MISSION
in Global Community

GLOBAL ARTS AND CHRISTIAN WITNESS

Exegeting Culture, Translating the Message, and Communicating Christ

ROBERTA R. KING
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For the Lord of the harvest

To my students, colleagues, and global companions
who witness to Christ's glory and salvation through music and the arts

Contents

Series Preface

A mission leader in 1965, not too long ago, could not have foreseen what mission would look like today. In 1965 nations in the non-Western world were gaining their independence after centuries of Western colonialism. Mission societies from Europe and North America were trying to adjust to the new global realities where Muslim nations, once dominated by the West, no longer granted "missionary visas." The largest mission field, China, was closed. Decolonization, it seemed, was bringing a decline to missionary work in Africa and Asia.

On the home front, Western churches were in decline, and the traditional missionary factories—mainline churches in the West—were struggling with their own identities. Membership was then—and remains—in decline, and missionary vocations were following the same pattern. Evangelical and Pentecostal churches began to surpass mainline churches in mission, and then, just when we thought we understood the new missionary patterns, Brazilians began to go to Pakistan, and Malaysians began to evangelize Vietnam and Cambodia. Africans (highly educated and strongly Christian) began to move in great numbers to Europe and North America. Countries that had been closed began to see conversions to Christ, without the aid of traditional mission societies. And in the midst of this rapid transformation of missionary work, the alarm rang out that most Christians in the world were now in Asia, Latin America, and Africa rather than in the West.

What does it mean to be involved in mission in this new world where Christianity has been turned upside down in less than a century?

This series is directed at this new global context for mission. Fuller Theological Seminary, particularly through its School of Intercultural Studies (formerly School of World Mission), has been attentive to trends in global mission for over half a century. In fact, much innovation in mission thinking

and practice has emanated from Fuller since Donald McGavran moved from Oregon to California—as the first and founding dean of the then School of World Mission—to apply lessons about church growth learned in India to other areas of the world. Since that time many creative mission professors have provided global leadership in mission thinking: Ralph Winter (unreached people groups), Paul Hiebert (anthropology for mission), Charles Kraft (mission and spiritual dynamics), and Dudley Woodberry (Islamics), among others.

This series provides the most recent global scholarship on key themes in mission, written for a general audience of Christians committed to God's mission. Designed to be student, user, and textbook friendly, each volume contains voices from around the world speaking about the theme, and each chapter concludes with discussion questions so the books can be used for group studies. As the fields of mission are changing, shifting, or shrinking, the discussions connect the church and the world, East and West, North and South, the developed and developing worlds, each crossing cultural, political, social, and religious boundaries in its own way and knitting together people living and serving in various communities, both of faith and of other commitments—this is the contemporary landscape of the mission of God. Enjoy the challenges of each volume and find ways to live into God's mission.

Scott W. Sunquist
Amos Yong

Prelude

My Art, God's Mission?

It was in the midst of worship on a mountain in Galilee that Jesus commissioned his followers to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, all peoples, everywhere (Matt. 28:16–20). It was also in the midst of worship that God called me to move out in paths similar to those of the early disciples. I love worshiping God and longed to see peoples around the world come to love and worship him too. There was just one major question. How do music and the arts fit in with doing mission? Worship and witness form the bookends of God's interaction in the world today. This two-pronged dialogue with God in our lives lies at the heart of activating the gospel message. I struggled with this as I was first thrust out into mission.

My Story: Leaving on a Jet Plane

As I pressed my hand on the window of the plane to wave a final goodbye to family at Seattle's SEA-TAC airport, the question I had been asking over a long period of time remained at the forefront of my thoughts. Could God use me—a woman and a musician? The mission buzzword at that time was church planting, which rarely, if ever, included music and the performing arts as a medium for making Christ known. If it did, it was thought of as a one-time event, often at evangelistic services. Or one could go on a concert tour. Music and the performing arts were not considered a sustainable approach to doing mission in ways that reached into local communities, cities, and nations.

And yet, as the plane backed out of the gate, a flush of emotion came over me. A phrase haunted me from John Denver's pop song of the day, "Leaving on a jet plane, don't know when I'll be back again." It was a risk, flying off to Nairobi, Kenya, not knowing exactly how I would proceed. Yet at the same time there was a great sense of discovery and adventure. Psalm 73 had challenged me:

> Whom have I in heaven but You?
> And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.
> My flesh and my heart may fail,
> But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.
> . . . . . .
> But as for me, the nearness of God is my good;
> I have made the Lord GOD my refuge,
> That I may tell of all Your works. (vv. 25–26, 28 NASB)

I had claimed these verses as I spoke to my local church at the time of my commissioning service. They certainly expressed my sincere desire to draw close to God. Would I be able to follow through on my commitment? Would I be able to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and make my dwelling among a new people in incarnational ways that would bring glory to him (John 1:14), in ways that would make him known and followed through music and the arts? In the following years, I found myself on a musical safari. I had asked God to show me, and he answered in amazing ways, opening up unexplored pathways for witnessing to his goodness. He continues to lead me into arenas of witness that I never could have imagined when I departed so many years ago for East Africa. Indeed, over the last several decades, God has been raising up musicians and artists who are joining in the task of witnessing to the good news of Jesus Christ worldwide.

Where This Book Is Heading

The world of global arts today has expanded enormously. No longer are the arts limited to the high classical arts. Yet classical arts are still valued. Nor are the arts, when crossing cultures, limited to only traditional music, dance, and drama. Nevertheless, indigenous art forms are necessary and also highly desired. Our highly globalized world of the twenty-first century, with its interconnecting ties—social media, the internet, and YouTube—puts all art forms on the table, open to engaging with societies around the world. World music, for example, "is that music we encounter, well, everywhere in the world.

