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## RESPONDING TO XENOPHOBIA THROUGH SACRED MUSIC: A SELF-REFLEXIVE DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF A CHAMBER EUCHARIST

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### ABSTRACT

This article is a self-reflexive analysis of a composition entitled *A Chamber Eucharist* by Andrew-John Bethke. The composition is a six movement setting of the ordinary texts for the Eucharist (commonly called the Mass) in seven languages: Afrikaans, English, Latin, San, Sesotho, Setswana and Xhosa. It is scored for SATB choir, string quartet, oboe/recorder and percussion. The work was written for the Grahamstown community in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa in October 2015 as a response to the xenophobic violence which flared up in the preceding months. The first performance was given in November 2015. The author provides a brief contextual discussion about xenophobic attacks in South Africa, before analysing the overall structure of the work and then the theological underpinning, musical influences and compositional techniques of each movement. The composer tries to demonstrate through musical hybridity that different musical cultures from African can co-exist and complement each other. The result is a liturgical work which embodies numerous African musical styles, multilingualism and multiculturalism.

### OPSOMMING

Hierdie artikel is 'n self-refleksiewe ontleding van 'n komposisie met die titel *A Chamber Eucharist* ('n Kamer-Nagmaaldiens) deur Andrew-John Bethke. Die komposisie bestaan uit ses bewegings in 'n toonsetting van die normale tekste van die Nagmaaldiens (wat gewoonlik bekend staan as die Mis) in

sewe tale: Afrikaans, Engels, Latyn, San, Sesotho, Setswana en Xhosa. Dit is georkestreer vir SATB-koor, strykkwartet, hobo/blokfluit en slaginstrumente. Die werk is in Oktober 2015 vir die gemeenskap van Grahamstad in die Oostelike Provinsie van Suid-Afrika gekomponeer, in antwoord op die xenofobiese geweld wat in die vorige maande daar opgevlam het. Die eerste uitvoering vind in November 2015 plaas. Die skrywer verskaf eerstens 'n beknopte kontekstuele bespreking van xenofobiese aanvalle in Suid-Afrika. Dan volg 'n ontleding van die algehele struktuur van die werk en laastens die teologiese onderbou, musikale invloede en komposisionele tegniek van elke beweging. Deur middel van musikale hibridisering probeer die komponis bewys dat uiteenlopende Afrika-musiekkulture saam kan bestaan en mekaar aanvul. Die eindproduk is 'n liturgiese werk waarin talle Afrika-musiekstyle, veeltaligheid en multikulturalisme beliggaam word.

## I. Introduction

In the past eight years South Africans have been implicated in violent xenophobic attacks against foreign nationals. The attacks have been centred in urban townships and the targets of the violence tended to be shops or small businesses that are operated by foreigners (mostly immigrants from West and North Africa, as well as Pakistan and Bangladesh). The underlying causes of the violence are complex and quite often different from area to area.<sup>1</sup> However, one common cause of frustration for South African people, particularly those living in poverty, is the slow rate of transformation since the transition to multiparty democracy in 1994. Many had hoped that they would be able to become economically independent in the new dispensation. Sadly, the slow rate of economic growth has meant that the local job market has been shrinking rather than growing.<sup>2</sup> In townships, small *spaza*<sup>3</sup> shops, which stock all sorts of everyday items ranging from groceries to mobile phone airtime, have sprung up to assist the local residents with daily necessities. In many cases, these small shops have saved township people a great deal of money in taxi fares to travel into central business districts of the nearest town for shopping. Interestingly though, these business opportunities have been pioneered largely by those from elsewhere in Africa.<sup>4</sup> Some communities have reasoned that these foreigners have “stolen” their rightful opportunities to create work.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation's report on xenophobic attacks in South Africa (<http://www.csvr.org.za/docs/racism/seminar20june08.pdf>). They cite the following reasons for xenophobic unrest: poor service delivery; disappointed expectations of post-Apartheid South Africa; increased competition for resources and/or opportunities; and a feeling of not being heard.

<sup>2</sup> See [http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/theme/youth\\_employment/obstacles-and-needs-of-young-people-in-african-labour-markets/](http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/theme/youth_employment/obstacles-and-needs-of-young-people-in-african-labour-markets/).

<sup>3</sup> A *spaza* shop is a small convenience store, usually located in strategic points in an informal settlement.

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/foreigners-own-up-to-three-times-more-spaza-shops-in-townships-20151110>.

<sup>5</sup> See <http://mg.co.za/article/2015-01-29-mind-your-own-business-minister>.

The *Chamber Eucharist* is a musical and spiritual response to these xenophobic attacks. Through the medium of music and words it seeks to juxtapose different musical styles in such a way as to demonstrate that cultures can successfully work together to create a fabric of unity and familyhood. The work as a whole accomplishes this by allowing widely divergent languages and musical styles to coexist within the greater fabric of a unified whole. The spiritual role of the piece is to demonstrate that, as the South African national motto suggests, “there is unity in diversity”. This is a strong spiritual aspect of Southern African culture, which manifests in tenets such as *ubuntu* and *ujaama*. The overall aim of the work then is to promote peaceful integration of cultures in the burgeoning South African hybrid culture.

What follows is a detailed explanation of each movement of the piece, namely philosophical, musical, spiritual and textual angles.

