Daniel Trocmé-Latter

**Liturgical reenactments and the Reformation**[[1]](#footnote-1)\*

Half a millennium after Luther compiled his 95 Theses it is worth reminding ourselves of the significance of music in the widespread liturgical reforms of the 16th century. Naturally, there was little initial consensus on what was acceptable in church: in some places, choirs and organs fell silent; in others, polyphony thrived. In certain reformed liturgies, not even the congregation sang (although they participated in other ways).[[2]](#footnote-2) Yet the series of events that collectively became known as the Protestant Reformation had a profound effect on music—vocal and instrumental—both during the 16th century and in the decades and centuries to follow. The year 2017, therefore, seems an appropriate time to reflect on how we, as musicologists and performers, have experienced and continue to experience the Reformation.

Many will freely admit to turning towards Johann Sebastian Bach for musical inspiration at this time. After all, Bach must be the most famous Lutheran composer, and a prolific one at that. If there’s one year when we ought to perform *Ein feste Burg*, then surely this is it.On the other hand, what does a rendition of bwv80 or bwv720 actually teach us about church practice in the 16th century? Almost nothing, by itself. There is another associated risk, too; namely the subconscious conflation of Bach and Luther. Mattias Lundberg has commented on Bach so often being the ‘“prism” through which Luther is read’.[[3]](#footnote-3) Of course, Bach was composing two centuries after Luther, Zwingli, Calvin *et al.* had made their mark on the Church and, by extension, on the arts. Despite this, Bach seems persistently to be our go-to music when it comes to the Reformation, as if it will teach us something about Luther and his time; that is, more than just what Lutheran chorale tunes sound like. As inspiring and uplifting as Bach’s music unquestionably is, the performance of a cantata (or a section thereof) or a chorale prelude at a Sunday service is not an adequate time-travel substitute: we will not (unless we are particularly fortunate in terms of buildings and instruments available to us) be giving either ourselves or our listeners the impression of being transported back to the 18th century, let alone to the 16th.

This is not the place to debate the broader issues of the early music movement or historically-informed performance practice.[[4]](#footnote-4) Suffice it to say that such issues tend to reach new levels of detail of when liturgy is involved, since there seem to be so many additional considerations—both musical and extra-musical—ranging from considerations of who should be singing, to the inclusion of spoken parts of the service, to matters of dialect or text pronunciation. Over recent decades we have begun to see more projects come to light which aim—to varying degrees—to reenact musico-liturgical experiences, using repertory which has over centuries often become divorced from its original context, giving modern listeners as well as performers a chance to get closer to what would have been experienced centuries ago, in their liturgical or performing context. John Butt has drawn comparisons with dramatic scenes found in so-called ‘living museums’ or at battle reenactments, questioning whether objective accuracy in such contexts is less crucial than ‘an illusion of authenticity’.[[5]](#footnote-5) Are liturgical recreations any different? There is no single answer to that question, since it is clear that some performances seek to provide a basic idea of the original context of the music, while others are the result of recreations of a particular service in a particular church on a particular day: in other words, the recreation of an actual historical event. Most performances fall somewhere in the middle of these two possibilities.

Nevertheless, even the most realistic of liturgical reconstructions will be unable to reconstruct the exact beliefs and lifestyles of members of a church congregation. This, however, has not stopped people from trying. The early modern era is a period of particular focus, not least because there were so many liturgical divergences developing during this time—both from a temporal and a geographical perspective—and especially because of the significance of post-1517 events in creating such discrepancies.