World music can be folk music, art music, or popular music; its practitioners may be amateur or professional."[1] Noted ethnomusicologist Philip Bohlman argues further that "the old definitions and distinctions don't hold anymore; world music can be Western or non-Western, acoustic or electronically mixed. The world of world music has no boundaries, therefore access to world music is open to all."[2] This translates to all arts in general, into what we are here calling "global arts." Global arts span a vast array, their diversity including music, dance, drama, storytelling, proverbs, and visual arts.

In some ways, such diversity is overwhelming. Both positive and negative aspects arise from the arts going global. On the one hand, they provide unique opportunities for bringing people together. On the other hand, there's a darker side: (1) a loss of cultural identity, (2) a homogenizing of village practices in which global spaces usurp those of the village, (3) exploitation of cultural resources by transnational recording companies, and (4) fusion and border crossing, which enhances some world music and art while also impoverishing others.[3] Yet at the same time such a plethora of arts creates exciting and challenging opportunities for witnessing to Christ.

This volume asks the following questions:

1. How do global arts engage in Christian witness?
2. What is the contribution of global arts to communicating Christ, making him known, worshiping him authentically, and following him faithfully?
3. What are the critical issues and hurdles that need to be overcome?
4. What artistic practices engage people in their everyday lives to hear the good news of Jesus Christ?

Why do we need such a volume? It is important since "the church, the body of Christ, has two basic purposes for its existence: worship and witness."[4] Indeed, the arts in worship play major roles in the life of the church and are readily embraced in many areas. But what about the arts in witness? Historically, this has been very spotty, pursued mainly by those who have a particular interest in the arts. My desire here is to help bring understanding of a powerful resource that God has provided—and that he employs himself—for interacting with his people worldwide. In this prelude I create a basic framework to guide our missional intentions throughout the book as a whole.

1. Bohlman, *World Music*, ix.
2. Bohlman, *World Music*, ix.
3. Bohlman, *World Music*, x.
4. Sunquist, "Church: The Community of Worship and Witness," 281.

I address the interrelationship between worship and witness, look at various psalms in light of the intimate link between the two, and cite a number of historical examples that highlight the need for developing effective practices for global arts in mission. Finally, chapter by chapter I lay out what the book is about.

Worship and Witness in Dialogue

Worship and witness make up two sides of the same coin. They are intimately linked. In worship, God initiates and engages with us. An interactive relationship is developed between God and those who bow before him. We then respond and engage with him in worship and prayer. At the same time, witness flows out of worship, where God calls us to join him in his kingdom purposes. We, his people, move out, initiate, contact, and engage with people in various contexts, both near and far, by communicating the goodness of God that we have experienced in our lives and celebrated in our worship.[5] Or at least that is what the Scriptures imply. However, when observing a coin, we look at only one side at a time. Our focus usually rests on our favorite side of the coin. We ignore or fail to remember what is on the other side. Historically, the church has excelled in using the arts in worship. This has truly been a joy for many people as they relate with God. The other side of the coin, however, is largely ignored, leaving a major "arts-in-witness" gap. Local, regional, and global arts in Christian witness have mostly remained hidden.

Perhaps a more helpful metaphor for worship and witness is that of call-and-response song, a foundational musical form practiced around the world. In it, for example, a lead singer calls out an initial musical thought, to be taken up by a group response. It is dialogical, experiential, and interdependent. If either the leader or the group fails to respond, the song stops, and there is no engagement. Indeed, the call-and-response genre can take many forms, some straightforward and simple, such as singing in exact imitation of the call, with other types of call-and-response developing into a highly complex organizational structure where the call is volleyed between the initiator and the responding singers, who then take up the call.[6] In this way I see worship and witness as a divine call-and-response where God is interacting with us in the midst of worship—asking, inviting, even commanding us to join him in engaging the nations, both near and far.

5. See Sunquist, "Church: The Community of Worship and Witness."

6. For a more detailed table of complex call-and-response patterns as practiced in sub-Saharan Africa, see King, *A Time to Sing*, 65–70.

We find this cyclical twofold pattern of divine call-and-response—worship and witness—practiced throughout the Scriptures. God calls out to us first. We respond with faith and then praise and thanksgiving. Interaction with God calls us further into witness. Engaging with God, where we call out to God in the midst of worship, leads to God responding and engaging with us, speaking to us, dialoguing with us, prompting and urging us into witness. Barnabas and Paul, for example, were called to mission in the midst of worship. As the early church was worshiping and fasting, the Holy Spirit identified and set apart Barnabas and Paul for the work of the Lord, to go out and reach peoples in regions beyond (Acts 13:2).

Furthermore, it is particularly striking that Jesus's last command to the disciples took place within the context of worship. Jesus had told the eleven disciples to meet him on a particular mountain in Galilee. Given the custom of the day, meeting on a mountain immediately implied that they were going to a place where they expected to worship (e.g., the woman at the well spoke of worshiping on the mountain rather than in Jerusalem, John 4:20). Matthew 28 tells us, "When they saw him, they worshiped him" (v. 17). As the disciples are worshiping, Jesus gives his final directive to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything" he has commanded. Jesus then assures the disciples of his continued presence and relationship with them as they are to go out and put into practice what he has asked of them (vv. 18–20). Recognizing that the Great Commission took place in a worship context expands and shapes our understanding of how God interacts with us. An encounter with God leads to worship, in which Jesus tells us of the roles we are to play. He tells us to get up and get going! He tells us to move out and make disciples among the nations, peoples of different regions of the world, beginning at home, in the local areas and regions, including going to "the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). When the disciples return to Jerusalem, "they all joined together constantly in prayer" (1:14), a form of worship.

