

THE QUEST FOR UNIVERSAL MUSIC IN THE LDS CHILDREN'S SONGBOOK

Colleen Karnas-Haines

Introduction

Over the years, the leadership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has expressed a set of theories about the nature and purpose of music. Elder Bruce R. McConkie asserted a divine origin of music: “Music is given of God to further his purposes.”¹ Former Church President Heber J. Grant proclaimed the evangelical power of music when he said, “The singing of our sacred hymns, written by the servants of God, has a powerful effect in converting people to the principles of the Gospel, and in promoting peace and spiritual growth.”² This is similar to former President Harold B. Lee’s belief that, “The most effective preaching of the gospel is when it is accompanied by beautiful, appropriate music.”³ While former President David O. McKay’s characterization of music as “truly the universal language” is inaccurate due to cultural differences that shape how people interpret musical sound, he recognizes

1. Bruce McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 1966, as cited in “Music Quotes,” accessed Dec. 30, 2019, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/music/resources/music-quotes?lang=eng>.

2. Heber J. Grant, *Improvement Era*, (September 1940): 522, as cited in “Music Quotes,” accessed Dec. 30, 2019, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/music/resources/music-quotes?lang=eng>.

3. Harold B. Lee, *Conference Report*, (April 1973): 181, as cited in “Music Quotes,” accessed Dec. 30, 2019, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/music/resources/music-quotes?lang=eng>.

“when it is excellently expressed how deeply it moves our souls.”⁴ In 1970, the First Presidency released the following statement: “Through music, man’s ability to express himself extends beyond the limits of the spoken language in both subtlety and power. Music can be used to exalt and inspire or to carry messages of degradation and destruction.”⁵

Children’s music has taken on special importance in the Church’s efforts to inculcate its message. The Church’s official site for music distribution and the children’s songbook state that, “Music is a language that everyone can understand. Children all over the world sing these same songs.’ . . . This online version of the current *Children’s Songbook* makes it easy to learn and share this music anytime, anywhere.”⁶ The global aspirations of this music receive special attention in this framework. In June of 2018, the Church released a public notice stating that the children’s songbook was beginning a multi-year revision process. This revision project helps to continue the long line of Latter-day Saint children’s songbooks that started with Eliza R. Snow’s first children’s songbook published in 1880. The musical expectations of this new songbook were listed at the *Church News* site: “Sacred music teaches the doctrines of the gospel, nourishes us spiritually, and has the power to unify Church members throughout the world.”⁷ Sister Cristina B. Franco, member of the Primary general presidency, declared that, “Gospel-centered music will assist families worldwide in raising a

4. David O. McKay, *Conference Report*, (April 1945): 119, as cited in “Music Quotes,” accessed Dec. 30, 2019, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/music/resources/music-quotes?lang=eng>.

5. *Priesthood Bulletin*, Aug. 1973, 3.

6. “Children’s Songbook,” accessed Dec. 30, 2019, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/music/library/childrens-songbook?lang=eng>.

7. Camille West, “Church Announces Plans for New Hymnbook and Children’s Songbook,” *Church News*, June 18, 2018, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/church/news/church-announces-plans-for-new-hymnbook-and-childrens-songbook?lang=eng>.

sin-resistant generation.”⁸ The article continued, “As a source of doctrine, hymns and children’s songs have a unique way of feeding us spiritually while uniting us as families, congregations, and members of a worldwide church.”⁹

Using music to educate children, nourish members spiritually, and unite the global church generates a set of complex goals because, contrary to the message in the children’s songbook, music is not universally understood. Even with the best intentions, musical messaging may fail and even divide people. There are two challenges that Church leadership and the songbook revision committee must face to achieve the abovementioned educational, spiritual, and social cohesion goals: understanding the complexity of children’s musical cognition and taking advantage of the rich musical heritages of diverse Church members while operating in a church that has traditionally been centered, culturally, administratively, and physically, in the United States.¹⁰ Children’s songs can create a unique opportunity for building unity in the global church through music, but only if those compiling the new children’s songbook understand and use what is known about children’s musical cognition to that effect. However, achieving this goal entails decentering American/Western music.