However, some of the most visually impressive reconstructions actually come from pre-Reformation liturgies, including one from the end of the 15th century: Rob van den Berg and Cappella Pratensis’s rendition of Jacob Obrecht’s *Missa de Sancto Donatiano (Bruges 1487)* (Fineline fl72414, *issued* 2009, 181′) describes itself on its back cover as an ‘evocation of a commemorative mass founded by a fur merchant’s widow and first sung in the Sint Jacobskerk in Bruges in October 1487’. The CD features the mass and bonus tracks containing the melodies used in the mass as *cantus firmi*, but in addition there is a DVD that contains a filmed reenactment of the entire service as it might have been experienced in Bruges at the end of the 15th century, as well as a documentary with commentary by Jennifer Bloxam and Stratton Bull. The film is notable for its extreme attention to detail, including its use of celebrant, deacon, subdeacon, distribution of communion to the fur merchant’s widow, and so-on; it is a reenactment in the truest sense.[[6]](#footnote-6) The visual element, with multiple camera angles, no doubt makes a huge difference—the service can be experienced as if one were there; as the back-cover blurb states, ‘opening a window onto the world of late-medieval Bruges’. The project website[[7]](#footnote-7) contains extra resources, including video clips of almost the whole mass, although it is not possible to play all tracks uninterrupted (one presumes this is an intentional feature). There is also information about the texts of the mass (with bibliographies), the sources used for the reconstruction and an interactive score. The ‘Explore the Era’ section of the website is as yet incomplete (and the link to the Challenge Records website is currently broken), but once the remaining gaps are completed this will be a fantastic resource.

*The Experience of Worship in late medieval Cathedral and Parish Church*,[[8]](#footnote-8) a research project that began at Bangor University in 2009, encompasses a wide range of investigations into late medieval English and Welsh church practice. The website contains a multitude of resources, including a dozen or so videos of enactments of liturgies from *c.*1535, ranging from an Eastertide Lady Mass in Salisbury Cathedral to a Procession of the Holy Name of Jesus at the ancient Welsh church of St Teilo’s. What makes these reenactments slightly less believable to watch is the presence of members of the public dressed in modern clothing, contrasted with vestments of the clergy and choir. Rather than having the illusion of travelling back in time as we do in the Obrecht DVD, we instead seem to be watching the film of a commemoration of a past event; in other words, we are somewhat further removed from the ‘original’ event. This of course does not detract from the usefulness of the reconstruction exercise, and one could suggest that for those who were present at these services, the experience—with incense, surround-sound and candlelight—was more realistic than watching it on a screen ever could be. Arguably, indeed, maintaining a chronological distance from the event in this way would actually be beneficial, in a postmodern, openly subjective sense, whereas a ‘time-travel’ experience may instead be akin to flying too close to the realms of fantasy rather than gaining any significant sense of objective reality. The ancient Sarum Rite (Use of Salisbury) is a phenomenon of particular fascination, having been in widespread use throughout the British Isles before being replaced by the *Book of Common Prayer* in 1549. To the credit of *The Experience of Worship*, a number of Reformation era and post-Reformation era reenactments have also been organised under the project’s umbrella. The website notes the importance of considering ‘how buildings and people adapted to the new liturgies’ of the time,[[9]](#footnote-9) and to this end services were organised at Bangor Cathedral and St John’s Church, Washington, Connecticut in 2012 and 2013, using the *BCP* editions of 1549, 1552, 1559, and 1604. Disappointingly, however, none of these services appear to have been recorded; at least, none of them appear on the website.

Similar arguments about the faithfulness of reconstructions can be made in the context of a BBC Radio 3 broadcast from 2016. In February of that year Harry Christophers and the Sixteen, along with members of Genesis Sixteen, sang a Henrician-era Catholic vespers reconstruction, apparently the first service according to the Latin Rite of the Catholic Church to be celebrated in the Chapel Royal at Hampton Court Palace since the 1550s, with music by Taverner, Tallis, Cornysh and others.[[10]](#footnote-10) However, this was not intended to be a reenactment as such: it contained some speaking and singing in English, and only the clergy—not the musicians (of course both male and female)—wore vestments (at least if the clips shown in the trailer are to be believed[[11]](#footnote-11)). The aesthetic appearance of the service would not have mattered in a radio broadcast, of course, but the decision to use English as part of a Latin rite within a historical liturgical recreation is an intriguing one.