I see two things happening here: first, worship precedes witness, and second, the call to witness takes place in the midst of worship, where one is soaked in worship. The call to witness does not allow us to stay put in one place, to limit our lives to dwelling in the sanctuary. Rather, we are told to go and make disciples, with the ultimate intention of bringing our neighbors back to join in the grand, global worship procession. Our interactions with the living God provide the bedrock for developing a passion for completing the task of making Jesus Christ known, followed, and worshiped. The twofold cycle then continues on.

This twofold cycle in practice, however, is in some ways more of a threefold cycle. Worship and the call to witness are often confined to the worship event. As we worship God, he speaks to us, telling us to go and make disciples, to witness. It's part of the Christian narrative. I believe, however, that the dialogue between worship and witness, when followed through in ways that push us beyond the walls of the church building, becomes more of a threefold cycle: (1) engaging with God in worship, (2) encountering and dialoguing with God in ways that push us out to witness, and (3) responding to God's call by taking it up and engaging with people about God outside the sanctuary. Such engagement is based on practices of witnessing to who God is, what he has done, and his saving grace. Engaging our neighbors, those near and far, leads to transformative encounters that initiate the most significant relationship in a person's life. Ultimately, engagement with our neighbors leads to encountering God, experiencing God, exploring life with God—all of which leads to joining local Christian communities in engaging with God in worship. In this way the fruit of witness generates enhanced worship, where the worshiping community rejoices in God's dynamic interaction in their midst. Scott Sunquist explains, "When they work in perfect harmony, the witness brings people to faith and brings them to worship the Triune God, and the worship moves people to confession, repentance, and then out to witness."[7]

The psalms offer rich and exemplary demonstrations of God's enhanced cycle of call-and-response—that is, worship and witness fleshed out and put into practice. Let's take a look.

The Psalms in Witness: Three Missional Gems

Throughout the centuries, the psalms have served believers as dynamic expressions of Christian experience and "vibrant portrayals of the divine and human encounter."[8] As one of the largest bodies of poetry-lyrics (an art form) in the Scriptures and located at the center of the Bible, the psalms are "passionately dialogical."[9] They immediately pull readers and listeners, singers and participants, into the inner recesses of a faith community's life of worship as they engage with God. We learn how to talk with God and make the praise and prayers of the psalms our own, pulling them into our own contexts and life issues. We learn from them that God is listening and calling out to us at the same time. Beyond that, "the Psalms make it possible to say things that are

7. Sunquist, *Understanding Christian Mission*, 283–84.
8. Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 8.
9. Brueggemann, *Praying the Psalms*, xiv.

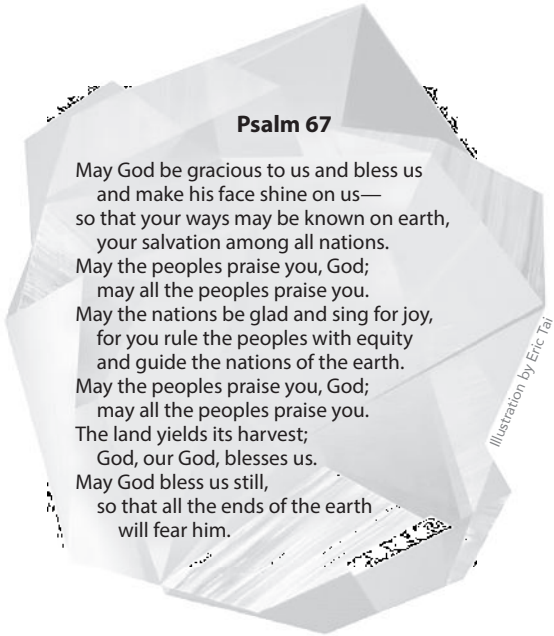
otherwise unsayable."[10] They give us license to raise deep, intimate issues of utmost importance to us. They teach us who God is and what he has done for us, and reveal God's thoughts toward us. And "as Luther understood so passionately, the Psalms are not only addressed to God. They are a voice of the gospel, God's good word addressed to God's faithful people."[11] The offering of praise, thanksgiving, and prayer forms an interlocking, dialogical means of engaging with God.

Three missional psalms I find especially strong in calling for witness to the gospel are Psalms 67, 96, and 98. While so much can be said about each psalm, I want to highlight five key elements that point to witness. These include (1) God's passion for the nations, (2) God's purpose in blessing a people, (3) the significance of "singing a new song," (4) each psalm's rootedness in its cultural context and everyday life, and (5) each psalm's method for praising and declaring God's glory and salvation.

God's passion for the nations. I am struck by how "drawing all nations" to worship and honor the Lord appears throughout the book of Psalms as a consistent theme. With great intensity, Psalms 67, 96, and 98 focus on blessing, praising, proclaiming, and declaring God's intervention in the lives of his people. Such psalms are not compartmentalized away from the main corpus of psalmic literature, but rather constitute a major integrating theme within Psalms and throughout the biblical narrative. In actuality, these psalms reveal God's radical passion for reaching the nations through the example of his involvement with the Israelites. It is striking how Psalms as a whole regularly expresses this passion for the nations, for all peoples, as a driving motivation. Indeed, it seems that the lyrical poets rarely, if ever, forget God's heart for the nations and the Israelites' divine calling to join God in making him known and followed. The psalms convey that one does not either worship or witness, compartmentalizing them from each other. Rather, their interlinking integration is a central lifestyle value. One worships to bless and to call the peoples of the world into praise and worship that acknowledges God's rule to the "ends of the earth" in ways that bring him honor and glory.