Understanding Music Cognition

Earlier theories of children’s music in the Church have relied on a notion of children as musically immature. For instance, the 1989 version of the

8. West, “Church Announces Plans for New Hymnbook and Children’s Songbook.”

9. West, “Church Announces Plans for New Hymnbook and Children’s Songbook.”

10. D. Michael Quinn, “LDS ‘Headquarters Culture’ and the Rest of Mormonism: Past and Present,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 34, nos. 3–4 (2001): 135–64, 209.

children's songbook by the Church emphasized "simplification" as a central goal for children's music to make it more universally applicable.

Brother Moody, who has worked side by side with the Primary General Presidency and board in the production of the songbook, notes that some Primary leaders . . . have expressed a desire for simpler musical arrangements. For these reasons, the decision was made . . . to simplify some of the more difficult arrangements. . . . "This will open up songs that are real jewels," says Sister Cannon [former first counselor in the Primary general presidency], "and make them more accessible to everyone."¹¹

However, there has not always been a clear agreement about what constitutes simplicity. In a 2004 interview with Church member and early childhood music professor Susan Kenney, she talked about the challenges of defining "simple" music by discussing a children's song titled "Praise" by Merrill Bradshaw.

It really does appear to be hard. He [Merrill Bradshaw] is a contemporary composer. . . . Now at first glance you would say, "I don't really think that is child appropriate." I mean, look at all the accidentals, look at the meter changes all the way through it and everything, I mean, it's ridiculous! And yet, it is so childlike because it's the way children speak. . . . It's really based on how language is built and when we [taught] this to kids, they would just learn it, just like that [snap]. . . . But adults hated it . . . because they would look at that and say, "Ahh, 5/4, 4/4, 2/4!" . . . But when I [watched] children learn this and [saw] how easily they could sing it I would say, "We should be looking at the children here and not what the adults like."¹²

Kenney proposed that a song is truly simple, musically, for a child when the rhythm follows speech patterns, even though that may

11. Ann Edwards Cannon, "The New *Children's Songbook*," *Ensign*, June 1989, 15, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1989/06/the-new-childrens-songbook?lang=eng>.

12. Susan Kenney, interview with author, Mar. 4, 2004, Provo, Utah, minidisc recording.

produce complex-looking rhythmic notation on the printed page. “We don’t speak in 4/4 time; we speak syncopated.”¹³ Syncopation may look complex in written form, but as former Primary general president Michaelene P. Grassli stated, “Children don’t sing the songs from copies of the book; they learn the words by rote, so they can concentrate on the words and their meanings.”¹⁴

Such a recognition exemplifies how new research would benefit the Latter-day Saint understanding of children’s music. Children’s musical cognition is surprisingly flexible, more flexible than adults’ musical cognition. Adults perceive, produce, and react to music in the ways they have been culturally conditioned to perceive, produce, and react. While this may narrow an adult’s musical abilities, it aids in musical communication. If an adult has been conditioned to perceive a minor scale as sad, that adult can better understand what a minor-based song performed within their culture is trying to communicate. On the flip side, children may miss the cultural significance of singing a song in a minor key, but they will be more open to hearing a variety of emotions (not just sad) in a song produced outside their culture that happens to contain harmonic markers of a minor scale. As expectations become refined with age, cognitive musical flexibility is reduced but intracultural communication is enhanced.

