one student writing "I appreciate the depth and history of another religion when I hear its music. Music is drawn from so much background that it's impossible for it to exist in a religion without

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[51] This was in response to the survey's question, "Have you had a religious or spiritual experience with music at Sacred Artistry? Please describe:"

[52] This was in response to the survey's question, "Do you think that hearing the music of another religion can help you understand or appreciate that religion? Please explain why or why not:"

that depth." Another wrote, "When I see someone play and it really comes from the heart, I think that is what religion should be. This intimate feeling of closeness, and not some structured 'religion.'" All of these responses reflect a musical religiosity, the exploration of meaning, purpose, value and practice through music that informs the consciousness of one's identity. Through intentional musical communication in an inter-religious context, performers and audience both construct an understanding of themselves in relation to the messages and values they receive.

Almost everyone responded that bringing musicians of different religions to create and perform music improves our global and domestic community.[53] One student wrote, "Anything that brings people of different religions together in a way that encourages communication between them, especially about religious beliefs, is beneficial. Open-mindedness goes a long way in a cruel world." Another student responded, "Yes, it shows commonality and pushes for cooperation rather than tolerance." This suggests a critique of the term "tolerance," which for some implies enduring diversity for the sake of peace, rather than embracing diversity as a valuable addition to community. For some, religious music can even help make this transition in one's own viewpoint. One student responded, "Hearing and enjoying the music of a religion immediately befriends and deletes the stigma that once blocked me from appreciating it."

These responses illustrate inter-religious music at work through community reformation, dialogue and religiosity. These categories play crucial roles in a liberal arts education, because they aid students in enriching community, open minded learning, and individual creativity, three key components to producing scholarship and successful

[53] Reponses began with a majority of "yes," one "definitely," one "I think so" and one "I couldn't say" to the question, "Do you think that "interfaith music," a concept that brings musicians of different religions together to create and perform music, makes a difference in our religious world today? Why or why not?"

professionals. Musical religiosity encompasses these categories as well, as these factors are all value-laden constructs of our actions, experiences, and beliefs. Sacred Artistry has positively impacted Emory's student body by creating a time and safe-place for relaxation, learning, appreciation and expression. Next year, the two founders of Sacred Artistry will have graduated, and the program's continuation will rely on the dedication of students and the Office of Religious Life.[54]

While Sacred Artistry creates a space for inter-religious music performance, Spirit Sounds is a model of music composition through inter-religious collaboration. The following chapter contains the Spirit Sounds CD, explanations of music compositions as well as testimonies from participants that indicate the significance and potential of inter-religious music.

[54] The Office of Religious life plans to continue hiring undergraduate students to run Sacred Artistry performances and panel discussions in Common Grounds for the 2012-2013 academic year.

III

Spirit Sounds Production

This chapter analyzes Spirit Sounds through musical religiosity,[55] and features the intentions, experiences and statements of participants and myself. Spirit Sounds serves as an example of incorporating inter-religious music into a community project, and organizing that project into the previously defined categories of community reformation, dialogue, and religiosity.

In the spring of 2010, the Office of Religious Life and I organized an end of the year inter-religious concert entitled "Spirit Sounds," which presented music from various religious traditions, including classical Indian dance, Christian worship songs, and Jewish chanting. The following year Assistant Dean of Religious Life Victoria Armour-Hileman and I organized "Composers in Concert," which featured original religious compositions from Jewish, Christian, Hindu and Buddhist students and staff from Emory. This event was held in Cannon Chapel and attracted approximately 100 attendees, receiving widespread positive feedback from the Emory community.

The success of these events, and the support of faculty and staff, led me to launch an inter-religious music project my senior year entitled, "Spirit Sounds: A Collaboration of Inter Faithful Musicians." Spirit Sounds is a 12-track CD and concert of original inter-religious music composed by Emory student, staff, faculty and alumni. The title has a dual meaning, the "descriptive" sounds of one or many spirits, and an "active" spirit

[55] Musical religiosity is defined in the introduction as an exploration of meaning, purpose, value and practice through music, which informs the consciousness of one's identity.

sounding through music. *Spirit* refers to the transcendent and also the inner self of each person, their soul or character. All participating musicians identify with a religious tradition or are exploring spiritual growth. These journeys simultaneously involve investments in music and the arts. Spirit Sounds grant proposals and promotional materials state:

> "Artists commit to collaborating on song composition and instrumental accompaniment with members of different religions to express religious commitment and struggles; connect with history and tradition; utilize religion-based musical style; channel spiritual energy; and address concerns of modern religious challenges and questions."

Spirit Sounds artists include a poet, guitarists, vocalists, a keyboardist, and lyricists of Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Baha'i[56] and Atheist[57] identities and backgrounds. Participants range from twenty to thirty-seven years old, and include three men and five women (including myself). Each musician represents an individual voice within community, offering a unique assortment of experiences and values. In recognition of the distinctive beliefs of followers, W.C. Smith states that through history, "the faith of men even within one community has not been the same" (Smith, WC 190). Approaching collaboration through musical religiosity, Spirit Sounds respects religious individuality and encourages a pluralist view within one's own religion. Philip Bohlman affirms that to be religious, and to be musical, is a personal act that one makes within a religious

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[56] I did not intend Spirit Sounds to consist of monotheistic representation. Representation was circumstantial to my connections and to the availability of various contacts. Despite this lack, a few of the songs include references to Buddhism and Hinduism due to individual artist's interests.

[57] Atheist participant Kevin Cryderman and I agreed on his inclusion as a religious representative in Spirit Sounds due to the distinctiveness of the atheist worldview in comparison to religious worldviews in America. We felt that the atheist voice merited representation in a country which contains a strong atheist following and scientific ideologies. Including an atheist in religious collaboration illustrates that being a "non-believer" does not exclude one from appreciating musical religiosity, as Spirit Sounds and Sacred Artistry exhibit.

community. Spirit Sounds, as a community, honors the individuality of participants as a vital component of the study and practice of musical religiosity.