In each of these three psalms, the nations form an integral part of the worship dialogue. The psalmists speak to God and reflect on God's blessing in their lives and faith community and on the importance of making God's ways known on earth to lead to "salvation among all nations" (Ps. 67:2). The psalmist calls the faith community to "declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples" (96:3), and claims that the Lord has

10. Goldingay, *Psalms 1–41*, 22–23.
11. Brueggemann, *Message of the Psalms*, 15.



indeed "made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations" (98:2). Knowing God and his just ways is something that cannot be kept to one local community. It has to spill out into other communities and nations. There is no exclusivity here. God's glory is the community reaching out to include others. Indeed, there is a prayerful longing that "*all* the peoples praise you, God" (cf. Ps. 67:3, 5). Psalm 67 is particularly focused on praying that the nations and peoples come to praise God with increased intensity. The repeated chorus heaps phrases one upon another, calling them to praise that resounds with ever-increasing volume: "May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you" (vv. 3, 5). Drawing from cultural poetic forms, the psalm builds to a final grand crescendo, knowing that God's blessing on local worshipers is intimately linked to God's heart and desire for the nations, "so that all the ends of the earth will fear him" (v. 7).

Likewise, throughout Psalms 96 and 98, the whole world is urged to come to worship and praise God. Yet again the ultimate purpose appears to be making the goodness of God's work among all peoples a global reality—going global with God's call to faithful worshipers. Israel used these psalms, known as enthronement psalms, in its life as a worshiping community.[12] As

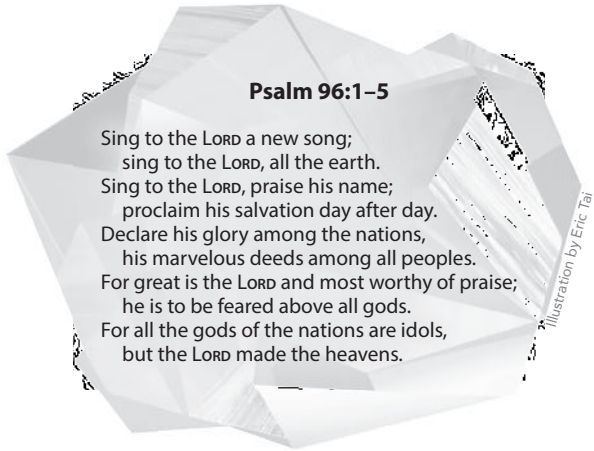
12. See Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 414, 420.

John Goldingay notes, "Yhwh has an eye on the whole world. Perhaps it implies a missionary commission to Israel."[13] We see this further when biblical scholars judge that Psalm 96:10 enunciates and is "the quintessential 'gospel announcement' of the entire Old Testament, that the nations are summoned to acknowledge YHWH as fully sovereign on earth."[14] The global horizon of this psalm, according to Walter Brueggemann, is already evident in the vista of verses 1–3—"all the earth," "among the nations," "among all peoples." Verses 7–9 further reinforce it with "families of nations" and "all the earth."[15] Witness among the nations is not only a high priority but also an imperative.[16] It emerges out of unselfish worship that focuses on God and his passion for all nations, for whom the global horizon extends to all peoples, even to the ends of the earth.

God's purpose in blessing a people. Unselfish worship and praise come about as a result of knowing the purpose of God's blessing among a particular people, the nation of Israel. Psalm 67, for example, provides one case in point. It is "a prayer for God's blessing to be known in the nation's life in such a way that the world as a whole comes to acknowledge God. The interrelationship of these two ideas thus continues from Pss. 65 and 66."[17] The psalmist declares, "May God be gracious to us and bless us, . . . so that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations" (Ps. 67:1–2). In other words, we bless God so that we may bless others. "The psalm sees Israel's blessing as designed to benefit the whole world. . . . That is a blessing emphasizing Yhwh's name. . . . And again thereby it draws attention to the universality of God's involvement with the world."[18] The central part of the psalm (vv. 3–5) emphasizes how all the peoples of the world are included in giving honor to God in praise and confessing his sovereignty. Goldingay tells us, "Indeed, they are not merely confessing and realistically acknowledging how things are but rejoicing and resounding: that is, resounding with joy. They know that it is indeed true that God's blessing and delivering of Israel is also good news for them."[19] A genuine celebration of God's blessing extends into the global horizon for each people's benefit. The reason for such celebration in the "broad sweep of praise (v. 4) is that YHWH is a judge who will bring all nations to justice, well-being, and peace."[20]

13. Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150*, 108.
14. Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 415.
15. Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 415.
16. See Kaiser, "God's Purpose for Mission in the Psalter of Israel."
17. Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 299.
18. Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 304.
19. Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 302.
20. Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 290.

The significance of "singing a new song." Singing a new song comes as a result of God's active involvement and blessing among all peoples, acting so powerfully that it calls for a new song. A new song emerges out of dialogue and interaction with the living God, in which many peoples experience God's blessing on them. Its purpose, as in Psalms 96 and 98, is to communicate with God, based on a particular people's new understandings of who God is and what he has done among them. Goldingay surmises that "the implication might then be that for the nations a new song is appropriate because they are now becoming aware of facts about Yhwh that they had not known before. Praising Yhwh will mean singing a song they have not sung previously, a new song that will reflect their 'new orientation.'" This presents a stark contrast to what is actually practiced in worship and witness around the world. When making his point, Goldingay nails it that the psalms repeat the exhortation about "singing a new song" a number of times (and they never say, "Let's sing a golden oldie!").[21] This point has extensive ramifications for witness through global arts.