Given the obvious developmental trajectory of children becoming adults, it can be tempting to view children as mini- or pre-adults, but the interplay between cognition/biology and enculturation challenges that view. Sociobiological scholars describe the difference between *music* and *musicality* by acknowledging various cultural musical practices. In this view, “*Musicality* in all its complexity can be defined as a natural, spontaneously developing set of traits based on and constrained by our

13. Kenney, interview.

14. Kellene Ricks, “‘The Power of Music’ Found in New Songbook,” *Church News*, May 20, 1989, 5, <https://www.thechurchnews.com/archives/1989-05-20/the-power-of-music-found-in-new-songbook-151373>.

cognitive and biological system. *Music* in all its variety can be defined as a social and cultural construct based on that very musicality.”¹⁵ Children’s musicality, however, does not mature in a straight line from inability to mature ability. One of the richest areas of discovery in music development research is musical innateness. Just as with speech sound production and perception, some aspects of musical ability are amplified and some atrophy according to the musical “language” the child learns. Children are not born with culturally appropriate letter sound production; they are born with the ability to learn letter sound production. Likewise, children are not born with music; they are born with a musicality, a predisposition to produce and perceive musical sounds. If innate aspects of musicality exist, then young children are not “blank slates” but instead bring something to the experience and production of music. What they bring to music is arguably different than adults as the process of cultural amplification and atrophying is at a nascent stage.

Changes in a growing child’s musical perception do not imply maturation or becoming “better” at tasks. Often, the opposite is true. Music cognition researchers describe how culture alters humans’ innate abilities to process music. For instance, Stephanie M. Stalinski and E. Glenn Schellenberg tracked children’s process of musical enculturation. They found that children adjust their temporal perception in music to suit their culture by twelve months. Young infants in Western cultures can detect disruptions in both isochronous meters (in which beats per measure remain constant, typical in Western musical traditions)¹⁶ and non-isochronous meters (in which beats per measure change while still maintaining cycles within the song, often found outside of

15. H. Honing, et al., “Without It No Music: Cognition, Biology and Evolution of Musicality,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 370, no. 1664 (2015): 2.

16. Stephanie M. Stalinski and E. Glenn Schellenberg, “Music Cognition: A Developmental Perspective,” *Topics in Cognitive Science* 4 (2012): 487.

Western musical traditions).¹⁷ Contrast that ability with North American adults, most of whom can only detect disruptions in isochronous meters. Infants lose this ability to perceive meters outside their cultural norms around twelve months old.¹⁸ Children adjust their understanding of harmony to match their culture somewhere between four and six years old. Tonality perception as it relates to key-defining contexts matches adult performance typically by twelve years old.¹⁹ Related studies include topics on absolute pitch, emotional judgments of musical mood, and other aspects of music processing to understand the unique musical perceptions of children and how they evolve (not necessarily improve) over time.

The dilemma arises when the Church attempts to create a global musical experience by placing its most familiar musical system, Western, in the center and the other musical systems on the periphery as deviations from the norm. John O’Flynn, concerned about intercultural contexts in music education, explains, “European methodologies that start with simple song materials, skills, and concepts appear to work well in some European contexts where such cultural-educational assumptions “fit” with society’s beliefs about music and education. . . . However, developmental strategies such as these make little sense in parts of the globe where children may be involved in complex musical activities at an early age, largely owing to their immersion in community-based musical practices.”²⁰

Musics of other cultures may be represented, but if children are taught to develop music processing in a way that makes the Western musical system “understandable,” then the other musics of the world

17. Stalinski and Schellenberg, 489.

18. Stalinski and Schellenberg, 489.

19. Stalinski and Schellenberg, 489.

20. John O’Flynn, “Re-appraising Ideas of Musicality in Intercultural Contexts of Music Education,” *International Journal of Music Education* 23, no. 3 (2005): 196.

will always be a distinct “other.” Children will always be “translating” the foreign sounds, hampering the unity the Church desires to build. The aforementioned studies of children’s wide and varied musical abilities are significant because they suggest that children’s music, rather than adult hymns, may provide the best chance the Church has of building a cross-cultural musical understanding. Before those music cognition milestones (twelve months, four to six years, twelve years), children may be able to perceive another culture’s music as “music” and not “the other’s music.”