## 2. Overall structure

The *Chamber Eucharist* is designed as a liturgical work that can be performed as part of a normal Eucharistic service or in a secular setting like a cantata. It is scored for SATB chamber choir, string quartet, oboe and percussion. The work includes the usual texts that would normally comprise a setting of the Mass, that is, *Gloria*, *Kyrie*, *Credo*, *Sanctus*, *Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei*. The *Credo* is the climactic movement - an articulation of the fullness of the spiritual and cultural message. The *Gloria* and *Kyrie* act as preparatory pointers to the *Credo*, and the *Sanctus*, *Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei* in succession gradually bring the listener to a sense of rest and calm.

The title of the work is intentional.<sup>6</sup> Written for performance within the Anglican Cathedral of St Michael and St George in Grahamstown,<sup>7</sup> the *Chamber Eucharist* was intended to form part of its ongoing transformation programme, where the Cathedral leadership team is attempting to create space within its worship patterns for a local multicultural voice to emerge. This work was first performed

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<sup>6</sup> Usually this particular set of texts set to music would be called a Mass. A “Mass” is a ritual and theological concept that represents a particular approach to one of the central sacraments of the Christian faith. The word itself is derived from the final response in the Latin liturgy of Communion: the priest says “Ite missa est” and the people respond, “Deo gracias”. The meaning of the word *missa* is said to be a derivative of “*missio*”, meaning “mission”. Thus, the translation of the phrase above can be, “Go, you are sent on a mission”, to which the response is, “Thanks be to God”. The word “mass” though, has specific connotations that relate directly to the Roman Catholic idea of the transubstantiation of the elements of bread and wine during the Words of Institution. Many churches that broke away from the Roman Catholic Church during the Reformation rejected the idea of transubstantiation altogether, and renamed their liturgies commemorating the Last Supper as “The Lord’s Supper” or “Holy Communion”, etc.

<sup>7</sup> While this piece was written for an Anglican context, it is by no means limited to performances within Anglican Churches. It can function equally well as a secular performance work, within other denominations or in inter-denominational settings.

with the aim to promote engagement in multiculturalism and address first-hand the issues surrounding xenophobic attacks. Given the Anglican setting, I felt strongly that the appropriate title would be *Chamber Eucharist*, rather than “Mass”. The Greek word “eucharist” means “thanksgiving”. And indeed, philosophically the work is a thanksgiving for cultural interactions already taking place in South Africa and a demonstration that through music such interactions have been taking place throughout history. The work stands as a beacon of hope and thanksgiving rather than a call to a missionary endeavour of multicultural cohesion. The use of a chamber choir, string quartet, oboe and percussion means that the work can be performed by a fairly small group (the first performance included sixteen musicians), hence the first part of the title “Chamber”.

Numerous languages have been used in the work. The idea was to include as many of the languages familiar to the Cathedral community as possible. These include: English, Afrikaans, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Setswana, Sesotho, Sepedi and Shona. Each cultural group represented by these languages is included in some way, either textually or musically. Additionally, the San language group, among the most endangered languages in Southern Africa, is used alongside Latin in the *Credo*.<sup>8</sup> Neither Latin nor San are understood by most people, yet regardless of language, race or cultural heritage the Christian belief is that all are recognised by God. This resonates well with the underlying motivation for this work: respect for all who live in South Africa regardless of their country of origin.

Another feature of the *Chamber Eucharist* is the use of ternary form in all but one movement. In general, the texts themselves are structured naturally in three sections. More often than not, this is an intentional process, evoking the Trinitarian understanding of Christian doctrine. In fact, the Trinitarian discourse in both text and music are intertwined to highlight this underpinning aspect of Christian faith. In some movements the sections morph naturally into one another, as transitions in African music would do, for example, *Kyrie*. In others, the sections are more clearly delineated, for example, *Agnus Dei*.

### 3. Gloria

The opening movement of the *Chamber Eucharist* is an energetic outburst of praise. The outer sections are probably the most Western oriented of the entire work, having a Celtic feel, not unlike the folk-music traditions of some cultures. The hymn tunes of Stuart Townend and Keith Getty have introduced largely “white” congregations to Celtic-like tunes and there is a popular movement of Celtic spirituality that has emerged in South African Anglican Churches in the past ten to fifteen years.<sup>9</sup> The text is English throughout, and this too contributes to the movement’s Western feel.

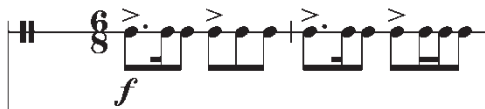
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<sup>8</sup> For more information about endangered San languages see <http://www.khoisan.org/> and <http://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/khoi-and-san-national-language-body-officially-launched-upington-northern-cape>.

<sup>9</sup> See Bethke, “Repertoire Performed in the Anglican Parishes of the Diocese of Cape Town: Congregational Music and Local Developments” in *The Journal of Musical Arts in Africa* (2015) for more details.

The movement begins with a rhythmic pattern played on the conga drums<sup>10</sup> that underpins the opening and closing sections (see example 1).