Deciding on Spirit Sound's subtitle posed a challenge: that of choosing between the terms "inter-religious" and "interfaith". Our earlier defined "musical religiosity," while an inclusive term that helps frames this thesis and project, is also less generally used by the general public and does not overtly connote inter-religious work. The term "faith" (as stated in chapter two) in the American context casts an implicit Christian dominance over religious conversation. WC Smith offers a different perspective on religion and faith. In *The Meaning and End of Religion*, WC Smith argues that the term "religion" is invalid, and that instead we should adopt "faith" to refer to the internal motivation towards relating to the transcendent. Smith states that "religion" structures the beliefs of others into a concept, inherently turning the transcendence of other traditions into false deities (Smith, WC 140).[58] Smith explicates further that religion is a term of the outsider, one who is observing the behavior of the religious, but does not understand the internal motivation of practiced custom. "Religion" then denotes *the context* instead of *the people* in that context, focusing on the "cumulative history" while ignoring the followers' "faith," or immediate transcendent experience in present time (Smith, WC 137). WC Smith states that any material that comes from the religious, including art and music, "arises not because those persons participate in some entity called religion, but because they

[58] WC Smith explains that religious studies from an outsider perspective cannot possibly access the transcendent experience of the insider. As a result, outsiders may not acknowledge that religious followers are acting in respect to what they consider transcendent. By dismissing the presence of transcendence and placing practices under the concept of "religion," Smith claims one inherently turns other religion's gods into idols, into false deities (Smith, WC 140).

participate in what I have called transcendence," a participation that Smith later classifies exhibits one's "faith" (Smith, WC 195).[59]

Smith's understanding of "faith" matches American's current preference for individual and communal transcendent experience in religious culture, which has always included art and music to inspire transcendent experience. What term then would reflect Spirit Sounds' desire to be inclusive and connected to the tradition of inter-religious exchange, while embracing fresh spiritual and religious expression?[60] "Faithful" became the answer. "Faithful" alludes to both faith and religion while also reflecting an essential quality within our musicianship that transcends our religious affiliations: that of faithfulness. In a religious context, one directs his or her faithfulness to the transcendent through devotion and practice. In American vernacular, being faithful can also imply people respecting and caring for each other, for creating community. Each Spirit Sounds participant acts in loyalty to their community and their beliefs, and I hoped that Spirit Sounds would foster both kinds of faithfulness between participants, as individuals as well as inter-religious musicians. This term surely carries flaws and implications. Yet, for this project, I felt it was the best choice to indicate inter-religious commitment within the initiative while promoting a novel, inclusive approach. The title aims to portray a community of musicians acting faithful to each other through the shared experience of Spirit Sounds via established categories of community reformation, dialogue, and spirituality.

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[59] In Faith and Belief (1987), Smith argues that despite claims that the term faith is restricted to Judaea-Christian thought, the concept of faith is in fact present in the majority of religious traditions, expounding on Buddhism as an example.

[60] Spirit Sound's atheist musician and the CD producer who identifies as Christian but works at a synagogue do not neatly fit into categories of religious affiliation. Even for those who belong to a religion, the diversity within their identities resisted the reduction of their participation to a religious representative. My interactions with each musician resulted in personal discussions and distinctive worldviews that may or may not fit into their religious creed.

Community Reformation: Refugee Youth Music

Spirit Sounds culminates in a concert on Thursday, April 19 at 7:00pm in Cannon Chapel at Emory University. The concert will serve as a fundraiser for a refugee performance art program at the Clarkston Community Center, a non-profit that offers community programming to refugee populations ("About Us")[61]. To promote and organize the event, Spirit Sounds is collaborating with a host of organizations, including the Atlanta nonprofit Building Understanding, Emory;s Inter-Religious Council and Office of Religious Life, Sacred Artistry, Ethics and the Arts Society, and the Emory Round Table.[62]

The decision to make the CD release concert a fundraiser came later in the project's evolution. Our inter-religious musical collaboration promoted a desire to go beyond ourselves as an expression of the social agenda of pluralism and diversity. Making the concert a refugee fundraiser increased Spirit Sound's reach by involving a number of communities to brainstorm and collaborate. Partnering the concert with an additional community reformation agenda honors the central role of all religion in issues of poverty, education, gender and immigration. Mariangela Mihai, a Romanian refugee and Spirit Sounds participant, and Daniel Shorr, founder of the Atlanta nonprofit, "Building Understanding," are co-heading the event. Their passion for inter-religious and refugee advocacy expanded the event's communal support in aid in promotion, ticket sales, and concert planning.

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[61] This collaboration is thanks to the work of Mariangela Mihai, president of Emory's Ethics and Arts Society, and ongoing advocate and scholar of refugee concerns in Atlanta.

[62] Costs for the concert and CD production are funded by grants from Emory's Center for Creativity and the Arts, Student Inquiry and Research grant, Stipe Society of Creative Scholars, Student Government Association, and an online fundraiser through Kickstarter.com.

Included in the Spirit Sounds CD is a song called "Occupy," which invites the listener to ask occupy movement activists what they pray, stand, and live for.[63] Although not created collaboratively, we decided to include this song in the CD in the spirit of communal engagement and religiosity that infuses the Occupy movement.

It is this spirit of inquiry that creates dialogue and meaningful exchange across differences. By engaging in dialogue around and through music, Spirit Sounds participants seek understanding guided by musical religiosity.