In addition, Brueggemann argues for a linkage between "new song" (Ps. 96:1) and "tell" (Ps. 96:2 NRSV). "The 'new song' points to a new reality while the verb 'tell' most likely means to tell the news, which in the church is rendered as gospel." He notes further: "The interface of new and gospel means to announce (enact?) the new rule of God. . . . In Christian usage [it is used] to relate the newness of the gospel to the proclamation of the kingdom of God and the utterance of Jesus"[22] (see Mark 1:14–15). Applying this to

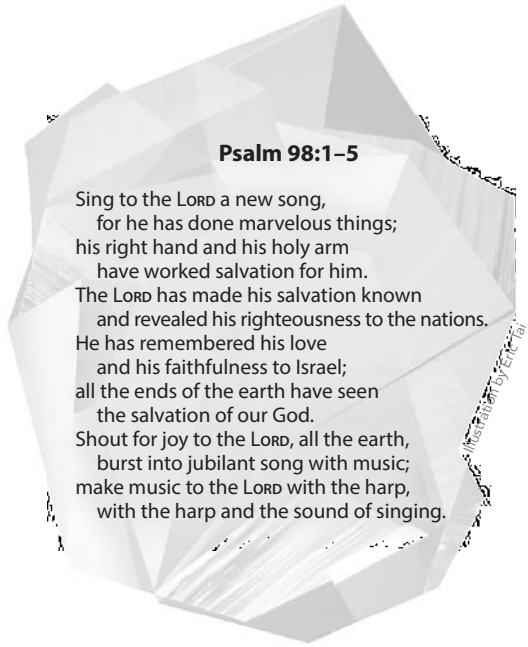
21. Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150*, 103.
22. Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 417.

today's ever-increasingly globalized world, singing a new song is dialogical and experiential as the gospel is proclaimed among the peoples in local, regional, and global cultural contexts. The practice of singing a new song changes and morphs in culturally appropriate expressions in order to embrace all peoples in meaningful ways.

The psalms' rootedness in their cultural context and everyday life. The psalms assume their cultural context. Indeed, when the Israelites are displaced and away from home, they feel ill at ease as they lament, "How can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land?" (Ps. 137:4). The Israelites inherently drew from their local and regional cultural arts within their contexts. That is, psalms functioned as languages that were at their disposal in their everyday lives in order to communicate with God. Three observations can be made here. First, Psalms 96 and 98, scholars think, were regularly employed during festivals and processions at different times of the year. They played a normal part in the Israelites' engagement with God in worship and were naturally accessible to them. Second, the interrelationship between praise and prayer points to practices of spirituality that reveal key values and a worldview in the song genres employed. The genres include psalms of "praise, thanksgiving, protest, trust, and obedience."[23] Goldingay aptly notes that the psalms do not appear in any systematic order. Rather, they are "all mixed up in the Psalter—it does not give us the praise psalms, then the thanksgiving psalms, then the prayer psalms, and so on. The Psalter mirrors and affirms our disordered lives."[24] The psalms defy discrete categories because life and our need for prayer and praise defy compartmentalization. Psalms emerge out of the contexts and crises of our lives as these realities intersect and dialogically engage with God.

Third, Psalm 98 also provides a taxonomy of local instruments intended to bring praise to God. The instruments are not imported; they belong to their local music culture. With great enthusiasm, everything available to the Israelites is meant to explode with joyful praise before the Lord. This moves from shouts for joy to jubilant songs with music. Note that in Middle Eastern practices, music is made with instruments. Singing is not considered music; it is the instruments that make music. This underscores the fact that musical instruments are also to engage in jubilant praise and worship. Indeed, music-making incorporates the harp with the sound of singing (v. 5) and "trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn" along with shouts of joy (v. 6). Notice how "shouts" and the sounds of nature, in contrast to contemporary Western

23. Goldingay, *Psalms 1–41*, 67.
24. Peterson, *Answering God*, 107.



definitions of music, are also included in the great crescendos of praise and worship of the king. Thus, in all these ways we see that the psalms, grounded in relationship with God, are rooted in the contexts of everyday life as practiced by Israel.

The psalms' method for praising and declaring God's glory and salvation. We have seen, then, that the psalms testify to who God is and to what he has done in the midst of his people. They set a model for witness through the global arts as they reach out to all the nations worldwide. Through interactive praises and prayer, Israel is dialoguing with God so that his character appears on heightened display before the nations. And artistic engagement accomplishes all this.

In witness, one of the major goals is to introduce people to who God is and how he is ready to become involved in the lives of people worldwide. Old Testament scholars attest that theologically the psalms are "the densest material in the entire Old Testament. . . . There is a greater concentration of statements about God here than anywhere else."[25] When nonbelievers are learning about God, they often need concrete examples of how believers relate with God. The psalms—and, I believe, other artistic forms—model before a

25. Goldingay, *Psalms 1–41*, 69.

nonbelieving world that God is involved with his people. Music and global arts have the powerful ability to raise theological content to the surface that would not otherwise be open for discussion. Additionally, the psalms (and other art forms) provide accessible spaces for individuals and communities to see, hear, and engage in the interactive, dialogical relationship between God and humanity. For Israel, this takes place in the midst of worship, worship that engenders witness beyond national boundaries. Thus, testifying to God and accompanying theological insights are on heightened display in the midst of worship as it pushes out to engage our neighbors near and far.