Example 1 – Rhythmic pattern that underpins the *Gloria* (conga drum, bars 1 – 2):



The melodic fragments that follow, and permeate the texture, are derived from this opening rhythmic motive (bars 5 – 19: see example 2). The rhythm’s strength is that it drives the music forward, never allowing it to stop, except at the end of sections. In a sense it creates a trance-like aura around the piece, which is typical of Southern African religious music-making where traditional healers are taken into communion with the ancestors through relentless drummed rhythmic pulses (Cumes, 2004:9). Likewise, this opening movement captures the same idea and ushers the listener (and singer) into the sacred world through the “trance” of the music.

Example 2 – Motives related to the rhythm established by the conga drum (string quartet, bars 5 – 8):

The image shows a string quartet score for Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Cello in 6/8 time. The score is in D minor. The Violin 1 part starts with a melodic fragment: quarter note (D), eighth note (E), eighth note (F), quarter note (G), eighth note (A), eighth note (B), quarter note (C), eighth note (D), eighth note (E), quarter note (F), eighth note (G), eighth note (A), quarter note (B), eighth note (C), eighth note (D), quarter note (E), eighth note (F), eighth note (G), quarter note (A), eighth note (B), eighth note (C), quarter note (D), eighth note (E), eighth note (F), quarter note (G). The Violin 2 part starts with a similar melodic fragment: quarter note (D), eighth note (E), eighth note (F), quarter note (G), eighth note (A), eighth note (B), quarter note (C), eighth note (D), eighth note (E), quarter note (F), eighth note (G), eighth note (A), quarter note (B), eighth note (C), eighth note (D), quarter note (E), eighth note (F), eighth note (G), quarter note (A), eighth note (B), eighth note (C), quarter note (D), eighth note (E), eighth note (F), quarter note (G). The Viola and Cello parts start with a similar melodic fragment: quarter note (D), eighth note (E), eighth note (F), quarter note (G), eighth note (A), eighth note (B), quarter note (C), eighth note (D), eighth note (E), quarter note (F), eighth note (G), eighth note (A), quarter note (B), eighth note (C), eighth note (D), quarter note (E), eighth note (F), eighth note (G), quarter note (A), eighth note (B), eighth note (C), quarter note (D), eighth note (E), eighth note (F), quarter note (G). A dynamic marking of *f* is placed below the first few notes of each part.

Harmonic modulation is not a concept that underpins improvised African music, although it can be a feature of Western-inspired music. As this work is a fusion of African and Western compositional styles, harmonic modulation is applied freely in this movement and throughout the work. For example, note the sudden modulation from D minor to E minor in bars 45 – 50 (see example 3). In effect, this takes the first section to its close, ending on an E major chord (bar 59), but also setting the stage for

<sup>10</sup> A pair (or more) of narrow, tall drums that are sometimes used in orchestral scores.

the middle section, which is in A major (dominant of the macro-tonality for the *Gloria*, D minor). The modulation lifts the restatement of the words “Glory to God in the highest” to new melodic heights (the sopranos reach a top G) and serves as the climax of the first section.

Example 3 – Modulation from D minor to E minor (bars 45 – 50):

Musical score for Example 3, showing vocal parts (T, B), Ob., Drum, Vln. 1, Vln. 2, Vla., and Vcl. from bar 45 to 50. The score includes dynamics like *mf* and *f*, and lyrics: "f Glo ry to God in the".

The central section is more audibly Southern African. It demonstrates, through the choir, a trait of most African music: “call-and-response” technique (see bars 63 – 71: example 4). Another feature of this section is the Sotho-like melody, derived from the pentatonic scale. It has characteristic falling contours and parallel perfect fourths are used as a harmonisation technique (see bars 78 – 86). Particular pentatonic scale patterns lend themselves to round-like counterpoint and bars 87 – 97 (see example 5) explore the possibilities of contrapuntally based motivic development.

Example 4 – “Call-and-response” between Bass and Alto (alto, bass and second violin, bars 63 – 68):

Musical score for Example 4, showing vocal parts (A, B) and Vln. 2 from bar 63 to 68. The score includes dynamics like *mp* and *p*, and lyrics: "p On - ly Son of the Fa - ther." and "mp Lord Je - sus Christ on - ly Son of the Fa - ther."

Example 5 – Round-like counterpoint (bars 93 - 97):

Musical score for Example 5, bars 93-97. The score includes vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and string quartet parts (Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola). The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: "You take a way the sin of the world, have Lamb of God. You take a way the sin of the world, have Lamb of God. You take a way the sin of the world, have Lamb of God." The string quartet provides harmonic support with sustained notes and rhythmic patterns.

The final section is closely based on the first, although here aspects of the motives are inverted (compare bars 5 – 12 with 107 to 113: example 6).

Example 6 – Aspects of the opening motives inverted (string quartet, bars 107 – 110):

Musical score for Example 6, bars 107-110, featuring string quartet parts (Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello). The key signature is one flat (Bb) and the time signature is 4/4. The score shows inverted motives from the opening section. The dynamics are marked *f* (forte). The string quartet plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests.