Dialogue: Creating Meaningful Music

In Chapter 1, Mark Heim and Kusumita Pederson depict inter-religious dialogue as an exchange of knowledge or doctrine aimed at helping different religious groups live together harmoniously. This can only occur with the individual connections that thread communities together. Spirit Sounds focuses on singular interactions to foster inter-religious relationships, which will then be shared with a community. This experience reduces uninformed judgments and increases empathy between participants.

Each Spirit Sounds participant collaborated on writing and producing songs for an album of entirely novel music. Because of the number of participants, and hectic academic schedules, I collaborated with each artist individually. Each song includes my vocals, some lyrics, and some guitar. The thread of my voice through every song creates a cohesive album, despite the various styles and collaborators. It should be noted that the

[63] This recording includes the choir from Reconstructionist synagogue Bet Haverim, where Will Robertson works as choral director. I separately wrote "Occupy" while working on Spirit Sounds collaborations. Three other Spirit Sounds were composed separately but included in the project: Listen Daughters, Wooden Hearts, and Waters of Zion. These songs were included in Spirit Sounds to meet the CD's aim of 12 songs, since each song has a single collaborator (eight collaborators total) and because these songs were written with inter-religious purpose and content. Each song is performed with a Spirit Sounds participant.

strong female presence in the album (only 3 out of 12 songs have male vocalists) may influence how the album is engaged, and may be a asset or deficit depending on the listener.

The first few "jam sessions," during which an artist and I would get together at someone's house to start developing our song, revealed a need for further structure. Most of my participants had little experience in collaborative song writing, and since I had not co-written a song with any of them before, we did not know where to begin. In response I constructed a "jam workshop," which began with a dialogue about what religious topics we view as important and relevant to our lives. During the discussion we each sought connections with our religious tradition and spiritual experience to incorporate into our song. For participants who were lyricists, I then suggested a "free write," in which my collaborator-artist and I wrote a stream of consciousness about our topic, and afterwards worked at crafting those words into verses and a chorus. For some collaborations, my partner worked on the melody and instrumental portion while I shaped our discussion into lyrics. During this process my partner and I checked in during two or three minute intervals, reading or playing what we had composed, to maintain connection and focus of music and lyric.

No matter how often I engage a partner's thoughts and feelings, I am continuously acting and viewing within my own set of values and biases. Religiosity assumes that academics, like subjects of study, are laden with personal values and needs (Chesnek 54). Scholars suggest that sympathy or empathy can be utilized to gain access to another's religious consciousness, and that insight can arise from observing one's own experience (Twiss 9). Another approach is integrating one's own feelings, moods and motivations into research literature. Paying attention to the self acknowledges one's filters

and interventions, leading to truer ethnography. (McCarthy-Brown).[64] For this reason, this chapter includes my own thoughts, emotions, and experiences while framing those of others.

Dialogue around songs was a key element to the collaboration process. Through dialogue, we each learned about the other's religiosity, including traditional creeds and individual beliefs. Dialogue opened up a safe space for questions and further inquiries, as well as comparisons between religions. One of my chief goals was to ensure that each participant felt ownership over collaboration, that they were a valuable contributor, and that their song held an important message. Expressing religious views and experiences developed the relationship and level of trust, and that proved more and more important as collaboration progressed. Jewish collaborator Matt Lipkins[65] told me how he needed to trust someone in order to create music with her, as it was a personal and revealing process for him. While we experience music in public and in private, the creation process is often a personal one. Collaborating with others invites them into a private sphere of your thoughts and abilities.[66]

Carolyn Tong and Jacqueline Woo come from Christian households and have been active in church throughout their lives. Carolyn Tong is a Chinese non-

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[64] German philosopher of phenomenology Edmund Husserl also maintains that an ethnographer must focus reflectively while encountering a phenomenon (Twiss, 3).

[65] It was important to collaborate with another Jewish musician because of the vast differences between sects and individual belief within Judaism, a denominational diversity present in all religions. For the same reasons that inter-religious work is needed, so inter-denominational collaboration dissuades judgments and strengthens community ties.

[66] To maintain my own comfort and ensure the awareness of collaborators, I aimed to communicate how I felt about the progression of the song. I found it vital to seek feedback from my participants about whether they were enjoying the process and the way that I engaged in collaboration. Since each member donated his or her time to the project, open dialogue about experience reduced my anxiety about members being accountable. Scheduling meetings with student artists required trust in dependency, and since Spirit Sounds completely depended upon its participant's dedication, their expression of appreciation for the project reassured me that they would follow through for the production and performance elements. In this way, dialogue improved the experience of the facilitator (me) while ensuring that participants felt heard.

denominational Christian guitarist and vocalist at Emory's School of Nursing, 2012. Jacqueline graduated from Emory with a BA in business and currently works at Diversified Trust, a Comprehensive Wealth Management Center. During a "jam workshop," I asked each of them what things they love or find strength from in their tradition, and also to explain an issue they struggled with. From this conversation, and others that followed, emerged two songs. Throughout all of the Spirit Sounds dialogues, different elements emerged from our religious backgrounds. Discussions ranged from religious practices, to creed, to community views, to prayers and blessings. To spark conversation I posed open-ended, personal questions relating to religion, an approach I learned from Emory's Inter-Religious Council. Each week, the IRC begins its meeting by posing a religious question to its members about community and individual beliefs and practices, and I used this approach to spark and frame conversations within the tradition of inter-religious dialogue. With Matt Lipkins, our conversation turned to relationships, and unequal dynamics that are disrespectful and uncompassionate. Kevin Cryderman, Emory Film Studies professor who originally hails from Canada, and I spoke about his atheist identity and the significance of his participation in an inter-religious music project. Mariangela Mihai, a Baha'i poet from Romania and senior anthropology major, and I spoke about loss and seeking comfort in art and religion. With Nour El-Kebbi, a Lebanese Muslim studying International Relations and Arabic, I discussed difficulties of fitting into our religious communities.