Not only do the psalms teach us how to praise and pray, but they also set a model for engaging in worship and witness. Knowing God lies at the heart of the psalms as they "speak from God by showing us how to speak to God."[26] In particular, "singing new songs" facilitates processing peoples' encounters with God. Peoples' newly acquired depth of relationship becomes dynamic expressions of Christian experience that testify to the character of God and his missional involvement throughout the world. In a contemporary world longing for meaningful spirituality, the book of Psalms becomes then a "manual for spirituality, for relationships with God,"[27] and thus witness to who he is. As God's Word, the psalms cannot help but "spill over into the larger horizon of other peoples."[28] As a dialogical art form, they offer key guidelines for effectively telling God's story worldwide.

This is good news for missions and churches, for musicians and artists who want to join in effective, dynamic witness. Yet, when put into practice, it is more complex, filled with unimagined potholes that can sabotage our efforts. The following section discusses three of the most common potholes—false assumptions—that lead to unintended gaffes and gaps in witness through the arts.

False Assumptions: Gaffes and Gaps in Employing Global Arts

So, how do we go about declaring God's glory via global arts? If the arts are universal, is there really a need to consider how they should be employed? Isn't it just a matter of plug and play? Surprisingly, in the history of Christian mission, employing global arts in witness has often met with confusion, the hardening of hearts away from the gospel, and, above all, misunderstanding who God is: a God of love and compassion toward all peoples and a God who

26. Goldingay, *Psalms 1–41*, 23.
27. Goldingay, *Psalms 1–41*, 58.
28. Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 291.

desires relationship with us. Abundant gaffes and gaps show up throughout contemporary mission history. Historically, when moving out cross-culturally, large numbers of missionaries were not aware that global arts are context-specific. That is, each cultural group defines, derives meaning from, and employs its art forms in contrasting ways. The intentions behind using the arts in witness were well-meaning, yet a lack of informed approaches to employing the global arts contributed to miscommunicating the gospel or presenting a truncated gospel.

Three initial ways that global arts have been inadvertently misused lie in the areas of meaning, aesthetics, and metaphorical association. First, the relationship between language and musical tones, for example, determines the meaning of song lyrics. Tone languages (in which variations in pitch distinguish different words) are spread throughout the world, especially in Asia, such as Mandarin (and its dialects) and Thai, and across sub-Saharan Africa. Stories are told of how the text of a song such as "Precious Name, Oh How Sweet," when translated into a tone language, had the meaning changed to "Well-done chicken, oh, how sweet." Another lyric, "In heaven, there is no sorrow," meant to give comfort, was heard by the people as "There is no egg on the bicycle!" One missionary working in West Africa realized that the tone of the language made hymns unintelligible. He reworked the melodies of the songs so that they could be sung. On the first day, the church was so excited to have the new hymns. But then they began singing them. They stopped and told the missionary, "We can't sing these hymns! We can understand them. We're not supposed to be able to understand the words when we're in church!"[29]

Second is the area of aesthetics. Everyone loves a good song, right? Yes, but according to whom is the song good? Among the Cebaara Senufo of Côte d'Ivoire, the Western missionary leading the local translation team as they worked on the book of Revelation wanted to give a musical example of God's glory. He sang Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" from the *Messiah* and was stunned at the lack of enthusiasm that greeted him. The local believers on the team were reticent to speak up and tell him what was going on. Finally, one of them revealed the problem, asking, "Why is all of your music crying music?"[30] What is glorious and beautiful to one person from one particular culture does not automatically transfer over to peoples who have different aesthetic standards. We also see this in churches today between generations

29. Examples are part of my personal collection of gaffes and gaps acquired over many years.

30. For a discussion of music communication issues, see King, *Pathways in Christian Music Communication*.

where the aesthetics, or what are called "heart" languages, have changed over a period of time due to the dynamic nature of cultures and societies.

The third area of misuse that has caused enormous misunderstanding is that of metaphorical associations. The use of Western art forms contributed to the overall problem of the gospel coming clothed in Western wrappings. Many people thus translated art forms into the understanding that the Christian God is foreign and not relevant to local peoples. Why should they believe in a foreign god when they already have their own gods to contend with? For example, if the gods speak to a Peruvian people in Peru through their drums, why does the Christian God not speak to them in a similar musical language? The stories do not stop there; they keep going. Sadly, the overabundance of gaffes-and-gaps stories includes all art forms—music, dance, drama, storytelling, proverbs, and visual arts. These few examples highlight the need for learning about global arts with a view to understanding the hidden complexities inherent within the diversity of cultural arts available for making known among the nations what God has done (Ps. 96:3).

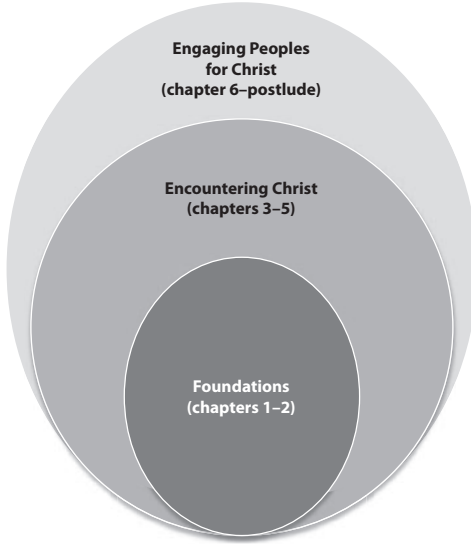
What This Book Is About

Throughout this work I argue that witness is dialogical and therefore relational; the arts excel in expressive dialogue, forging relational bonding in profound and persuasive ways. Witness through global arts provides a way of loving your neighbor as yourself and is incarnational. I also seek to show how the global arts tap into the deeper affective dimensions of people more directly than mere informational input alone. They communicate in profound ways and make a transformative impact. Thus global arts not only play an accompanying role to witness in general, but they also themselves preach and proclaim the gospel in multivocal ways with significant impact.