Otherness in Latter-day Saint Music Making

How does the adoption of particular musical styles create division? The efforts of the revised children’s songbook focus on making sure that the words are translated into as many languages as possible.²¹ However, there is no explicit request for culturally diverse rhythms, harmonies, or instrumentation. The closest the Church gets to such a request is a press release regarding music submission guidelines that states, “Music composed in traditional styles (similar to previously requested and published pieces) and in more modern or culturally varied styles, which may resonate with the Church’s increasingly diverse membership, will be considered.”²² It is hard not to notice the significance of the language used; “traditional styles” means past American Latter-day Saint styles whereas the traditional music of other cultures is not, in this context, deemed “traditional” but “culturally varied.”

21. Tad Walch, “Call for a New Church Hymnbook Generates 17,000 Submissions, Suggestions” *Deseret News*, Aug. 4, 2019, <https://www.deseret.com/2019/8/4/20755999/call-for-a-new-church-hymnbook-generates-17-000-submissions-suggestions>.

22. “Music Submission Content Guidelines,” Apr. 2019, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/bc/content/ldsorg/music/PD60008660_000%20MusicSubmission.pdf?lang=eng.

The establishment of a center versus peripheries in Latter-day Saint music making creates a sense of otherness and hampers communication in various ways. In the United States, some Black Latter-day Saint communities struggle to both adopt typical Latter-day Saint musical traditions and find a home in the Church for their own musical heritage. “I know this is the Lord’s church,’ [Debra] Bonner [director of the Genesis gospel choir, a predominantly Black choir] said. ‘But the hardest part has been the music.’”²³ Outside the United States, some African cultures view Latter-day Saint music as overly secular. “The LDS church in Kumasi draws criticism because, unlike other Christian denominations, meetings do not feature cultural elements such as drumming, clapping or dancing,” reports Lauren Malner in a *Daily Universe* article discussing Garrett Nagaishi’s research with LDS converts in Ghana. “Some African cultures see pianos as bar instruments and find it strange that they are in every LDS meeting house.”²⁴ Such misinterpretations hamper the very thing Church leaders view as a primary musical purpose—the conversion of souls. In a recent article about Mormon studies in Africa, Amy Hoyt writes, “Despite the obvious connections between Latter-day Saint and African beliefs regarding the importance of the extended family and communal connections, the growth rate will remain hindered without allowing for cultural assimilation of local worship styles regarding music, sermons, and healing.”²⁵

West African musical culture is very different from the musical culture that bloomed from the founding nineteenth-century Latter-day

23. Associated Press, “A New Sound for Mormon Hymns,” *Telegram & Gazette* (Worcester, Mass.), Feb. 22, 2016, <https://www.telegram.com/article/20160222/NEWS/160229847>.

24. Lauren Malner, “Cultural Elements Affect Mormon Missionary Work in Africa,” *Daily Universe*, Apr. 16, 2018, <https://universe.byu.edu/2018/04/16/cultural-elements-affect-mormon-missionary-work-in-africa/>.

25. Amy Hoyt, “Mormon Studies in Africa.” *Mormon Studies Review* 6 (2019): 50.

Saint pioneers. Those steeped in Latter-day Saint musical traditions will likewise find it difficult to interpret musics from outside what they consider the “norm.” Internal power structures determine who is required to do the work of imposing one cultural norm over another and who is required to do the work of translation. As composer Murray Boren observed, “A missionary attending his first worship service in Nigeria is confronted with unfamiliar sights and sounds. He sees ‘dancing,’ he hears rhythmic accompaniment to a repetitive responsorial song, and he witnesses an almost tumultuous participation by the congregation. He feels uncomfortable. His first impulse is to replace the unfamiliar with music which seems more appropriate, more ‘reverent,’ more Mormon, more American.”²⁶