Again and again we encounter the question of how ‘accurate’—or how close to perceived reality—such recreations ought to be.[[12]](#footnote-12) Furthermore, when discussing Protestant—and especially Lutheran—reconstructions, it can be revealing to consider the question of the congregation: in other words, how such performances deal with the issue of lay participation, deeply fundamental to Protestant theology and worship, which the reformers insisted should be guided by true faith and understanding. Since it is never going to be possible to recreate a 16th- or 17th-century congregation, such a reconstruction is only going to be able to recreate outward sounds—ironically the very reverse of what the Protestant reformers themselves were trying to achieve.[[13]](#footnote-13)

One interesting case study with regard to the congregational question is Bach’s *St John Passion*, as released on CD by John Butt, the Dunedin Consort and a stellar line-up of soloists (Linn ckd419, *issued* 2013, 138′) and subsequently performed as an interactive concert in a number of venues, most recently and notably at the Royal Albert Hall at the ensemble’s BBC Proms debut in 2017.[[14]](#footnote-14) The CD presents a reconstruction of the Passion as it might have been heard in Leipzig, had it been performed on Good Friday 1739 (which the liner notes make clear it wasn’t).[[15]](#footnote-15) Joining the Dunedin Consort on the recording are the University of Glasgow Chapel Choir and a church congregation. The programme encloses bwv245 within a liturgy containing organ chorale preludes, congregational chorales, a choral motet and various responses. Period instruments are used, but the liner notes are upfront about musical concessions and ‘editorial’ decisions. For example, the congregational chorales are sung unaccompanied *in alternatim* (one verse sung in unison by the congregation, then one sung by the choir in four-part harmony), even though, as Butt acknowledges, *alternatim* practice had most likely disappeared by Bach’s time.[[16]](#footnote-16) A decision also had to be made with regard to the organ: contemporary notes on the early 18th-century liturgy by Johann Christoph Rost state that the organ wasn’t used in Leipzig during Lent. Butt questions whether, considering Bach’s remarkable Passiontide output for the organ, this rule could have applied to Holy Week. He also acknowledges, though, that even if Bach had composed his chorale preludes earlier in his career, in Leipzig it seems that the music at these points in the service would have been improvised by the church organist (who was not Bach), so Bach’s own settings were unlikely to have been used.[[17]](#footnote-17) The sermon at Lutheran vespers would usually have occurred between the two parts of the liturgy—after the psalms and just before the Magnificat. On Good Friday these two parts of the liturgy were replaced respectively by the two parts of the Passion. The sermon does not feature on the Dunedin Consort’s performance, but is accessible (in German) as an optional extra on the Linn Records website.[[18]](#footnote-18)

Even if, as John Butt says, the performance is of a liturgy ‘cobbled from different sources’,[[19]](#footnote-19) this is not only a top-class recording but a scholarly production, the website containing 18th-century written sources and a brief secondary biography for bwv245. However, Butt’s project also occupies a curious position between liturgical worship and concert-style performance. It is clear from the CD’s trailer[[20]](#footnote-20) that the recording did not take place in a liturgical setting: shots of the recording session reveal that no-one dressed up for the occasion, and orchestral players in the background can be seen reading books when they’re not playing. There is no harm in either of these things, it must hastily be added—again, on a sound recording this ultimately does not matter; my point is simply that it creates a thought-provoking juxtaposition with the final result, considering the lengths that Butt has gone to in order to present the full liturgical programme, including vernacular responsory, collect, blessing, and spoken sermon. The hybrid half-liturgy half-concert nature of this programme is made even clearer in the Dunedin Consort’s live performances, where the ‘congregation’ consists of paying concert attendees who are invited to join in with the appropriate chorales. Butt is to be commended for encouraging this level of participation, as it does enable people to experience this music in an unconventional (or perhaps *more* conventional?) way. It is just a pity, though, that at the BBC Proms performance the cameras repeatedly focused on audience members looking uncomfortable or plain lost during the chorale singing (in English, on this occasion). Nevertheless, the rousing final verse of Crüger’s ‘Nun danket’ performed by choir, congregation *and* organ made for a moving—if historically inaccurate—end to the concert programme. And a concert it very much felt like at that point: the audience applauded heartily, the performers acknowledged it gracefully. This was, after all, a scheduled concert performance in a world-famous concert hall, as part of a world-famous concert festival. It was perhaps not quite the ‘sonic time-travel’ of which the Proms television presenters spoke, though.[[21]](#footnote-21)