The intent of this book is to address the arts-in-witness gap. The global arts provide cultural arenas for mediating dynamic witness and wholehearted worship. They can move the church into embodied faith and culturally embedded practices that affect spiritual and social aspects of mission. Likewise, the arts possess profound abilities to symbolically capture values, reveal worldview themes, shape identity, and communicate with impact in culturally appropriate ways. While my main focus is on music and the performing arts, along with some visual input, other arts need further development as witness. Readers will be able to build on what I present here. Throughout this work, I point to biblical foundations located in Psalms, historical pathways, and theoretical frameworks for communicating Christ through the arts worldwide.

How This Book Is Organized

Music and the arts are multilayered and multidimensional. Powerful and full of impact due to their speaking beyond words, the arts are meant to be experienced. Writing about them is challenging and limits the extent of their dynamic impact. In order to unpack them, this work unfolds in a series of ever-widening, expanding concentric circles, with each chapter building on the preceding one. Each chapter is not compartmentalized in isolation from the next but rather is interlinked and interdependent. Three broad themes centered on witnessing to Jesus Christ through the global arts provide the book's three-part framework: (1) foundations in global arts and Christ-centered witness, (2) encountering Christ through global arts, and (3) engaging peoples for Christ via global arts. In addition to the text of each chapter, vignettes from the field, diagrams, photos, and my personal stories are integrated with the content as essential means to further unpack the complexities of witnessing cross-culturally through the arts.



How this book is organized

Foundations in Global Arts and Christ-Centered Witness

The first two chapters present foundations for understanding the essential roles that music and the arts play in faithful witness among all peoples. In chapter 1, I bring understanding about how to negotiate faith and culture.

When working with the arts cross-culturally, one of the first questions that people immediately ask is about culture. I show how the term "culture" is often misunderstood, especially in relation to the arts, and then I point readers to the three dimensions of culture that reveal the arts as expressive culture. The arts, as expressive culture, serve as life processors, languages of communication, and contextualizers. They form the resources and materials through which peoples engage, communicate, and encounter the living God. Creative contextualization, bringing the gospel message into a people's local setting through cultural arts, is taken up in the second half of the chapter.

Chapter 2 looks at music and the arts as expressive languages of communication. I address the misperception that all arts are universally understood. This becomes a hidden yet troublesome reality when witnessing and ministering cross-culturally and across generations. To help us understand and overcome such barriers, I present the cultural building blocks of communication, known as the twelve signal systems. The signal systems provide ways of learning how the arts function and communicate differently among contrasting peoples. I point to significant ways that the arts communicate, and I illustrate how they involve opportunities for negotiating with people for understanding Christ within varying cultural contexts.

Encountering Christ through Global Arts

The next three chapters build on one another as they examine transformative means for encountering Christ in context. Chapter 3 takes us deeper into unpacking cultural issues that launch us into reaching the nations through the arts. Cultural exegesis through music and the arts is a means to listening and learning about people's beliefs, faith, and experiences so that we can be more effective and relevant in our witness. The goal of communicating Christ by employing cultural arts (expressive languages) is to create understanding that overcomes the multiple barriers that have caused people to deem the gospel foreign or irrelevant. One of my greatest delights when communicating through the arts is to hear people say, "You mean that God is *for me*, too?" Drawing from my work among the Senufo of Côte d'Ivoire, I compare and contrast the difference it makes when cultural arts are redeemed for the purposes of the gospel. Then I analyze the Senufo case study and introduce readers to four key concepts drawn from the field of ethnomusicology that help us witness with deeper, transformative impact.

Building on cultural exegesis through the arts, chapter 4 reveals how the arts have always been involved in translating the gospel message. I introduce the reader to the concept of the arts as translatable "cultural texts" for interacting

with God. I develop this by first looking at several psalms and the ways in which God interacted with his people in the Old Testament and then show how the psalms are still being translated into cultural texts in relevant modes for the twenty-first century. I present ways contemporary biblical text translation and cultural text translation can join forces for transformed relationships *and* meaningful witness to surrounding communities. The practice of New Song Fellowships, a means of doing holistic translations of the Scriptures in which biblical texts are set to song through group composing with local believers, is explained. Translating cultural texts in tandem with biblical texts leads to translating God's message into the heart languages of a people in holistic ways. Based on "Abraham's Sacrifice and Nyarafolo Drums," a vignette on cultural text translation of the Genesis Abrahamic texts, I demonstrate how music and the arts foster an emerging church's engagement in understanding God's Word in culturally relevant and profound ways.

Chapter 5 takes translating the gospel message via cultural texts to the next level. The creative process of composing songs-in-context weaves together deeply profound lived experiences in light of the Scriptures as people try to make sense of God's presence in their lives. Active theologizing emerges from and fosters following Jesus, even in the midst of life's difficulties and when dealing with both joy and sorrow. The outcome results in witnessing to the goodness of God. A series of vignettes gives compelling evidence of how God is speaking to peoples worldwide through such processes. Two main streams of active theologizing discussed are emerging theologies (first understandings about God) and non-Western theologies of suffering from Ethiopia, Sudan, and China. The chapter closes by identifying key dynamics of interacting with the Scriptures via cultural texts and discussing how creative processes lead to creation of local hermeneutical communities of theological reflection.