#### 4. Kyrie

The *Kyrie* loosely fits into a ternary design. This structure mirrors African compositional idiom, which does not necessarily delineate form in separate sections, but rather tends to allow the form to emerge naturally through repetition (Scott, 2009:108). The two outer sections are closely linked thematically since the text is exactly the same. Both seek to imitate the *mbira* (also sometimes called the ‘thumb piano’ – see Appendix) using pizzicato strings.<sup>11</sup> Each string instrument represents a layer of the rhythmic and melodic texture that is commonly produced when two *mbira* players perform together (see example 7). Additionally, a characteristic component of the texture is the four against three rhythm, which is often added through a shaker (see the musical example below). The shaker required for this particular piece is made of a series of moth cocoons filled with seeds and sewn onto a flexible piece of animal hide.<sup>12</sup>

Example 7 – strands of *mbira* melody and rhythm (shaker, string quartet, bars 33 – 36):

The musical score for Example 7 consists of five staves, all in the key of D major (two sharps) and 3/4 time. The staves are labeled as follows: Sh. (Shaker), Vln. 1 (Violin 1), Vln. 2 (Violin 2), Vla. (Viola), and Vic. (Violoncello). The Shaker part (top staff) features a steady 4/3 rhythm with a sequence of eighth notes. The Violin 1 part (second staff) plays a melodic line with eighth-note patterns and some sixteenth-note runs. The Violin 2 part (third staff) provides a harmonic accompaniment with eighth-note chords. The Viola part (fourth staff) plays a rhythmic pattern with accents on the first and third beats. The Violoncello part (bottom staff) plays a rhythmic pattern with eighth notes and rests, mirroring the shaker's rhythm.

The choir sings upward melodic gestures tracing the harmonic movement of the *mbira*-like accompaniment. However, rather than singing in Shona, as the musical idiom might lead the listener to expect, the sopranos, altos and basses sing the word “Ahomna” – an isiXhosa praise word, specifically coined by the legendary prophet Ntsikana,<sup>13</sup> who used it in his four Christian hymns. It compares roughly with the words “Alleluia” or “Hosanna”. The tenors sing the main tune (along with the oboe), again using the isiXhosa words “Nkosi yiba nenceba” (“Lord, have mercy”). The choice of the word

<sup>11</sup> I was influenced and inspired by recordings of *mbira* players by Paul Berliner. See Shona *mbira* music, recorded in Mondoro and Highfields (Zimbabwe) (2002), Nonesuch Explorer Series 7559-79710-2.

<sup>12</sup> Andrew Tracey introduced me to this type of Zimbabwean shaker.

<sup>13</sup> Ntsikana Gaba (1760 – 1821) was a Xhosa Christian prophet who is still famous today for four hymns. The words and music of these hymns are characteristically Xhosa in style and imagery.

“Ahomna” as a background to the main text has liturgical significance. The original *Kyrie* text in Greek may have been derived from an obeisance phrase offered by subjects of a monarch as they approached the throne (often prostrate or on their knees). The underlying meaning, though, was that the king or queen had the subject’s life in their hands, hence “have mercy” (Taylor, 2010:20). In the Christian context this same posture is adopted, but in this case the worshippers approach God believing that their lives are in God’s hands. Using a praise word like “Ahomna” in the background, provides the context of being in the presence of God praising and worshipping on bended knee.

There is another deeper layer of meaning. In Shona society *mbira* playing almost always accompanies ritual ceremonies where their ancestors are invoked, often through a trance. The mesmerising and undulating music induces this trance-like state. As Berliner has observed, “At religious ceremonies the instrument is thought to have the power to project its sound into the heavens, attracting the attention of the ancestral spirits (Berliner, 2002:6).” The *Kyrie* seeks to position the worshipper in a liminal space through the ostinato patterns, opening the unseen spiritual world to those who participate in worship. Both these movements appear at the beginning of a normal Eucharistic service (although in the mainstream liturgical tradition, the *Kyrie* precedes the *Gloria*)<sup>14</sup> and so they try, by implication, to give the worshipper a glimpse of the world infused with God.

The reprise of section “A” takes the original strands of melody and rhythm and subtly transforms them, imbuing them with a Handel-like quality (see example 8). This is especially true of the cello part that bounces in a Baroque manner through to the end. In essence, this is an acknowledgement that Western influences have crept into African music through the tonic sol-fa movement introduced by Victorian missionaries. Tonic sol-fa editions of Handel’s oratorios made them accessible for performance in black communities.

The contrasting “B” section is a musical reflection on isiXhosa musical traditions. In it the second violin is required to strike the A-string with the back of the bow (*col legno*) in imitation of the isiXhosa *uhadi* bow (see picture in Appendix).<sup>15</sup> While the second violin plays a fairly characteristic rhythmic pattern on the notes A and B, the other string players create harmonics around these notes, imitating what may arise if an *uhadi* player desires these harmonics to accompany a melodic phrase. Above this the choir sings the isiXhosa words “Kriste yiba nenceba” (“Christ, have mercy”) to an adaptation of a local lullaby *Tutu mama* (see original tune and text compared with my adaptation below: examples 9 and 10). The altos and tenors use overtone singing to imitate the same technique that is used by numerous Xhosa singers when being accompanied by the bow.

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<sup>14</sup> In *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989* the *Gloria* was placed at the beginning of the service, very much like the liturgy of the Church of South India. The theological implication is that one comes into the presence of God with a song of praise and then approaches the throne on bended knee crying, “Lord, have mercy”.

<sup>15</sup> Usually an *uhadi* bow creates only two fundamental notes, a tone apart, e.g. A and B. A skilled player will highlight different overtones through the positioning of the resonating calabash (Dargie, 1982:13).