One ensemble which has particularly embraced the reconstruction phenomenon is Paul McCreesh’s Gabrieli Consort & Players. This group’s discography includes three programmes all focusing around Lutheran celebrations of the birth of Christ: Johann Sebastian Bach: *Epiphany Mass* (Archiv 457 631-2, *issued* 1998, 160′), Heinrich Schütz: *Christmas Vespers* (Archiv 463 046-2, *issued* 1999, 80′) and Michael Praetorius: *Lutheran Mass for Christmas Morning* (Archiv 439 250-2 (also 439 931-2), *issued* 1994, 79′). Each focuses on a particular location and time when that specific liturgy may have been heard, and employs authentic instruments as well as a congregational choir. The result on each disc is not only the reproduction of a liturgical performance (always full of lively precision and grandeur, in trademark McCreesh/Gabrieli style), but a careful collaboration with scholars and an informative set of liner notes providing a detailed context for the listener.

The Bach disc is a reconstruction of a *Hauptgottesdienst* on the Feast of the Epiphany as it might have appeared in 1740 in Leipzig, and was probably the first detailed CD recreation of Bach’s music for the Eucharist, including bell-ringing and a sermon (although one which lasts six minutes rather than the standard 60!). Two Pachelbel organ pieces feature among Bach’s *Missa brevis* in F(bwv233), two cantatas and a host of smaller works. The liner notes explain that much attention has been paid to performance practice, with singers, instrumentalists, and congregation situated in the church according to contemporary iconographic evidence.[[22]](#footnote-22) On the other hand, it is noteworthy that a plurality of approaches is adopted with regard to organ accompaniment. The notes explain that accompanied and unaccompanied hymnody co-existed in Bach’s Lutheranism: ‘As it is uncertain as to exactly when the change was made, some of the congregational hymns sung on this recording are with organ accompaniments (including inter-line organ interludes or *Zwischenspiele*), while others are in the more traditional unaccompanied style’.[[23]](#footnote-23) Having this variety no doubt makes for a better listening experience, even if it is more likely that a church would have stuck to one style or another.

*Christmas Vespers* is presented as it may have been experienced in the Dresden Court Chapel, *c.*1664, with Schütz’s *Historia der Geburt Jesu Christi* (swv435) as the disc’s centrepiece. The Dresden Court was particularly well known for its high-quality music and musicians, many of whom came from Italy to work there. In this rendition, bell-ringing is omitted, as is the sermon, but a congregational hymn is sung at each end of the service, and three more, sung by the boys’ choir, are interspersed between movements of the Magnificat (swv468). The liner notes acknowledge that congregational hymnody, although fundamental to Lutheran worship, ‘may have been considered less important in major court chapels where more elaborate figural music was emphasised’[[24]](#footnote-24)—not least in Dresden, one imagines, given the preponderance of Italian musicians there. The issue of organ accompaniment is again addressed, noting that although hymns would ‘almost certainly’ have remained unaccompanied in the 16th century, the 17th century gradually saw organ accompaniment becoming more established.[[25]](#footnote-25)

Michael Praetorius has fared particularly well from liturgical reconstruction recordings. The Gabrieli Consort’s ‘Lutheran mass for Christmas celebrated at one of the major churches in central Germany around 1620’[[26]](#footnote-26) once again highlights the centrality of congregational singing within the Lutheran tradition. As with McCreesh’s other recordings cited here, the attention to historical fidelity here is impressive, but liberties are also taken when it is deemed appropriate to do so (for example, ‘we have taken at face value the composer’s invitation to rearrange the musical material’[[27]](#footnote-27). As on the Schütz disc, no spoken parts of the service are included, although certain sections (e.g. the Gospel and Epistle readings) are intoned. Praetorius’s music used here is taken from various sources, with instrumental additions coming from Samuel Scheidt and Johann Hermann Schein. The sound produced by the instrumentalists and singers is nothing short of sumptuous, especially the recessional hymn—Praetorius’s arrangement of ‘In dulci jubilo’ (from *Polyhymnia Caduceatrix & Panegyrica* (Wolfenbüttel, 1619))—in which the ensembles come together in a vast and majestic display of dynamic and textural contrast.