From these discussions arose the Spirit Sounds songs, each of which engage musical religiosity to accomplish one or more of the following: express religious commitment and struggles, connect with our histories and traditions, utilize music styles of religious traditions, praise and/or petition transcendence, and address concerns of

modern religious challenges and questions. During my "jam workshop" with Christian musicians Jacqueline Woo and Carolyn Tong, I kept thinking about a TED video I watched about making oneself vulnerable to others. The video struck me as addressing a universal topic, and related to my personal journey and spiritual growth, and described an unguarded approach to relating that I hoped to reach through Spirit Sounds collaboration. When I mentioned the video we all agreed to watch it, and afterwards Carolyn related how Jesus accepts her and all people despite imperfections, and how she must remind herself to embrace His Love amidst her daily challenges. From this discussion I wrote the lyrics for "You Will See Love," which Carolyn and I revised to reflect her understanding of receiving transcendent love.[67] During the recording process, producer Will Robertson asked us to explain the meaning of each song before recording it. He said that it was evident during recording whether an artist holds an emotional investment in what they sing, and reviewing the original thoughts and feelings that inspired a song reminds a singer of those emotions. Carolyn and I discussed the message of "You Will See Love" of making oneself vulnerable, and during her recording I heard Carolyn engaging both of our beliefs through her singing. Hearing the words we had written come to life to produce a lasting, beautiful recording increased my empathetic connection to Carolyn's religiosity. This arose both from the dialogue Carolyn and I held around our song, and also emerge from the experience of musical religiosity through song production.

[67] The melody for "You Will See Love" was inspired by chords that Jacqueline played on the guitar during that the jam workshop. While Jacqueline and Carolyn did not compose a piece together, through this workshop they exchanged religious views and feelings, and later independently met up to further connect and create music together.

Matt Lipkins is a Jewish Emory alum with a BA in psychology, and works as a full time musician from New York.[68] Drawing from concepts from Martin Buber's "I and Thou" and Jewish prayers, we compared the unhealthy state of worshipping a lover like worshipping the Jewish God. I composed the lyrics to "Selfish Love" while Matt developed the keyboard composition, and then we revised each others and our own work As a "more learned Jew" than Matt, I contributed the more traditional Jewish content (Hebrew prayers, liturgical references). Our meetings evolved into a ritual, in which we talked for 30-40 minutes over drinks at Matt's house and then worked on our song for about an hour, ending with more conversation. From shared values articulated in "Selfish Love," and mutual interest in music, Matt and I exchanged musical religiosity through dialogue and composition. "Selfish Love" incorporates a Jewish prayer that translates, "blessed are you, Lord our God, on your high and lofty throne." Matt and I frame this prayer as a challenge to traditional conceptions of the Jewish God. Influenced by Matt's pop-rock musical style, "Selfish Love" sounds like a confrontation and lament, but coming from a place of strength and conviction. The chorus sings:

> I see withering flames in my two windows,
> Why cant you tell when the fire goes out?
> You on your golden throne
> Telling me to atone
> Selfish love.

The energy with which Matt played and sang "Selfish Love" assured me that Matt understood my motivations and emotions behind the song, and that we equally engaged the song's message due to similarities in religiosity.

Kevin Cryderman and I developed a structure for splitting the song lyrics of

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[68] Matt Lipkins graduated in 2011 and works fulltime in pop band "The Shadowboxers" (www.theshadowboxers.com).

"Common Ground," and then helped each other with lyric revisions. Our conversations centered on finding connections between the histories of different religions, and framing them in a comedic "lets all get along" attitude. Kevin contributed a host of musical styles to add a lighthearted energy to the song, which reflected his general approach to religious discussion and his musical tastes. I enjoyed the way that Kevin used his vast knowledge of religions to explain his own opinions and religiosity; and because of his unique atheistic beliefs, I accumulated further value to the atheist role in inter-religious work. A jam session with Kevin and Jacqueline inspired the two of them to collaborate independently. I soon learned that Kevin and Jacqueline were using their own time to connect through musical religiosity, from conversations and music around personal growth. This further confirmed Kevin's place in inter-religious dialogue and engagement. Kevin ended up heavily contributing to and producing "Find your Own" as well as "Common Ground;" Kevin's efforts conserved professional production costs and increased our flexibility with studio time.

Most musicians began collaborations tentatively, unsure what was expected of him or her. I reassured certain musicians that they were "religious enough" for this project (Lipkins, Mune), and others that their musical abilities were valuable additions (Tong, Woo). I had selected some musicians because of their religious beliefs and activity; however, a few musicians I recruited without much knowledge of their religiosity. I believed that everyone would be able to engage a topic within their religiosity through music whether or not they were "religious." These discussions led me to frame and reframe the project for each musician, describing an inclusive, un-definable, open-ended quest of musical religiosity.

Because of different understandings of Spirit Sounds, and because of various

interests and personalities, I noticed distinctive modes of engagement from each artist. For Woo, collaboration was deeply connected to expressing her spiritual journey through the lyrics; for Tong, jamming centered around our friendship and religious identities; for Lipkins, song composition relied on lyric meaning and aesthetics; for Cryderman, the success of our song depended upon light-heartedness, accurate religious references, and the method of song production. For every musician, song composition was accompanied by bouts of excitement and satisfaction especially as a chorus was finalized, or a bridge added, or a song recorded and played back. The distinct personalities created unique, multi-dimensional relationships as well as songs that will appeal a wide audience.