Example 8 – Transformed *mbira* strands (shaker, string quartet and tenor, bars 104 - 107):

104

T

Sh.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

*f* Nko - si, Nko -

Example 9 – Original *Tutu mama* melody (transcribed by Andrew Tracey – handwritten sheet music)

Tu tu ma - ma tu tu mtan Lo\_ mtan u-la - hle\_ ki - le, lo\_ mntan u-la - hle\_ ki - le, lo\_ mntan u-la - hle\_ ki - le. Tu tu ma - ma

Example 10 – Adapted *Tutu mama* melody for “Kriste nenceba” (soprano soloists, 65 – 70):

The singer should slide between the notes with a diagonal line between them.

Soloist 1

Soloist 2

*mp* Kre - stu, Kre - stu, yi - ba nen-ce - ba. Kre - stu, Kre - stu,

Soloist 1

yi - ba nen-ce - ba. Kre - stu, Kre - stu, yi - ba nen-ce - ba.

Symbolically the juxtaposition of Shona and Xhosa cultures in the piece is an artistic statement against xenophobia.

## 5. Credo

The Credo is the central movement of the work both structurally and textually. As a separate piece it is rich in symbolism. The text is an adaptation of the Baptismal Creed<sup>16</sup> translated into Latin by retired professor of classics at Rhodes, David Gain.

Credo et confido in Deum patrem creatorem mundi,  
Credo et confido in Jesum Christum redemptorem generis humani,  
Credo et confido in spiritum sanctum, animatorem populi Dei,  
Credo et confido in unum Deum, patrem, filium et spiritum sanctum. Amen.<sup>17</sup>

[I believe and trust in God the Father who creates the world.  
I believe and trust in Jesus Christ who redeems humanity.  
I believe and trust in the Holy Spirit who gives life to the people of God.  
I believe and trust in one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.]

As a statement of faith, it has been recommended for use at the weekly celebration of the Eucharist by the eminent South African scholar and priest, John Suggit (Suggit, 1993:10). The reasons Suggit gives for the appropriateness of the creed for the twenty-first century, is that it is far more dynamic in conceptualisation, not relying on Greek philosophical constructs (which the Nicene and Apostles' Creed are steeped in). It also has the beauty of the added words "and trust" rather than simply, "I believe...". Perhaps this is in keeping with the man of the epileptic boy who is healed by Jesus. According to Mark's Gospel, the boy's father says, "I believe, help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24). In a world that struggles to stomach faith in an unseen God, sometimes absolute belief is tempered by an inherent child-like trust, which is linked more to relationship than the cognitive reasoning of belief.

Alongside these words I have placed a short phrase in the San language, "!Ke e: /xarra //ke", which means "diverse peoples unite" - the motto of South Africa. The motto of a secular state unfolds within Christian doctrine creating space for xenophobia to be mediated – space for reflection and contemplation.

From a musical point of view there is one major compositional cell that permeates the opening and closing sections of the piece. It is directly linked to the San phrase mentioned above. This particular

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<sup>16</sup> The Baptismal Creed is a statement peculiar to the Anglican Church of Southern Africa in its *Anglican Prayer Book 1989*. It is a conflation of the answers to the traditional questions posed to the parents, godparents or baptismal candidates just before the actual baptism occurs.

<sup>17</sup> The adaptation is in keeping with contemporary notions of the Holy Trinity as a community of reliance and equality, ideas that resonate when dealing with the root issues surrounding xenophobia.

phrase has both tonal and rhythmic inflections, which can be represented musically as follows:



The phrase may be heard spoken by a native San speaker at the following website: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNOpUPlqxY>. As a motive it is explored by the string quartet and the choir and, in the closing section, is developed slightly for variety, but still maintains its basic shape.

While this short motive is developed, another is linked with it, producing the rhythmic vitality of the opening and closing sections:



The meta-rhythmic pulse is a strongly delineated three pattern, but, like a lot of Southern African music, a competing subpulse of two is introduced in the shaker part (Dargie, 1982:10 - 14) (see example 11).

The choir's repetition of the word "Credo" to a step-wise melody with parallel harmony highlights a characteristic reminiscent of Southern African music (Bethke, 2018). It is worth noting that the melody for the credal text is only African-like in that it tends more towards downward movement as opposed to upward inflections, the latter being part of a Western musical notion that generally

Example 11 – Competing three against two rhythm, choral ostinato and descending tenor melody (bars 37 – 43):

favours balancing of upward and downward melodic movement (Dargie 1982:13). Here I created a texture that is fairly common in local music where a soloist sings above a choral ostinato pattern. The instrumental accompaniment is inspired by a compositional technique evident on a recording by the internationally acclaimed Kronos Quartet. Their 1992 album *Pieces of Africa* features a work by Dumisani Maraire, which uses similar techniques,<sup>18</sup> although I have moulded the motives I am using to match the overall texture.

The middle section of the piece seeks to represent the hymn-singing tradition of Africa and is in a conventional four-part harmony structure. However, the harmonisation is almost entirely parallel motion between the parts. Occasionally particular parts pre-empt the main entry of the rest of the choir, very similar to local performances of hymns where a song-leader may come in ahead of the rest of the congregation to keep the rhythm alive. This is deliberate. The words in this section speak of Jesus, the incarnation of God, and the hymn singing style is used to glorify this aspect of Christian belief.