While the population growth of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is slowing, it is still growing, especially in areas such as Africa. A 2016 Church press release claims, “[T]he Church in Africa has grown exponentially in . . . the past 30 years” with “20 times more members than in 1985.”²⁷ Much of this growth is concentrated in West Africa, although the characterization of “exponential” growth is debated.²⁸

West African music practices have been controversial for the predominantly white American Church leadership. Briefly, in the late 1960s, members of the Church Music Committee accepted these practices because “the Old Testament peoples had danced and clapped before the Lord with drums, timbrels, and cymbals.”²⁹ Over a decade

26. Murray Boren, “Worship Through Music Nigerian Style,” *Sunstone* 10, no. 5 (May 1985): 64.

27. “With Kinshasa Temple Groundbreaking, Church Growing Rapidly in Africa,” *Church Newsroom*, Feb. 12 2016, <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/church-growing-rapidly-africa>.

28. Peggy Fletcher Stack, “Mormonism is growing in Africa, but is its rise ‘exponential?’” *Salt Lake Tribune*, June 20, 2016, <https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2016/06/21/mormonism-is-growing-in-africa-but-is-its-rise-exponential/>.

29. Michael Hicks, *Mormonism and Music: A History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 219.

later a mission president denounced the West African musical practices as “satanic and . . . descended from the culture of Cain himself.”³⁰ More recently, many Latter-day Saints have resigned themselves to the fact that perhaps “the westernization of alien cultures is inevitable.”³¹

The Church has occasionally adopted a paradigm of “diversity” to address its global status and to attempt to decenter American musical traditions. For example, in 2009 a Brazilian member of the Church, Liriel Domiciano, performed in Portuguese during the Church’s general conference broadcast. Judd Case analyzed the performance to show the inroads made in cultural diversity. “[The performance] allows Brazilian and other Portuguese-speaking Mormons to hear a few moments of Conference without a translator. English-speaking Saints can experience a powerful Conference moment in a language other than their own. The global Church can likewise experience difference amidst familiarity; it can experience the brief subversion of the Anglo American Church’s cultural norms in a way that affirms shared Mormon identities.”³² “Brief” is the key word as the chosen song, “I Know That My Redeemer Lives,” is familiar to and culturally comfortable for the Church’s American audience. This comfort stems from the fact that the song was written by an Englishman in 1738, sung in English by both Liriel Domiciano and the Tabernacle Choir, performed in Salt Lake City, Utah, and sung in Portuguese only by the guest singer. While this was a display of diversity, it did not decenter American/Western music.

The performance of diversity asks very little of the dominant American/English-speaking culture. Compare this to the work required of non-English, non-Western converts who are asked to make music by changing instruments, styles, languages, and their definition of appropriate “church” songs. This comparison reveals the challenges in

30. Hicks, *Mormonism and Music*, 221.

31. Hicks, *Mormonism and Music*, 221.

32. Judd Case, “Sounds from the Center: Liriel’s Performance and Ritual Pilgrimage,” *Journal of Media and Religion* 8, no. 4 (2009): 223.

equalizing the musical and, more generally, the cultural power structure of the global church. In an analysis of his Navajo grandfather's conversion to the Latter-day Saint religion, Moroni Benally asserts that "the biopolitical power of the Church attempts to structure and dictate what is and is not culturally appropriate."³³ In the Church's discouragement of member participation in Native ceremonies, Benally sees a Church that "is constructed upon premises that privilege upholding whiteness."³⁴ The Indigenous members must practice "passive non-compliant resistance,"³⁵ not as a challenge against authority but as an integrated act of their cultural identity-informed faith. As Gina Colvin articulates, many decentered members wonder if "the white Utah church will ever soften enough to admit the stories and narratives from beyond its borders."³⁶ The question can be expanded to include the musical world of lyrical stories and narratives, and also instrumentation, rhythms, and musical styles. Melissa Wei-Tsing Inouye studied the children's Primary program in Hong Kong and Auckland, New Zealand and found that members across the globe have found ways to fully realize their complex, multifaceted selves and have claimed their "agency to embrace, redefine, and reproduce" their integrated Church identities.³⁷ The question is: to what extent do those at the center have to perform the same negotiations?