It would be impossible to explain exactly why each musician participated in Spirit Sounds, and what they got out of it. WC Smith argues that there is an internal experience that produces creative spiritual works of prose, poetry, ritual, morality, art, law, community and character, and that this experience is un-definable (Smith, WC 171). To illuminate the internal experience, the next section shows multiple subjective accounts of Spirit Sounds to relinquish a hegemonic point of view (McCarthy Brown). By exploring the "committed subjectivity of faithful believers," one pursues the true nature of religious consciousness by illuminating apprehensions, emotional states, and motivations for religious activities (Twiss 8). In the case of Spirit Sounds, composition expresses an element of the creator's identity, and is crafted with the hope of communicating that to the music's listeners. Examining words from the musicians will shed some light on what Spirit Sounds participants think about inter-religious collaboration.

Musical Religiosity: Internal Motivations

One motivation behind inter-religious collaboration is to search for religious truth in a pluralist setting while expressing personal devotion and spirituality (McCarthy 20). In inter-religious music, musical religiosity explores the construction of meaning, purpose, value and practice through music that affects a consciousness of one's identity. This section shows ways in which Spirit Sounds participants exhibit an acceptance of the religiosity of others, fostering inter-religious empathy and faithfulness.

Because of my limited expertise in musical notation and my personal emphasis as a lyricist, my scholarship focuses more on lyrics than the musical sound of pieces. I found that my own attempts to re-describe detailed musical qualities of songs were inaccurate and forced. I recognize that my extensive background in religious studies in comparison to ethnomusicology crafted an exposition which focuses more on representing word than musical sound. This, however, does not reflect the relative importance of lyrics and music in a musical piece. Lyrics read off a page do not hold equal impact to a performed song, and music without any words invokes physical, emotional and spiritual responses. Further, a listener could engage Spirit Sounds without understanding a single word, yet still digest the intention and religiosity behind pieces. To remedy this inequality, this chapter includes the Spirit Sounds CD, to be referred to at the reader's discretion in this section.

At the start of the project, all of the Spirit Sounds artists were asked to submit a video of themselves for promotion purposes.[69] In it they explained their artistic and religious background and why they are interested in participating in Spirit Sounds. This

[69] Youtube version of promotional video entitled "Spirit Sounds: A Collaboration of Inter Faithful Musicians." <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qhay_FrbGnY>

request was an effective way of getting a commitment from the artists, of initiating reflection in musicians about their involvement in the project, and of communicating to our supporters what Spirit Sound is doing.

Because of the vital inclusion of Islam in inter-religious work, I invited the participation of Dr. Isam Vaid, the Muslim Religious Life Scholar at Emory. Isam is involved in inter-religious work and Sacred Artistry and holds extensive experience in inter-religious expression. In his video, Isam stated, "we've seen people of different religions coming together to do reading and poetry and music…And those are all building blocks for relationships, which lead back to trying to get to understanding each other - in a true way." During my collaboration with Nour El-Kebbi, we consulted Isam on rules about invoking Allah and using Quranic references and prayers in our composition. As in Judaism, Islam holds restrictions for speaking God's name out of traditional religious contexts,[70] and together we sought respectful, inclusive approaches to our compositions. At the end of collaboration, I asked Isam whom Spirit Sounds should reach. He responded in an e-mail, (March 25, 2012):

> I feel that this is appropriate for general audiences such as college campuses as it communicates something very powerful which is our humanity trying to reach out to something that is more vast than we can imagine. That power can also be communicated in houses of worship to enhance understanding. Just a few hours ago I learned that a Muslim woman was found bludgeoned to death in California with a note beside her "go back to the country you came from." God knows we need more of this kind of work which can reach people and impact them positively (March 25, 2012).

[70] Depending of levels of observance, there will still be Muslims and Jews that may take issue with Spirit Sounds songs. "Aphora Ztipura" uses the Hebrew word "Hashem," meaning "the name," a word that traditional Jews use instead of the actual name of God out of respect. However, "Selfish Love" uses the word "Adonai" for God, which may exclude traditional Jews (in orthodox and some conservative streams) who consider this use inappropriate. Although a difficult decision, I realized that not using Adonai in "Selfish Love" would be a disservice to the intention of the song (explained later in this chapter).

In "Aphora Ztipura," Nour and I aimed to highlight shared values of Islam and Judaism through a metaphor of birds and flight. A discussion of shared spiritual experiences led to the ways in which birds hold religious significance while representing elements of our personalities. During song-writing, Nour and I spoke about the importance of Muslim and Jewish collaboration, and discovered commonalities in what we both considered our "ethnic" musical styles. After integrating these styles into our song, producer Will Robertson added an *oud*, an Arabic stringed instrument commonly used in Middle Eastern music. We decided to compose a song with English, Arabic, and Hebrew to represent our tradition's languages while keeping the song accessible to the English-speaking majority of Americans. Nour stated in her video that "no matter what faith you are, there is something very spiritual about music, especially singing in groups…it provides this medium for all different kinds of people to bond together." Throughout collaboration, Nour, who I had never met before, become good friends. We shared elements about our personal lives, including discussions on romantic relationships and family concerns. In March we performed together at an event for the Muslim Student Association to promote Muslim-Jewish collaboration. At the end of the project, Nour wrote to me in an e-mail:

> I felt like I re-found my spirituality through this project- well at the very least, it got me thinking about it very seriously again. I absolutely do think that so much of me is reflected in the music- poetically, musically, and thematically…I think this music should be intended for anyone- there's no one audience that this work would touch (March 24, 2012).

Nour also expressed gratitude for inviting her into the project. Nour's "re-found spirituality" through inter-religious music is in part a result of the common American understanding of the role of spirituality and religion. For Nour and I, Judaism and Islam contribute cultural elements that inform our spirituality, but are not perceived to contain

it. For many religious Americans, religiosity expands beyond religious creed and rituals, aided by exposure to diverse communities and schools of thought. However identifying as a Muslim and a Jew is vital to Nour and my identities and perception of our own religiosity. By engaging her cultural elements *and* a personal spirituality, Nour was able to grow in her overall religiosity through music.