Staying with Praetorius and the Nativity, in 2004 David Fallis and the Toronto Consort, joined by the Toronto Chamber Choir, recorded Praetorius’s *Christmas Vespers* (Marquis mar81335, *issued* 2004, 59′) ‘as it might have sounded in a large north European church in the early 17th century’.[[28]](#footnote-28) The CD label’s website states that ‘The rich German sound of the organ, combined with the delicate tones of the recorder and the soaring voices of the choir[,] combine to create an unforgettable Christmas experience’.[[29]](#footnote-29) What seemingly has been forgotten, though, is the congregation, since many of the pieces featured were clearly designed for congregational participation, including an opening and a closing hymn. It is indeed a fine performance, but it is difficult—especially in the shadow of the work done by John Butt and Paul McCreesh—to accept that a Christmas vespers service would have sounded quite so choral—so neat around the edges. In contrast, Jeannette Sorrell and Apollo’s Fire’s *Christmas Vespers: Music of Michael Praetorius* (Koch International 7673, *issued* 2007, 74′) recording does feature massed voices which mimic a congregation, although with some sections sung in English. It is also quite different in programmatic design from the Toronto Consort version, albeit with some overlap of repertoire. Without attempting to recreate a specific event it presents a pair of services derived from several of Praetorius’s published collections.

Another fine—although congregationless—performance recreation is Michael Praetorius: *Ostermesse* (CPO 999 953-2, *issued* 2012, 68′), as performed by Weser-Renaissance under the direction of Manfred Cordes. Again, there is no shortage of scholarship behind this recording: the final product is the result of collaboration with various researchers, with the 1569 Wolfenbüttel church order being used as a model for the mass. However, ‘congregational’ aspects of the service (e.g. responses to the priest) are sung by what seems to be a small group of professional singers rather than anything resembling an Easter congregation in the Wolfenbüttel Court Chapel in the late 16th century. Moreover, there is no attempt in these liner notes to justify the congregation’s absence, the focus instead being on the restructuring of the school system during the Reformation and the Lutheran Easter liturgy in Praetorius’s own time. It is a liturgical recreation of sorts, therefore, but only in a choral/instrumental sense. Even if (as Robin Leaver and Paul McCreesh remark about Dresden[[30]](#footnote-30)) congregations were less important in court chapels than in parish churches they would surely, in Lutheran areas, still have been active participants.

Cordes takes the same overly cautious view on the much earlier Hieronymus Praetorius: *Vesper for St. Michael’s Day* (CPO 999 649-2, *issued* 2000, 69′). The liner notes explain that ‘Vespers services… became quasi-concerts and, indeed, were listed as such in a Hamburg musical guide of 1657’.[[31]](#footnote-31) However, this reconstruction is from *c.*1620, when congregational hymnody was a fundamental aspect of Lutheran parish worship. On *Festmusik zur Reformationsfeier 1617* (Christophorus chr77363, *issued* 2012, 67′),[[32]](#footnote-32) no mention is made in the liner notes of the extent to which a congregation is used in this reenactment, leading to the assumption that there was none (certainly none is credited alongside Arno Paduch, Kammerchor Bad Homburg and the Johann Rosenmüller Ensemble). That the music for a centenary celebration of the Reformation would not involve a congregation is again hard to swallow. If the omission of a congregation in a liturgical reconstruction is due to a concern about musical quality, then directors are missing a crucial point: church services are not primarily about creating perfect musical performances, but about worship. The reality is that most congregations do not and did not sing perfectly in time or in tune, but that is what makes them real.[[33]](#footnote-33) If a church’s instrumentalists or choirs are of a professional standard, and if the congregation is particularly skilled at singing, that must be considered a bonus; this is something as true today as it was centuries ago. Clearly, no conductor wishes to record a professional CD with unpleasant singing on it, but a fair compromise is perfectly possible, as several of the other recordings featured here have demonstrated.[[34]](#footnote-34)