Engaging Peoples for Christ via Global Arts

The final four chapters and the postlude present a series of missional practices, outlining and demonstrating incarnational witness through the arts. Missiologists and mission practitioners have long recognized the great potential of the arts. Yet they have not known how to approach them. Chapter 6 brings Christ-centered witness through the arts into everyday life, demonstrating how nonprofessional and professional artists alike can contribute to the mission task. Evelyne Reisacher, noted missiologist in Islamic studies, persuasively speaks to the need for "mission practices that are connected with the everyday realities of people, where people actually live and hurt and hope in local

communities. Witness happens in the most ordinary places and in contexts that mission has not yet imagined."[31] With this in mind, the chapter lays out initial pathways of the global arts that foster living Christianly on a daily basis, between the bookends of worship and witness. It first addresses the arts as public witness, providing examples of life-giving songs and music in medical contexts, the visual arts and drama in dealing with trauma and psychological pain, and ukuleles in prison ministry. We then turn to the arts in daily life as a means to growing in Christ, with particular focus on discipling youth and celebrating life cycles through newly created Christian rites.

Chapter 7 continues addressing the arts in daily life by focusing on the role of and methods for telling God's story, especially among oral and postliterate peoples, who make up 70 percent of the world's population.[32] Here I present significant factors in orality for the twenty-first century and highlight how critical storytelling, proverbs, song, and local visual art practices can be in addressing deeply embedded worldview issues. Such practices offer rival stories to people in need of transformation in various spheres of their lives. The chapter outlines key guidelines for telling God's story, with supporting vignettes from around the world.

Chapter 8 turns more specifically to interfaith issues that confront and affect our globalized twenty-first-century world. I explore the contribution of music and the arts in peacebuilding and interfaith dialogue among Muslims and Christians, arguing that bridge building can take place through exchanging and learning one another's art forms. The chapter addresses the questions "How do the creative arts foster loving our religious neighbors?" and "How do believers begin to engage with the newly arrived religious neighbors—for example, refugees and immigrants—coming from the Middle East into the Western world?" Based on my previous research in *(un)Common Sounds* and a recent case study of a church-sponsored benefit concert for Syrian refugees in Southern California, I introduce key concepts inherent in the global arts applied to peacebuilding and interfaith dialogue.[33] These include (1) creating musical spaces of relating, (2) *musicking*, and (3) encountering contrasting music-cultures. These become theoretical foundations for presenting a model of "dialogues of beauty and art" applied to interfaith contexts, specifically among Muslims and Christians. Built around the concept of musicking, the model specifies five dialogical arenas that occur simultaneously in the midst of music-making events. Vignettes and examples from Hawai'i, Israel, Libya, Indonesia, the United States, and Pakistan show how this is being practiced.

31. Reisacher, *Joyful Witness in the Muslim World*, xvii.
32. Jewell, "Winning the Oral Majority," 56.
33. King and Tan, *(un)Common Sounds*.

The next chapter (9) widens the lens to a much broader view of our global world. Globalization is snowballing worldwide. Culture and the arts are directly linked with the processes of globalization. Urban and transnational contexts bring together people in unlikely convergences of gatherings. From transnational festivals in Fez, Morocco, to multicultural, urban Christian gatherings in Australia, innovative relational bonding opportunities are taking place and point to new approaches for making Christ known and followed. As more local art forms, such as hip hop, ukulele playing, and whirling dervishes, go global through the media, a wider divergence of aesthetics and taste is evolving that gives voice, place, and identity to formerly marginalized peoples. The main focus in this chapter is on engaging cities in their hypermulticultural settings. I present a bird's-eye view of cities' thriving musical and artistic diversity, with corresponding shifts in concepts and practices of music and the arts. We first consider the global hip hop phenomenon, its messages of injustice, its theological components, and the significant role that graffiti art has contributed to church planting in the inner city of Los Angeles. The focus then widens further to the diasporas scattered throughout the city area and to the presentation of a schema for forging relational bonds through musical and artistic interaction.

Finally, the concluding postlude speaks to the interactive dynamics between the global arts and Christlike witness. Recognizing that the arts excel in expressive dialogue and relational bonding in profound and persuasive ways, in this chapter I invite you to reconsider and reimagine with me what that means for our expanding horizons in the twenty-first century. The chapter brings together essential markers and guidelines that form a road map for revealing God's glory and salvation to the far ends of the earth (Ps. 67:2). I identify and discuss three essential intersecting pathways in the pursuit of making Jesus Christ known and loved worldwide through the global arts: theological imperatives, shifts in perspectives, and emerging practices. I suggest that when inextricably bound together, like a lifeline, they foster navigating the journey toward Christ in ways that open windows to God's very nature, to encounter and faithfully follow him, and to authentic, wholehearted worship. Working in concert with the Holy Spirit, people are empowered to set out on a journey toward Christ, where they come to gaze on his beauty, seek his face, and, in the midst of brokenness, be overwhelmed with his glory (Ps. 27).

Long ago, as my plane pulled out of the gate heading for Nairobi, Kenya, I thought I was embarking on a journey to discover where and how God could use me, a woman and a musician, longing to serve him in mission. I did not realize that he was sending me on a journey that was at the vanguard of an emerging group of musicians and artists with similar passions. We've come

a long way. I invite you to join me in pursuing God's heart for the nations and learning how to join in God's call to make disciples of all nations via the global arts.

Questions for Discussion

1. How are worship and witness interlinked?
2. What do the psalms teach us about the arts and witness?
3. What are the two most important issues that you look forward to learning about in this book?