In Carolyn Tong's video submission, she states that playing in worship services at her church is "the one of the main ways that I connect with God, and feel His presence with me." In relation to Spirit Sounds, she said, "it's really not that often that you get to be in one place with people who are so passionate about their faiths, and coming from all these different backgrounds." Because of our previous music collaboration and friendship, Carolyn and I already know a lot about the other's religious beliefs and musical style, and Carolyn shared that she wanted to be a part of the project in part from observing my passion in these areas. We had each visited each other's house of worship, and seen each other perform in multiple venues. For Carolyn, this experience was a way to further connect musically and spiritually with a friend of a different religious background.

Carolyn and my song, "You will see Love," required in-depth explanations of our views on vulnerability and love. The second verse sings:

> We can each retreat to ours shells
> Live within the surety of our faith
> But God shows through more than answers
> Mystery paves the holiest way

Our original chorus, which refers to being loved by Jesus and by each other, went "if you cast out a fear of love, you will be loved," and underwent a series of revisions. I soon became uncomfortable with the phrase "cast out," as it reminded me of Talmudic and Biblical references to casting out lepers and criminals. Carolyn challenged the

qualifier for being loved, because she said that Jesus loves his children whether they fear his love or not. We accommodated these issues with a re-written chorus: "if you *release* a fearful heart, you will *see* love." This process engaged both of our religious identities and creed understandings, and taught us about the other's views and intention for the song. It also let us both promote our internal message while remaining inclusive to our partner's motivations. While the song represents Jesus's love to Carolyn, I hear it as encouraging vulnerability to one another, and the lyrics encompass both of these interpretations.

Mariangela Mihai often performs her spoken word poetry with music,[71] and so I asked her to collaborate on a poetry-song piece for Spirit Sounds. Spoken word poetry is performed with rhythmic and tonal structure and thus elicits similar effects to music. I find the quality of Mariangela's voice and performance to be quite emotionally impactful. Mariangela was born in Romania, a country with communist history that forbade religion, and her family became Baha'i after the 1989 Revolution. In her video submission, Mariangela said, "as a Bahia, I believe that all religions come from the same God, and that unity in diversity is not only desirable and beautiful, but also quite possible." She ends her video with the following quote by Abdu'l Baha:

> All Art is a gift of the Holy Spirit. When this light shines through the mind of a musician, it manifests itself in beautiful harmonies. Again, shining through the mind of a poet, it is seen in fine poetry and poetic prose. When the Light of the Sun of Truth inspires the mind of a painter, he produces marvelous pictures. These gifts are fulfilling their highest purpose, when showing forth the praise of God.[72]

This quote illuminates how Mariangela relates to her art, and her experience in collaboration with me on "The Valley." Mariangela and I wanted to create a song of mourning after discussing experiences that impacted our perception of loss. Drawing

[71] Examples on her website at www.romanianpoet.com
[72] Abdul Baha was the eldest son of Baha'u'llah, the founder of the Baha'i religion.

from Jewish liturgy, the first verse begins, "I do not fear in the valley of death and shadow." Responding to the metaphor of valley, Mariangela recites her original poem in English, as well as a Romanian interpretation at the start and end of the song. Her poem begins:

> Last night, I dreamt I was a shepherd again.
> I had my own mountain where you could sometimes hear the sharpened teeth of wolves.
> I had a blind dog
> His name was God.
> He spoke in tongues, and sneered and barked at the moon,
> At my sheep with golden wool…

The minor chords of "The Valley," lower vocal harmonies, and electric guitar without percussion elicit the sense of a mystical place of the tortured and mourning soul. Because of the intense emotion of this piece, it holds the potential to provoke empathy from whomever has experienced loss in their lives across religious boundaries (as shown by Mariangela's reaction to the music, and my reaction to her poem). Empathy across boundaries is a key to inter-religious collaboration, especially when one considers the mourning that results from inter-religious conflict and religious discrimination.

Jacqueline Woo, a guitarist, lyricist and vocalist who was raised Methodist in Singapore, explains in her video that songwriting recently became an important way for her to process changes in her faith beliefs. Jacqueline and I met while interning through Emory in Jodhpur, India in the summer of 2010. Jacqueline told me that her experience country with a different dominant religion (Hinduism) and her education at a secular institution has led her to question her belief in God and identity as a Christian. It is important to note that the start of Jacqueline's musical creativity coincided with changes in her religiosity, and music became an avenue of exploration and expression in the face of uncertainty. This adds an important element to our concept of musical religiosity, in

which music creates a space for spiritual connection even while beliefs are challenged. In her video, Jacqueline said, "Ariel and I will be writing a song about our spiritual journeys, and we don't really know what is going to happen." This openness illustrates Boyce-Tillman's concept of "liminal musical space," in which conflicting ideas and beliefs can be held without resolution in music (as opposed to dialogue). Throughout collaboration, Jacqueline expressed growth in her spirituality and musical comprehension, using her songs to structure her own changes in belief.

Jacqueline and I focused "Find Your Own" on her developing relationship with God and how the partnership she enjoyed with God as a child has shifted. For Jacqueline, "Find Your Own" represents the relationships she has had--and hopes to have--with God. This discussion inspired Jacqueline to write lyrics that represent God by different names, and a refrain that instruct the listener to find her own image of God. The song speaks from God's perspective, and the singer self identifies as Father, Friend and God. Jacqueline and I switch vocal parts to reflect how God's voice, as well as presence, can change. During the bridge, Jacqueline sings a series of notes without words, accompanied by harmonies and instruments that create a dramatic build up. This part of the song displays a different voice of Jacqueline's, one that represents a celebratory experience with God purely through vocalizations. For the listener who holds a personal connection with God, this wordless vocalization may offer a space to reflect upon one's own relationship. Collaborating with Jacqueline while she processed changes in her Christian views created lengthy and reflective discussions and a positive experience. When we had finished recording our song, Jacqueline sent me an e-mail that read, "I really enjoyed the entire

process...getting to know you, Kevin and Kendra[73] more, thinking about my faith, learning how to shape a song" (March 20, 2012).