With the St Gertrude’s chapel service reconstruction (Gertrudenmusik Hamburg 1607 (Intim Musik imcd071, *issued* 2001, 64′)) we are fortunate enough also to have a companion score in the form of a critical edition by Frederick Gable.[[35]](#footnote-35) Gable produced the edition based on an account of a Lutheran service held in 1607 to rededicate the newly renovated chapel of St Gertrude in Hamburg after it was gutted by fire. One of the priests present published a detailed account of the ceremony, which he said featured ‘hymns, [musical] instruments, sermons, and prayers, after the manner of Solomon’.[[36]](#footnote-36) It is, in fact, the most complete description of a liturgy that we have from the late 16th- and early 17th-century period.[[37]](#footnote-37) Gable sums up the entire argument for liturgical reconstructions when he says, ‘Without the surrounding liturgy, a concert performance of this music disregards its original function, and our perception of its aesthetic effect remains incomplete’.[[38]](#footnote-38) Gable identifies a number of ambiguities in the 1607 order (for example, the strength of musical forces used and the way in which the Lord’s Prayer might have been performed) and provides plenty of advice on how a performance of this service should be carried out, including a guide to pronunciation. The CD realisation by Ulrike Heider and the Göteborg Baroque Arts Ensemble takes the vast majority of these notes on board, although the choral performances are not always as polished as one might hope (the sopranos, for example, struggle with the unrelenting high notes in Hieronymus Praetorius’s *Cantate Domino*). The recording does include a congregation, but also omits several of the spoken or chanted liturgical items; Gable permits this in his performance suggestions, but also cautions that ‘Dispensing with the added liturgical items… defeats the purpose of the reconstructed liturgical context’.[[39]](#footnote-39)

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So far we have discovered a fair number of carefully researched and well executed performances of service reconstructions. Yet there is an elephant in the room; namely that we have not encountered the reenactment of any service that took place contemporaneously with the shift to Protestant worship, or even within a few decades of that shift. The Lutheran reforms swept across Germany in the first half of the 16th century (most reforming localities did so during the 1520s or 1530s), but just one of the Lutheran reconstructions discussed above is ostensibly set in the 16th century.[[40]](#footnote-40) Where are the recordings of reformed worship when it was revolutionary and new—perhaps even only embryonic?[[41]](#footnote-41) There are a few recordings of this sort from various confessions, but one needs to know where to look.

The first two, both from the mainstream Lutheran tradition, are not true reconstructions. Martin Luther: *Deutsche Liedmesse* (Cantate c57616, *issued* 1996, 57′) is a compilation of various recordings originally released during the 1960s by Wilhelm Ehmann and the Westfälische Kantorei. It presents the movements of Luther’s *Deutsche Messe* of 1526 followed by some German chorales, but there is no liturgical design here: liturgical chants and spoken parts of the service are omitted. Similarly, *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott: Musik der Reformation* (ETERNA 8 27 638-639, *issued* 1983, 105′), from Hans Grüß and Capella Fidicinia, seems not to be based on any actual event or liturgy (at least there is no relevant explanation in the liner notes). Nevertheless, it is a useful resource (and was re-released by Berlin Classics in 1996) for discovering some of the earliest—and least known—music in the Lutheran repertory, including works by Johann Walter and Thomas Müntzer.

One of the principal reasons why only a handful of the earliest Reformation repertory has been recorded may be the perception that early Protestant worship amounted to little more than unaccompanied hymn-singing. First of all, in larger Lutheran parishes this is patently untrue: polyphony was widespread from quite early during the Reformation.[[42]](#footnote-42) Even though the situation was rather volatile in England, the records show that choral music endured, indeed even experiencing something of a revival during the second half of the 16th century.[[43]](#footnote-43) Second, even if it *is* demonstrably true in certain parts of Europe (e.g. the Reformed confession as found in Basel or Geneva), this should not be cited as a reason for not attempting reconstructions, since these forms of worship are as much a part of the musical backdrop of the Reformation as any as any other. A relentless focus on the Lutheran musical contribution will only perpetuate the impression of a homogeneous Protestant theology and uniform response to music’s role in church.

