

DISCOVERING MUSICAL MOTIVATIONS VIA ACTOR NETWORK THEORY

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ABSTRACT

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1 INTRODUCTION

Testing for change

2 MAINTAINING ORDER THROUGH TRADITION

Entering a musical space brings about friendships and connections that can last a lifetime. Having been at an institution that fostered these connections for a decade of my upbringing, many of the relationships I have formed have been rooted in musical experiences. One such tradition that has been a staple of the choir school is Tenebrae.

Tenebrae has been one of if not the longest standing choral tradition at St. Michael's Choir School that brings together generations of choir boys. Each year during the Wednesday of Holy Week, current students and alumni perform one of the most well-known works of the school's founder, Monsignor John Edward Ronan. Though during my years as a student at the choir school, Tenebrae was already one of my favourite services as it brought together older students who I met at the school, it has become even more so now that I myself am an alumnus.

2.1 STAYING CONNECTED THROUGH MUSIC

One of the greatest beauties of Tenebrae is that it would not be possible without the participation of alumni. As a result of the consistency that has endured across decades of Tenebrae performances, various actors within the network such as the cathedral basilica and its rectors, the choir school, and the alumni association have become locked into the roles they take on. Additionally, due to the minimal changes in each actors' roles, the Tenebrae service has largely become punctualized into a single actor whose smaller influencing actants need not be analysed at the microscopic scale.

It is not surprising that over the years, there have been a wide variety of musical styles and interpretations of the Tenebrae responsories (the music sung during the service); however, despite this resistance in the network, its effects have largely been hidden. I think this is representative of the shared meaning of Tenebrae to each of its actors, and it reflects that even somewhat significant changes over the course of many years does not change Tenebrae as a punctualized actor. Furthermore, I believe the system has such enduring stability because the alumni of the choir school have such a strong amount of power and influence over Tenebrae, both as religious service but also as a means to bring as many graduates together.

3 FORMING NEW CONNECTIONS

3.1 POST-SECONDARY CHORAL INVOLVEMENT

4 UNDERSTANDING MY RELATIONSHIP WITH PHILOSOPHY AND BEAUTY

In the context of Maslow's Hierarchy of needs (needs citation), music and arts in a broader context help fulfill our desire for self-actualization. Despite all the exams and performances that I have undertaken throughout my years as a musician, ultimately my desire to dedicate my time and energy toward music is motivated by philosophical beliefs of beauty. Just as an engineer has a worldview that impacts how they approach and apply themselves to projects, I believe that musicians require a artistic ideology that informs their interpretation of repertoire. Though a musician's artistic ideology need not be informed by one's philosophical biases or beliefs, I think it is natural for both to inform one another as they have for me. More specifically, I strongly resonate with Roger Scruton's work on describing and understanding beauty. He states: "Beauty is an ultimate value—something that we pursue for its own sake, and for the pursuit of which no further reason need be given. Beauty should therefore

be compared to truth and goodness, one member of a trio of ultimate values which justify our rational inclinations.” (see Scruton Beauty: A very short introduction)

Though I am conscious about these beliefs currently, it has not always been the case, especially during my years in high school. Several of my most developed musical relationships included in my network such as Ms. Krechkovsky and Ms. Dunn fostered an appreciation for the beauty that can be attained through music. Further, they encouraged me to evoke landscapes and vivid imagery through the simple beauty ingrained in each musical line and phrase. Though I was able to develop a subconscious appreciation, I never grasped

the underlying beliefs that supported these inclinations till they were challenged by my first organ instructor Dr. Ku. The organ expanded my palette with its wide range of colours and voices, but my initial instruction did not seem to strengthen my ability to see its potential to achieve beauty. Regardless of the musical validity or conviction of the style he taught me, I felt strongly conflicted and did not feel as though the music I produced satisfied my understanding of beauty. It took me several years to reflect and realize that the beauty which I sought simply could not exist in this rigid, uncompromising style of interpretation.

5 CONCLUSION