Brian Mune, a Presbyterian raised African American and sophomore studying Neurobiology and Behavior, plays guitar with a percussive style that features harmonics. When I asked Brian about his religious beliefs, he said he was not religious, but expressed a spiritual experience in nature, and spoke of a "God-ness" in everything instead of a belief in God. Brian did not engage a discussion of religiosity in the same way as others. For Brian, creating music together was the ideal mode of communication. While our conversation influenced the lyrics of "Lyre Bird," Brian was minimally engaged in the lyrical content. The second verse of "Lyre Bird" sings:

> Are you imagination?
> Who can speak the truth?
> All of our thoughts are God-ness
> Kindled living proof.

Lyre Bird begins with forest sounds and bird chirping, crafting an auditory space for calm contemplation and connection with the natural world. Despite Brian's "lack of religion," a clear musical religiosity emerged through his guitar playing and composition. His aesthetic values and world perception produced a guitar arrangement that communicates his belief in a natural transcendence through acoustic harmonics and string tapping.

In Kevin Cryderman's video, he said, "although I'm an atheist, I believe it's important to have interfaith dialogues." Kevin wanted our song, called "Common

[73] Kendra Wolpe is my younger sister and a sophomore at George Washington University, and an unofficial contributor to Spirit Sounds. While residing Atlanta for the semester, she helped with harmonies and contributed feedback during song production. Kendra, raised Jewish but self-titled nonreligious, was uninterested in overt religious conversation around songs, and has expressed discomfort in religious settings. However, Kendra engaged Spirit Sounds songs and participants through a shared love of music and self-expression, illustrating a musical religiosity that can include the nonreligious.

Ground," to express shared values across religious traditions. "Common Ground" draws similarities between stories in five world religions, and then in the bridge says;

> Vishnu and the cobra slept when an Aum began to hum,
> From the lotus flower emerges a power, Brahma's creation had begun,
> A big bang the atheist sang, there's no creator God,
> But as we all face outer space we likewise are awed.

"Common Ground" expresses appreciation of different viewpoints in the face of disagreement, and the common human experience of wonder in the face of worldly phenomenon. Kevin and I approached "Common Ground" more from intellect and humor than emotion, as many of the other songs had emerged. Kevin and I did connect over the shared value of religious openness and learning, and felt that our song communicated an important message about overlaps in the histories of religious traditions. "Common Ground" is musical religiosity not only because it overtly mention religious traditions, but because it draws value connections across religions and promotes an inter-religious tenet of friendship despite difference. Through music, humor, and knowledge of religious similarities, "Common Ground" promotes a pluralist worldview and faithfulness between believers. Music is often used to promote a certain agenda, often quite overtly. More than other Spirit Sounds songs, Common Grounds directly endorses an inclusive, interactive community of religiosity through inter-religious collaboration.

Will Robertson, graduate of Berkeley College of Music in music production served as the Spirit Sounds producer. Raised Baptist and professionally engaged as the Chorus Director and Bandleader at the Jewish reconstructionist synagogue, Congregation Bet Haverim, Will is integrally involved in inter-religious dialogue and musical religiosity. As a composer, musician and producer, Will became a collaborator, editor, and facilitator

to the Spirit Sound musicians, soliciting song explanations, adding instrumentals, and editing tracks. For each song, Will contributed in composition through instruments and mixing, but for the first track of the CD, I asked Will to compose a compilation of each artist's prayers which he recorded at the end of each their individual session. In an e-mail to me, Will wrote:

> Basically, I used the Psalm [Psalm of David 150] as a structural device to guide what happened when.
>
> *Hallelujah! Praise God in his holy house of worship,*
>
> (Lord's Prayer: "our Father, who art in heaven" [Carolyn's prayer] - a familiar prayer to American ears, so a nice way to open. It's also a transition between "house of worship" from the Psalm - i.e. where God is - and the open skies, the next line.)
>
> *Praise him under the open skies;*
>
> ("I pray to the universe" [Kevin's prayer] …that is, the open skies.)
>
> *Praise him for his acts of power, praise him for his magnificent greatness;*
>
> (Ariel's Shehecheyanu and "Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, melech ha-olam" + Mariangela's "O God" - "thy will be done," "refresh and gladden my spirit," shehecheyanu... - all reflections on God's power. We ask God for things in God's glory; we thank God for bringing us to this season. Magnificent.)
>
> [Will explains the rest of the prayer layering]
>
> …And the next two lines are my absolute favorite part of the piece.
>
> *Let every living, breathing creature praise God!*
>
> Kevin (Atheist prayer): ...and just go one god farther.
> Will (quietly): Hallelujah!
> Nour (sung): aaaamiiiin.
> Ariel: laz'man hazeh. amein.
> Carolyn: amen.
>
> This actually made my eyes well up several times - I feel like it's such a beautiful expression of interfaith dialogue, especially the three "amen"s at the end - Jewish, Christian and Muslim (March 22nd 2012).

Will and I named this compilation of all our prayers "Psalm," and each Spirit Sounds artist responded positively and most felt very moved. At the beginning of the "Psalm," Isam Vaid calls the *Adhan*, the Muslim call to prayer. He wrote in an e-mail "It was a very moving track from the angle of the beautiful layering of the prayers and how they intertwined but yet authentically remained their own; and how the flow was from one to the other was harmonious and the conclusion with Ameen/Amen" (March 25,

2012). The aesthetically pleasing element of Psalm is integral to its effectiveness in a musical religiosity. Beautifully presented elements lend themselves to creating a positive interaction, and the more positive people feel about something, the more they are willing to embrace and defend it. The auditory beauty of inter-religious music serves as a metaphor for the beauty from people come together to express their distinct religiosities.