33. Moroni Benally, "Decolonizing the Blossoming: Indigenous People's Faith in a Colonizing Church," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 50, no. 4 (2017): 76.

34. Benally, 26.

35. Benally, 77.

36. Gina Colvin, "A Maori Mormon Testimony," in *Decolonizing Mormonism: Approaching a Postcolonial Zion*, edited by Gina Colvin and Joanna Brooks (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2018), 40.

37. Melissa Wei-Tsing Inouye, "A Tale of Three Primaries: The Gravity of Mormonism's Informal Institutions," in *Decolonizing Mormonism: Approaching a Postcolonial Zion*, edited by Gina Colvin and Joanna Brooks (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2018), 229–62.

Given that the Church is already located across the globe, the stories “beyond its border” already do exist. A balanced relationship requires that the leadership at the center of the Church allow those diverse voices to not only be heard in comfortable spaces, with provided translations, and framed in familiar constructs but to allow those voices to leave a perceptible imprint upon the institution.

Universals

Music that communicates to a culturally diverse population must go beyond simply offering multiple translations of the lyrics. It must also go beyond a token chapter representing “other” world music, which may be conveniently overlooked by the dominant culture that has the privilege of musical representation in every other chapter. Given the vast differences in music due to differing geographic, cultural, and social influences, one wonders if it is possible to create a musical culture that is truly universal. There are some musical elements that provide a foundation for such an enterprise. Music researcher Reinhard Kopiez proposed that while true universals are elusive, *statistical* universals can be found in the concepts of music-driven movement, synchronization, and expectancy.

Statistically universal musicality suggests that music sparks motion because music is meant to spark movement, no matter the age or culture. Kopiez outlines emerging studies on the relationship between music and perceived movement.³⁸ While the movements across cultures may look different and serve different purposes, the fact that humans in some way link music to movement (dances, work songs, rocking lullabies) is a statistical universal.

38. Reinhard Kopiez, “Making Music and Making Sense Through Music: Expressive Performance and Communication,” in *MENC Handbook of Musical Cognition and Development*, edited by Richard Colwell (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 213.

In the Latter-day Saint context, what purpose does it serve to train children to “pop” from their seats when singing, “I looked out the window and what did I see? POP-corn popping on the apricot tree,”³⁹ only to tell them to stop popping, stop clapping, stop dancing in church once they have grown to a certain age? The ability to listen and interpret musical sound through motion may be exactly how music allows people to “express [themselves] . . . beyond the limits of the spoken language.”⁴⁰ The Church has a well-established history of incorporating songs in their children’s program with hand motions, sign language, body movements, etc. What may need reconsideration is the attitude that considers those motions “childlike” instead of integral to understanding music.

Music and movement has been and continues to be a controversial subject within the Church. In the analysis of Liriel Domiciano’s performance at general conference, Case notes Domiciano’s movement during the performance,

The camera’s focus on her gestures—on the movements of her hands and arms, on the swaying of her head, and on the alternation of her eyes between closing and looking up (as if to heaven)—is made powerful by the sudden, devoted silence of the female singers behind her. As the multilayered shots move in some of them increasingly become a jumble of elbows, shoulders, and locks of hair as choir members become a backdrop for Liriel, but the Choir’s reverent attentiveness remains unmistakable. The female choir members’ performance of closed-mouth, arms-at-side solemnity, when juxtaposed with their soaring unison only moments before, shows their respect for both Liriel and Conference. Their solemnity also serves as a visual cue for the broadcasting audience to engage in similar reverence.⁴¹

39. “Popcorn Popping,” *Children’s Songbook*, 242, words and music by Georgia W. Bello, <https://www.lds.org/music/library/childrens-songbook/popcorn-popping?lang=eng>.