The middle section is accompanied by short bursts of the two melodic patterns discussed above, which brings unity to the piece as a whole. The “beat cushion” or *ipampampa* (isiXhosa) is used by the percussionist in a manner congruent with a congregational performance technique, highlighting the first and second beats. The climax of the movement arrives in bar 115 after considerable motivic preparation. The musical meaning of this movement is twofold. Firstly, by including the San motto, the South African listener is reminded that his/her ideal is to remain united as a people despite our diversity. The rhythmic setting of the words shows that the process of accepting the “other” is creative and invigorating. The second is the deep spiritual undertones that emerge in the choice of words in the creed. They present a God who is active and present rather than distant.

## 6. Sanctus

In this movement I fuse Sotho rhythms with African-Western hybrid melodic patterns. The characteristic downward melodic contours of Southern African local music and Western ideas such as melodic/harmonic climax, as well as tonal modulation are fused. The text is in Afrikaans – a language developed in South Africa (Western in structure but with many local components). The translation comes from the Afrikaans version of *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989*. Significantly, the use of Afrikaans and African-like musical texture juxtaposes two cultures that would have been considered as polar opposites during apartheid.

The opening motivic cell is a determinative feature of the work. Its rhythm is one that I have found in a Sotho song, originally a wedding song, but adapted for use in Christian settings as a Eucharistic hymn (“Haleluya! Pelo tsa rona” – see examples 12 and 13). In this song the simple triple metre is divided in the middle of each bar visually rendering two principal dotted crotchet beats though every second strong beat falls on a “weak” part of the bar creating a syncopation. Occasionally I have allowed the two-beat simple triple pattern to be followed by the standard three-beat one, i.e. compound duple alternating with simple triple; re-arrangement of six quaver pulses per bar). This symbolically represents how xenophobic violence is not in keeping with traditional values of African solidarity and *ubuntu*.

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<sup>18</sup> *Pieces of Africa*, Kronos Quartet (1992), Elektra Nonesuch 7559-79275-2 [track 12].

Example 12 – Original Sotho “Haleluya! Pelo tsa rona” (Nyberg, 1984:33):

Ha - le - lu-ya! Pe-lo tsa ro-na, di tha - bi-le ka-o-fe la.

Example 13 – Derivative rhythmic pattern from Sotho song in the *Sanctus* (string quartet parts, bars 1 – 2):

Violin 1  
Violin 2  
Viola  
Cello

The second section provides an evocative melodic phrase, which alludes to Southern African music. It is not based on an existing melody but is inspired by local music based on a pentatonic scale (with tonal centre on D) and descending melodic contours (see example 14). The accompanying figure in the cello follows *uhadi* bow harmonisation practice based on two adjacent tones, while the oboe introduces a parallel descant a perfect fifth above the viola melody. The vocal melody is much slower and hymn-like when compared with the viola/oboe melody and is similar to what appears on several

Example 14 – Pentatonic melody with *uhadi*-like accompaniment and parallel fifth imitation in the oboe (oboe, viola and cello, bars 47 – 54):

Ob.  
Vln. 2  
Vla.  
Vlc.

Example 15 – Build-up to the climax and the “Hosanna in die Hoogste” melody (bars 123 – 130):

The musical score for Example 15 consists of two systems of staves. The first system covers bars 123 to 130, and the second system covers bars 131 to 130 (likely a typo for 134-140). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4.

**System 1 (Bars 123-130):**

- Ob.**: Oboe part, starting with a rest in bar 123, then playing a melodic line with accents.
- Vln. 1**: Violin 1 part, playing a melodic line with accents.
- Vln. 2**: Violin 2 part, playing a melodic line with accents.
- Vla.**: Viola part, playing a melodic line with accents.
- Vlc.**: Violoncello part, playing a melodic line with accents.
- S**: Soprano voice, singing "Ho - san - na in die hoog - ste! Ho - san - na in die hoog - ste!"
- A**: Alto voice, singing "Ho - san - na in die hoog - ste! Ho - san - na in die hoog - ste!"
- T**: Tenor voice, singing "Ho - san - na in die hoog - ste! Ho - san - na in die hoog - ste!"
- B**: Bass voice, singing "Ho - san - na in die hoog - ste! Ho - san - na in die hoog - ste!"

**System 2 (Bars 131-130):**

- Ob.**: Oboe part, playing a melodic line with accents.
- Vln. 1**: Violin 1 part, playing a melodic line with accents.
- Vln. 2**: Violin 2 part, playing a melodic line with accents.
- Vla.**: Viola part, playing a melodic line with accents.
- Vlc.**: Violoncello part, playing a melodic line with accents.

The score includes dynamic markings such as *ff* (fortissimo) and *f* (forte), and articulation marks like accents and slurs. The lyrics are "Ho - san - na in die hoog - ste! Ho - san - na in die hoog - ste!" repeated across the vocal parts.

occasions on the Kronos Quartet CD mentioned above.<sup>19</sup>

The final section is the same as the opening, with a short coda to allow for the words “Hosanna in die hoogste” (Hosanna in the highest). The build-up to the coda is based on the opening motive, which is slightly truncated as it draws to the climax (bars 126 – 131, see example 15). The melody for these words is new motivic material and is harmonised in parallel fashion.

