

# Gathered Here in the Mystery of Love Workshop

Friday, June 27<sup>th</sup>, General Assembly 2014  
Thandeka, David Ruffin and Shay MacKay

1. Spoken Word Opening - words from Hazrat Khan and *The Mysticism of Sound*
2. Thesis statement – Music is foundational in designing worship services and rituals that transform our souls. When we pay attention to the relationship between music and the spoken word, we can create worship that restores us to harmony with ourselves, our community and our world.
3. More words on harmony from Khan
4. Testimonials – We invite you to reflect on your experience during this morning’s service and write down *one sentence or statement* about how or what it made you feel, how it worked for you, what worked well. If I’ve asked you the wrong question, answer the right one about the positive experience you had this morning, or on another experience that has moved you in this way. Share in groups of 2-3 – no comments, 5 seconds of silence. Have a few folks go to microphone to share.
5. Intro to loss and need and what’s missing
6. Testimonials – Reflect on your experience of worships services in the past and write down *one sentence or statement* about something that didn’t work or feel right, an experience of disharmony or things being out of sync. Have a few folks go to microphone to share.
7. Thandeka’s Talk -

A major function of our Sunday services is to restore us to ourselves so that we have the strength and energy to stand ever anew on the side of love. This restorative work takes place when we pay special attention to three major elements in our Sunday services:

- a. Music
- b. The Spoken Word
- c. The back and forth movement between the music and the spoken word.

I call these three elements: The Three Components of Emotional Intelligence in our worship. Let’s focus our attention on the element that is usually missed in so many of our Sunday services, namely, the back and forth movement between music and words. Let’s pay attention to this movement because it is where the wondrous heart of our Sunday services is so often found – or lost.

In my sermon, I told the story of how Friedrich Schleiermacher – the father of liberal theology – found this place of coherence when affirming the importance of harmony between feelings aroused by music and thoughts created by our active and attentive minds.

What I didn't mention was that he failed to make this place of harmony and coherence the foundation of the liberal faith tradition he created. We can trace the results of his failure from the 19<sup>th</sup> century Unitarian transcendentalists – who celebrated and translated Schleiermacher's work into English – to us today.

Liberal religious services became corpse-cold. Here's how it happened. Schleiermacher consigned the study of emotions and the ability of humans to navigate them through music and the spoken word – to ethics and philosophy.

The study of human emotions, Schleiermacher insisted, is not a theological discipline. His theology, lacking this attention to the links between emotions and religious ideas, became a theology without an emotional foundation. And the study of liberal religion in liberal seminaries became the study and critique of religious ideas.

This is how Schleiermacher gave liberal theology a foundation no one could find. He placed the emotional foundation of liberal faith outside liberal theological studies. As a result, the history of liberal theology became the history of the critique of bad doctrine and an attempt to replace traditional religious creeds and beliefs with critical reasoning.

We do not pay attention to emotions. Which means we don't pay adequate attention to the way music – the language of emotions – functions in our services. As a result, our services become "corpse-cold" as Ralph Waldo Emerson noted almost two centuries ago – and they dare not last longer than an hour less we freeze.

We come to GA because we need and want the heat. We want our feelings kindled and sparked and our minds set ablaze. Thousands upon thousands strong we create this fire in our souls by going back and forth between musical extravaganzas and a treasure trove of spoken words.

We can create this kind of back and forth movement within our Sunday services at home. We can create services in which the music and the spoken word are in sync. We can develop our emotional intelligence, our ability to note the disconnection between what is said and what is felt, what is spoken and what is sung, – and correct it.

8. David's story of search to re-establish that in UU worship and creation of Praise group in living room. Sample of song they wrote.
9. Three things we do to retrieve what we've lost:
  - a. Notice the lack of synchronicity and harmony between components (especially music and spoken word) of our worship services and rituals. Notice also the lack of transitions between the various parts of the service.
  - b. Commit to creating a common goal with your ministry team (minister, music director, worship associates, pianist, DRE, etc.) in regards to using music and spoken word to develop synchronicity and harmony within your worship services.
  - c. Develop clear communication processes and intentional practices with your team to use in ensuring synchronicity within your liturgical design.

10. Testimonials – write down and share one thing you can and will do to ensure synchronicity in your future worship services and rituals.

11. Invitation to conversation, discussion, questions.

12. Sing together

13. Benediction

~ from *The Mysticism of Sound and Music* by Hazrat Inayat Khan

A person does not hear sound only through the ears; he hears sound through every pore of his body. It permeates the entire being, and according to its particular influence either slows or quickens the rhythm of the blood circulation; it either wakens or soothes the nervous system. It arouses a person to greater passions or it calms him by bringing him peace. According to the sound and its influence a certain effect is produced. Sound becomes visible in the form of radiance. This shows that the same energy which goes into the form of sound before being visible is absorbed by the physical body. In that way the physical body recuperates and becomes charged with new magnetism.

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Harmony is the source of manifestation, the cause of its existence, and the medium between God and man. The peace for which every soul strives, and which is the true nature of God and the utmost goal of man, is but the outcome of harmony. This shows that all life's attainments without a sense of harmony are but vain. It is the attainment of harmony which is called heaven, and it is the lack of it which is termed hell. The master of harmony alone understands life, and he who lacks it is foolish in spite of all other knowledge that he may have acquired.

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I should like to explain first what the word *spiritual* means. Is it goodness which may be called spiritual, or is it wonderworking, a power to produce miracles, or a great intellectual power? The answer is: No. The whole of life in all its aspects is one music, and to tune one's self to the harmony of this perfect music is the real spiritual attainment.

A person who is ready to appreciate and understand music and poetry, or beauty in any form. It is this which is the awakening of the soul, which is the living condition of the heart, and it is this which is the real spiritual attainment. Spiritual attainment is to make the spirit live, to become conscious.

Beauty is born of harmony. What is harmony? Harmony is right proportion, in other words, right rhythm. And what is life? Life is the outcome of harmony. At the back of the whole creation is harmony.

To attain spirituality is to realize that the whole universe is one symphony in which every individual is one note. Happiness lies in becoming perfectly harmonious with the symphony of the universe.

Music is the miniature of the whole harmony of the universe, for the harmony of the universe is music itself, and man, being the miniature of the universe, must show that same harmony. In his pulsation, in the beat of his heart, and in his vibration he shows rhythm and tone. Music helps us to train ourselves in harmony, and it is this which is magic, or the secret behind music. When you hear music that you enjoy, it tunes you and puts you in harmony with life. Music develops that faculty by which one learns to appreciate all that is good and beautiful. Music also produces that resonance which vibrates through the whole being. It lifts the thought above the denseness of matter; it almost turns matter into spirit, into its original condition, through the harmony of vibrations touching every atom of one's whole being. Music touches our innermost being, and in that way produces new life, a life that gives exaltation to the whole being.