It will come as a surprise to some that—to its great credit—it is not the Lutheran or the Anglican Church but rather the Church of Scotland that reigns triumphant in the Reformation music recreation sector. Foremost among the relevant recordings are those made for ‘Singing the Reformation’, an extension of the AHRC-funded *Wode Psalter Project* led by Jane Dawson at the University of Edinburgh (2008–11).[[44]](#footnote-44) Scotland came relatively late to the Reformation, breaking with the papacy and adopted a Protestant confession of faith in 1560. Although the principal reformer John Knox was not himself a musician or a particularly strong musical advocate, he had spent several years prior in Geneva where he had encountered Jean Calvin’s form of Protestantism, whose liturgical music comprised only unaccompanied unison psalm-singing. The first Scottish metrical psalter was published in 1564,[[45]](#footnote-45) which likewise contained psalms to be sung in unison, but the psalms remained in English rather than the native Scots language.[[46]](#footnote-46) Soon after, Lord James Stewart (Earl of Moray and Regent of Scotland) commissioned Thomas Wode, vicar of St Andrews and a former monk, to compile a musical volume which eventually consisted of 105 four-voice psalm settings and another 18 canticle settings by David Peebles and other composers, plus over 100 other choral and instrumental works and other songs—a number of which were by non-Scottish composers. The collection is the most important source for Scottish music of the era, as well as a valuable source for English and continental repertory. The extant partbooks are now available as digital resources on the *Wode Psalter Project* website.[[47]](#footnote-47) It is believed that the psalm harmonisations were sung regularly where congregations were strong enough to do so, or where there was a group of singers that could sing the harmonies while the congregation sang the melody (in the tenor part).

As part of a follow-on project, in 2016 the website of the Church Service Society began providing downloadable performable editions of the sacred pieces from the Wode collection,[[48]](#footnote-48) as well as recordings of the vast majority of the psalms sung by a congregation,[[49]](#footnote-49) plus an entire service reconstruction (with a sermon, Lord’s Prayer and several psalms in 16th-century Scots—complete with occasional mistakes of pitch), in an attempt ‘to capture the experience of a singing congregation’.[[50]](#footnote-50) This took place at St Mary’s Church, Haddington in March 2016, and featured a combination of amateur singers and a ‘sang scule’ which included the choristers of St Mary’s. In these recordings, the harmonisations are sung only by the ‘sang scule’, but before discovering this I had had the impression from listening that there was a 70-strong congregational ‘choir’ singing the harmony. This is presumably down to microphone placement being too close to the ‘sang scule’, which is a pity, but this is still a brilliant resource and will hopefully spur others into creating similarly realistic sound recordings.

Other recordings of works from the Wode Psalter exist, but not with the same emphasis on producing a congregational sound. On *Psalms for the Regents of Scotland* (EURS 003, *issued* 1999, 67′), Noel O’Regan directs the Edinburgh University Renaissance Singers as part of a series of performances including a hypothetical Scottish ‘Evinsang’, with music from Wode partbooks, ‘as it might have been heard by the Regent Moray in Linlithgow on the eve of his assassination in 1570’.[[51]](#footnote-51) Alan Tavener and Cappella Nova’s *Sacred Music for Mary Queen of Scots* (ASV cd gau 136, *issued* 1993, 58′) contains Wode partbook settings as well as a mass attributed to Robert Carver. The Dunedin Consort and Fretwork perform a selection, including works by English and continental composers, on *The Wode Collection: 16th C. Music by Scottish, English & Continental Composers* (Linn ckd388, *rec* 2011, 64′), released as part of the same University of Edinburgh project. James Hutchinson and Sang Scule have recorded a selection of the works by Jhone Angus on a CD accompanying a 2011 book about the composer’s role in the Scottish Reformation.[[52]](#footnote-52) Meanwhile, other service reconstructions are happening in Scotland on a frequent basis, even if they are not being recorded.[[53]](#footnote-53)