## 7. Benedictus

Departing from the typical Southern African musical style the *Benedictus* admits another African influence – Arabic culture. The Arabic ventures into East Africa left such a cultural legacy that Swahili, the language spoken through most of East Africa, contains numerous Arabic words, for example, *safari* (Arabic for “travel”).<sup>20</sup> Also, in some parts, the Arabic musical tradition is still held in high esteem, as in Zanzibar (Kiel, 2005:1). Usually Tanzania (which includes Zanzibar) would not be considered a part of Southern Africa, but it is a member of the Southern African Development Community. More importantly, though, the inclusion of Arabic/Islamic musical style in a piece like this also opens a bridge of tolerance between South Africans and people from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Somalia who were targeted in xenophobic attacks. At the second performance of this piece, the Arabic style was of particular significance. As described in the introduction, the work was written as a response to xenophobic attacks in South Africa. Until October 2015, those attacks had not occurred in Grahamstown. However, two weeks before the performance, violence against foreigners flared up in this region.<sup>21</sup> The attacks were aimed at Pakistani and Bangladeshi business owners.<sup>22</sup> Most of these people are Muslim, and so the inclusion of this style proved somewhat prophetic.

There are two languages in this movement. The first part of the text is set in Latin and means “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord”. The twinning of Latin and the Arabic style is reminiscent of cultural interaction during the late Middle Ages when traders were bringing Arabic culture and goods to Europe through port cities like Venice. Symbolically the text invites the listener to welcome the one who comes from “beyond” (the “other”) – in this case Arabic peoples living in South Africa. The use of Setswana for the second part of the text “Hosanna in the highest”, situates the work firmly in the South African context.

The string quartet, oboe and percussion imitate a *taarab*<sup>23</sup> band, the viola with its resonant alto register producing the characteristic sound of the oud (fretless Arabic lute – see Appendix for a

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<sup>19</sup> See in particular track 12: *Pieces of Africa*, Kronos Quartet (1992), Elektra Nonesuch 7559-79275-2.

<sup>20</sup> See <http://baheyeldin.com/linguistics/list-of-swahili-words-of-arabic-origin.html>.

<sup>21</sup> See <http://www.grocotts.co.za/content/desperate-plight-displaced-residents-24-10-2015>.

<sup>22</sup> See <http://www.grocotts.co.za/content/foreign-nationals-moved-safety-after-attacks-grahamstown-21-10-2015>.

<sup>23</sup> *Taarab* is a musical genre most prevalent in Tanzania and Kenya. It is a fusion of East African, North African, Middle Eastern and Indian musical styles.

picture). *Taarab* style, like other African music, often builds up melodic and rhythmic texture in a slow repetitive progression. This is what I have tried to accomplish in the opening of the *Benedictus* – see example 16. After this initial build-up, a short drum solo ushers in the baritone solo. The soloist engages with the instruments in a type of conversation that builds up in intensity. The melodic patterns of the instruments increase in complexity as the piece progresses so that an arabesque-like texture emerges (see example 17). Symbolically these intricate strands represent the diverse “polyphony” of a society like South Africa’s. While the sound may be chaotic and energetic, it still is pleasing to the ear. Likewise, South Africa’s diverse people can unite in a similar way, each sharing their own unique cultural strengths to enhance the whole. The filigree counterpoint gradually gives way to the opening “oud” theme, which is shared by the quartet. Finally, the soloist bursts in with “Hosanna” and the instrumentalists push the movement to its energetic close.

The harmony is based in A minor throughout with semitone, non-chord notes as inflections, often creating “turn-like” motives (representing as closely as possible the small intervallic shifts capable on Arabic instruments) – see example 18.

Example 16 – Imitation of the oud on the viola (bars 1 – 6):

The image shows a single staff of music in bass clef, 4/4 time. It begins with a *pizz.* marking above the first measure. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes with some triplets. A *mp* dynamic marking is placed below the first measure. The key signature has one flat (B-flat).

Example 17 – Filigree texture between baritone soloist, oboe and string quartet (bars 69 – 73):

The image shows a multi-staff musical score for bars 69-73. The staves are labeled Bar. (Baritone), Ob. (Oboe), Drum, Vln. 1 (Violin 1), Vln. 2 (Violin 2), Vla. (Viola), and Vlc. (Violoncello). The Baritone part has lyrics: "Be - ne - dic - tus. qui ...". The Oboe part features complex triplet patterns. The Drum part has a steady eighth-note pattern with accents. The Violin 1 part has a melodic line with triplets and a *mp* dynamic. The Violin 2 part has a similar melodic line. The Viola part has a sustained note with a *mf* dynamic. The Cello part has a sustained note. The key signature has one flat (B-flat).

Example 18 – Semitonal, non-chord inflections (1<sup>st</sup> violin, bar 62):



Unlike the other movements, the Benedictus is not in three sections and it is particularly short and sharp. This is intentional. In Anglican liturgy, the Benedictus was left out completely quite early on in its worship history. It only returned much later in the twentieth century, but even now in some prayer books it is an optional extra. When performed in a liturgical setting, the Sanctus and Benedictus would normally be performed one after the other. Excessively long settings would disturb the proceedings. In the Tridentine Mass, the consecration would have been said by the priest facing away from the people; since they could not hear what he was saying, composers wrote long settings of the *Sanctus* and *Benedictus* to cover the silence. Today, where the priest normally faces the people and can be heard, such excessively long settings are no longer required.