Reflections

On the principles of community reformation, dialogue, and religiosity, Spirit Sounds created a collaboration of inter-religious musicians reflecting diversity and embracing differences within America and across the global community. The Spirit Sound artists were moved to collaborate beyond our shared musical religiosity to include disadvantaged refugee youth through a concert benefit. The dialogue that led up to Spirit Sounds' song creations positively increased our understanding and knowledge across diverse religiosities, and we hope the CD and concert will inspire more inter-faithful conversation. The satisfaction and emotional reactions that participants expressed during collaboration nurtured the project's primary goal of faithfulness. Such positive memories inspire respect for each other's worth and an interest in a future relationship.

This case study holds a lot of potential for further study. Studies could focus more on group collaborations instead of couples, and expand beyond music that is a Jewish woman paired with inter-religious collaborators. A comprehensive survey for before and after the project would reveal more about what changed for the artist during collaboration. While Spirit Sounds sought a diverse representation, the fact that all participants were Emory affiliates limits the scope of this case study to inter-religious music within a particular university. Another important consideration is whether

musicians were predisposed to openness towards exchanging religiosity in comparison to non-musicians. If that is the case, a musical religiosity could also reflect the aptitude of musicians to comprehend another's religiosity *because* of their strength and practice in music creation. This would not exclude non-musicians (due to the central role of music in religious practice) this might offer compilations for inter-religious music directly inspiring empathy or an experience of religiosity for other religious followers. However, even if only musicians are affected by inter-religious music, these individual can promote inter-religious engagement in other forms in their host communities.

It is difficult to explain fully what occurred during Spirit Sounds collaboration, in part because the music itself cannot be articulated in words. As you listen to the Spirit Sounds CD, you will receive the product of various beliefs, backgrounds, and intentions of Spirit Sounds participants. Each person combined his or her experiences to create a musical piece to share with a diverse audience. These songs represent some of the artists' deepest joys and struggles, exposing the self in the spirit of open communication. Because of the experience and taste of the participants, and the influence of my taste on all of the pieces, the musical style of the Spirit Sounds Album is flavored with the American folk tradition, each song including an acoustic guitar and vocals. American folk music is known for the personal qualities of its lyrics and the emotive performance, a reflection of the intent of this inter-religious music project. Spirit Sounds inter-faithfully and joyfully offers you the sounds and songs of musical religiosity at Emory University in 2012, and submits this CD to the powerful stream of inter-religious community reformation, dialogue, and religiosity running through 21st century America today.

IV

Conclusion

This thesis analyzed how and why inter-religious music, or perhaps more accurately inter-faithful music, effectively engages the modern American. In the case of Spirit Sounds, Inter-religious music encourages social reformation through event fundraiser, musician networks, the content of music pieces and by the modeling of inter-religious collaboration. Dialogue around music increases understanding of other religious beliefs and practices and leads to meaningful compositions that solidify relationships. Through musical religiosity, Spirit Sound's inter-religious music increases empathy and the human experience of transcendence within diverse communities. This creates a safe space where individuals of varied religious, spiritual and secular identities feel welcome and can express their personal beliefs.

For those engaged in inter-religious music, individuality is an important value and goal, not only in respect to personal ideologies of tradition, but also in the mystical experiences of religious music. The "safe space" described by Sacred Artistry and Spirit Sounds participants describe an "ineffable" quality of music, an experience that does not fall subject to the same scrutiny as religious belief or ritual. Wherein dialogue solicits explanations of practice, worldview, and relationship to transcendence, Spirit Sounds musicians assume an ineffable musical experience across religious boundaries. Understanding the experience of an ineffable quality of musical religiosity across religious traditions, and the ability to connect through the unexplainable, requires further exploration. Further study and feedback from participants could also show in what ways

inter-religious music creates Durkheim's concept of a "collective effervescence," and shed further light on the quality of spiritual and religious experience of musicians and listeners.

Sacred Artistry and Spirit Sounds serve as two initial models of inter-religious musical engagement: the former, an ongoing student community, and the latter, a single project with multiple dimensions and products. For both cases, different approaches and facilitators would attract a different group of participants and yield varying results. It is important to note that these initiatives depend upon leaders interested in musical religiosity and skilled in inter-religious exchange, and most importantly participants who foster an interest in exploring and promoting diverse religiosities. For violent conflict or cultural misunderstandings, a musical model may not be as effective as alternative modes of community reformation, dialogue and religiosity. Yet when possible, inter-religious music encourages understanding and empathy among neighbors, and Sacred Artistry and Spirit Sounds participants attest to music's effectiveness in negotiating diverse religiosities and crafting community.

Contemporary American spirituality demands inventive, alternative modes of cross-cultural engagement, and that demand will never cease. Inter-religious and inter-faithful music pioneers a path for the American seeking reflective, inclusive, and empathetic ways to engage diversity, all in the hopes that beautiful sound will also improve the world. But *tikkun olam*, repairing our world, demands our hands, our minds, and our hearts. As we prepare to fight against hatred and intolerance, as we plan new modes of dialogue and community reformation, we must remember to listen to the music

of our ancestors' wisdom. In the Sufi Rumi's words, we must "let beauty we love be what we do."[74]

[74] "Today, like every other day, we wake up empty and frightened," noted Sufi mystic Jalaluddin Rumi. "Don't open the door to the study and begin reading. Take down a musical instrument. Let the beauty we love be what we do" ("Sufi Music").

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