40. *Priesthood Bulletin*, Aug. 1973, 3.

41. Case, “Sounds from the Center,” 222.

It is an analysis that interprets a soloist's movements as powerful and the choir's stillness as devoted and reverent. What would a swaying choir imply? What about a choir that claps or nods in affirmation of the soloist's words? Even among Latter-day Saints in the United States this hesitation to move is noted during gospel choir tours for Latter-day Saint audiences. "Songs like 'When Jesus Says Yes' and 'He's a Battle Axe' are accompanied by swaying, clapping and stomping as the Genesis Gospel Choir makes what members call 'a joyful noise,'" writes the Associated Press in an article about the Genesis Group Choir. "Genesis Group President Don Harwell says the clapping may make some Mormons uncomfortable, but gospel music appeals to new church members from different cultures and they should be able to add their culture to the church."⁴² It is important to note that the gospel choirs are giving concerts, not integrating their music and movements into an average Sunday service. Even in the stillest of congregations, music creates movement—the opening of hymnals, the opening of mouths, the swing of the conductor's arm, and the jump of the pianist's fingers. The Church can create a teachable moment about cross-cultural movement in music through children's songs and through the children's as-of-yet loose understanding of the culturally constructed link between reverence and stillness. Instead of asking for token diverse songs that somehow unify a worldwide Church, the songbook revision committee can actively request songs that explore prescribed stomping, spontaneous clapping, reverently raised arms of affirmation, and Spirit-inspired swaying just as previous songbooks explored reverent stillness in songs such as "Reverently, Quietly," "The Chapel Doors," and "We Are Reverent."

Besides movement, synchronization is proposed to be socio-biologically universal because synchronization allows sound signals to magnify in volume and increase signal range.⁴³ While this ability

42. Associated Press, "A New Sound for Mormon Hymns."

43. Kopiez, "Making Music and Making Sense Through Music," 211.

may not be an adaptation for individuals, it benefits the society. Social cohesion requires synchronization, which can include, but does not necessarily mean, singing in unison. As music cognition researcher Nikki Moran explains,

As physical movement is increasingly recognized as central to the perspective and process of the cognition of the individual musician, there is a corollary for musical communication: from this *social* perspective, the immediacy and relevance of others' bodies in relation to oneself becomes paramount. Advocates of the enactive approach to cognition, DeJaegher and Di Paolo (2007) theorize that social interaction is driven by "participatory sense-making," the moment-by-moment processes of engagement by which two or more individuals co-construct communicative events in the world.⁴⁴

Some cultures contained within the Church are very skilled at participatory sense-making during music performances. As previously mentioned, traditions that allow for physical interpretation of music into body movements let individuals interact not only with the music and lyrics but with each other through synchronization (clapping, swaying together, etc.). There are also many cultures that use call-and-response techniques to break down the barrier between performer and audience by allowing for imitation, question/answer replies, and affirmations. Enabling less scripted, more spontaneous musical participation requires a great deal of trust in a congregation but it also builds bonds through communication. Speaking of music performance cognition, Moran explains that "the experience of live performance reveals that musicians need to be especially good at facilitating shared, social action"⁴⁵ because music is "an event of interaction."⁴⁶

44. Nikki Moran, "Music, Bodies and Relationships: An Ethnographic Contribution to Embodied Cognition Studies," *Psychology of Music* 41, no. 1 (2013): 5.