## 8. Agnus Dei

This movement is imbued with the Sotho musical idiom: the pentatonic scale and melody's descending trajectory. In this movement Sotho-like music and the language combine. To my ear the lyrical sound of spoken Sesotho contains many natural musical attributes, and the melody I wrote for the words strives to highlight these. The text for the opening and closing sections are the *Agnus Dei* from the Sotho translation of *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989*. When conceiving this particular movement, I asked a Sotho friend to say the words slowly and naturally so that I could get the tonal inflections and inner rhythmic patterns to fit the beauty of the spoken text. The first and final sections of this piece are an embodiment of that process. In essence, it tries to evoke the rolling mountains of Lesotho and the natural beauty that surrounds the people who live there, not unlike South Africa's Eastern Free State, which borders this landlocked country (see example 19). This fits with the text of the *Agnus Dei* ("Lamb of God: grant us your peace"). What a contrast to the violence associated with xenophobic violence!

Example 19 – Sotho text set to my own melody using a characteristic pentatonic scale (in the movement itself, the melody appears with short "call-and-response" sections):



The second section is in strong contrast to the first and last. It is a lively hymn tune that was introduced to me by the students at the College of the Transfiguration in Grahamstown. It originated in the Zionist Church, and is used to the words "Blessed assurance" in some congregations (Bethke, 2015) –

see example 20. In this setting, I have adapted the English words of the *Agnus Dei* to fit with the natural patterns of the melody. The harmonisation is not characteristic of the Zionist Church but more of West African Highlife music.<sup>24</sup> The theological idea here was to show that “peace” as a concept is not something necessarily slow and inert but can also be shown in joy and exuberance.

Example 20 – Zionist tune for “Blessed assurance” transcribed by the author:

9  
Blessed as - sur-ance. Je - sus is mine: — O what a for - taste of glo - ry di - vine!  
Heir of sal - va-tion. purchase of God: — Born of his Spi - rit — washed in his blood.  
This is my sto - ry, — this is my song, — Praising my Sav - our all the day long!

The third section returns to the quietness that was introduced at the beginning of the *Agnus Dei*, and brings this movement and the entire work to a gentle close. The two contrasting styles in this final movement signify a dream of peace, joy and exuberance where all people live together in harmony.

## 9. Conclusion

The complexities and brutality of contemporary South African society often demand creative responses from local faith communities. On the one hand, such communities still often represent divisions of the past, whether it be in style of worship or racial demographics. On the other hand, they function as crucibles of a new society based on radical equality and hope for a bright future. If local communities can acknowledge their past and focus on forging a new future through experimental theologising (either through preaching, community projects, or music and worship), the wounds of our broken humanity can begin the long process of healing. To ignore social phenomena such as xenophobia, which influence our collective identity, is a mistake. To gloss over them superficially is equally problematic. But, to take the initiative to address difficult issues as a community, striking at the core of social pain, and then striving to represent life as it could be, may be one creative way of ensuring a future for Christianity in a rapidly secularising context.

The *Chamber Eucharist* is such an initiative. The piece as a whole is rooted deeply within the community for which it was written. It holds together several cultural strands, both musically and textually, striving to stand in several cultural traditions simultaneously. Of course, like any cultural experiment, it runs the risk of over-simplifying one culture in favour of another. Such cultural biases are inherent in any work by a single composer, and no doubt will not stand the rigours of future theorists and theologians. And yet, the process of cultural exchange and negotiation that the composer

<sup>24</sup> Highlife is a musical genre that originated in Ghana at the beginning of the twentieth century. It is characterised by jazzy harmonies and up-tempo rhythms.

encounters while envisioning and 'building' such a work, inevitably changes him/her, and consequently the audience of the resultant music, gradually building cultural hospitality. The composer's aim in the *Chamber Eucharist* is to show that the intersection of widely differing cultures can yield something beautiful, something worthwhile, something that unites rather than divides. The meeting of cultures need not result in cultural clashes of continuous and violent misunderstandings. Instead, such meetings can be the catalysts for a flowering of cultural renewal and growth. Musicians have often been the agents of creative cultural interaction, sometimes sparking new movements of composition or theatre and even theology. It is my hope that the *Chamber Eucharist* will inspire others to engage with their local faith communities to produce a corpus of local music that addresses the unique contexts in which we find ourselves, so that we will find a voice that truly represents our diversity and celebrates the richness of our collective pasts. This is no easy task, but it is a fulfilling one.

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Uhadi bow: <http://www.kalimba.co.za/old/uhadi%20bow1.JPG> [Accessed 7 December 2015].

## APPENDIX

An *uhadi* bow:



<http://www.kalimba.co.za/old/uhadi%20bow1.JPG>

An *mbira*:



[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/35/Mbira\\_dzavadzimu.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/35/Mbira_dzavadzimu.jpg)

An *oud*:



[http://edtech2.boisestate.edu/bruceyounger/502/\\_images/oud\\_front.jpg](http://edtech2.boisestate.edu/bruceyounger/502/_images/oud_front.jpg)

A *kora*:



<http://www.nathaliecora.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/kora-2.jpg>