45. Moran, "Music, Bodies and Relationships," 6.

46. Moran, "Music, Bodies and Relationships," 14.

Just as singing together amplifies the decibels produced, unifying songs across generations amplifies the messages. The music of the Church, including the famed Tabernacle Choir, connects many American members with past generations—singing the songs that their ancestors sang. The songs in the previous 1989 songbook were said to “allow our children to join their voices with the voices of children of earlier times in their expression of the gospel,”⁴⁷ as described by the then-chairman of the Church Music Committee Michael Moody. Intergenerational social group cohesion has always been an expressed goal of the children’s songbooks. As is evidenced by the simple fact that the children’s songbooks are piano based, the songs unite Latter-day Saint children to past generations of mostly Western-centered Latter-day Saints. The nearly exclusive use of piano-based music in the children’s songbooks detaches non-Westernized Saint children from the rich spiritual musical heritage of their own ancestors. The challenge for the Church is to recognize that all children need to synchronize their voices and musical movements, both scripted and spontaneously negotiated, with the musicians around them but also with previous generations, regardless of their ancestral heritage.

Lastly, expectancy, or the ability to predict where a song will move harmonically, melodically, or rhythmically, is another suggested universal characteristic of music according to current research.⁴⁸ If past songbooks are an indication of the future, the fluency that will be promoted is Western-based with Western classical translations of other cultures’ musics. As an alternative, Latter-day Saints might seek to cultivate intermusicality, a term coined by Ingrid Monson. Intermusicality describes “the phenomenon by which musicians can sometimes import specific practices and nuances from one style or performance context to other styles or performance contexts. This idea lends itself

47. Cannon, “The New *Children’s Songbook*.”

48. Kopiez, “Making Music and Making Sense,” 212.

to an understanding of multiple practices and conceptions of music within an integrated experiential plane and suggests a way forward for the development of music curricula that are at once pluralistic and dialogic.”⁴⁹ Such a pluralistic musicality decenters any one musical culture as the standard or norm and explores a variety of musics. Intermusicality, as opposed to the inclusion of a few culturally diverse songs, expands what is possible for all Church members to experience musically. Intermusicality integrates instead of categorizes, weaves together instead of segregates. It fundamentally rethinks the musical experience rather than satisfying a diversity quota. John O’Flynn explores how to effectively introduce various culturally informed musics in music education. “If musicality is a flexible and inclusive term, it also needs to be considered in the singular, rather than as a set of distinct ‘musicalities,’” he writes. “It is also a conception of musicality that challenges orthodox methodologies of music education, where different styles and traditions are hierarchized and/or treated in taxonomic terms.”⁵⁰ Therefore, to achieve any sort of understanding of and predictive ability about songs from any culture, the Church should not compartmentalize “world” music but integrate non-Western and Western musics so that the borders between the two and subsequent hierarchies start to fade. Integration eliminates the tendency to treat musics of non-Western cultures as objects to be translated into more Western-palatable versions.

Conclusion

A well-developed children’s songbook has the potential to move the Latter-day Saint community one step closer to achieving social cohesion on a global scale. Music can be a language that “even children can understand”⁵¹ if the new generation of songbook compilers, song

49. John O’Flynn, “Musicality in Intercultural Contexts,” 199.

50. O’Flynn, 198.

51. West, “Church Announces Plans.”

leaders, and music composers recognize that children are more than budding musicians; they are already musicians with more flexible music cognition abilities than adults. Music can help leaders teach gospel doctrines if children and adults are allowed to experience music that not only moves their souls but also their bodies. Music can unite members around the world, if Church leaders successfully dismantle the musical hierarchy that puts Western music and Western musicality in the center and relegates all other musics to an unintegrated periphery. This next iteration of the Church's children's songbook will determine if the Church moves beyond good intentions and takes innovative steps toward universal music.

COLLEEN KARNAS-HAINES {ckarnash@uncc.edu} is the Director of Assessment, Planning, and Accreditation for the College of Computing and Informatics at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. She earned her BA in music and cognitive science from the University of Virginia and her PhD in ethnomusicology from the University of Maryland. After years teaching music history, she now supports departmental research initiatives and uses her free time to apply machine learning to music history research.