As John Butt has commented, ‘Even within preservation movements themselves, there is often distaste at too “clean” a restoration’.[[54]](#footnote-54) For the sake of historical accuracy, therefore, it is important that we take the less-refined along with the refined. More recordings like that organised by ‘Singing the Reformation’, which seek to envision a singing congregation, need to be forthcoming for other Protestant denominations. Performers need to be brave enough to recreate amateur musical sounds alongside professional ones. A set of recordings from English churches (perhaps roughly one per decade throughout the period 1530–70) could be a good starting point, and one which would attract plenty of attention.[[55]](#footnote-55) It should also go without saying that we would benefit from more reconstructed Catholic services from this period, all over Europe. Because this is 2017, though, we must end by returning to Luther. Without ‘audio guides’ to the earliest Lutheran liturgies, featuring chant, hymnody and polyphony, how can we hope to understand the later Lutheran context in the times of Praetorius, Buxtehude, Bach and beyond? Reconstructions on paper for the early Protestant services in Germany can be found in a variety of modern publications.[[56]](#footnote-56) Only when they have been brought to life sonically will we gain a true sense of the aural variety found in 16th-century churches.

1. \* Many individuals have been helpful in providing suggestions and direction for this review article, but special thanks should go to Frederick K. Gable, Robin A. Leaver, Jamie Reid-Baxter and Stephen Rose for their time and insights. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For the case of Zurich, most famously, see M. Jenny, *Luther, Zwingli, Calvin in ihren Liedern* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1983), pp.175–85. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See this issue, p.000. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. John Butt deals extensively with this topic within the context of historical reenactment phenomenon more generally. He writes that in the early music movement there exists ‘an antiquarian desire for the complete preservation of virtually anything from the past, and the notion that this is somehow better for our health; an environmentalist bent in which nothing is wasted’. J. Butt, *Playing with history: the historical approach to musical performance* (Cambridge, 2002), p.178. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Butt, *Playing with history*, p.181. He also cites the historian Hillel Schwartz: ‘Living Museums tend to choose that which *authenticates* over that which is authentic’ (H. Schwartz, *The Culture of the copy—striking likenesses, unreasonable facsimiles* (New York, 1996), p.279; quoted in Butt, *Playing with history,* p.182). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. This is in contrast to another pre-Reformation reconstruction by Cappella Pratensis, namely *Heinrich Isaac: Missa Paschale* (Ricercar ric 206692, *issued* 1999, 56′), which, although still a valuable example of religious practice, does not include any of the spoken or recited parts of the service. Ensemble Officium does likewise on *Heinrich Isaac: Missa Paschalis* (Christophorus chr 77257, *issued* 2004, 71′). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. [obrechtmass.com](http://obrechtmass.com/home.php); accessed 20 August 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. [www.experienceofworship.org.uk](http://www.experienceofworship.org.uk); accessed 20 August 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. www.experienceofworship.org.uk/enactments/other-services; accessed 20 August 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. [www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b074zxww](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b074zxww); broadcast 3 April 2017 on BBC Radio 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfWSM9gBzDs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfWSM9gBzDs); accessed 20 August 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Two recent Bach discs worth mentioning in this regard are *Köthener Trauermusik BWV 244a* (Harmonia Mundi hmc 902211, *issued* 2014, 74′) and *Angenehme Melodei* (DHM 88985410522, *issued* 2017, 53′). Both consider themselves reconstructions but not in the sense used in this article; rather, they are reconstructions of lost works from scattered and fragmented sources. The first is of the funeral music for Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen, reconstituted from a copy of the wordbook and some other sources; the second is of two homage cantatas: bwv216a to the City of Leipzig, and bwv210a to the Patrons of Science and Art. These discs will be reviewed in forthcoming issues of *EM*. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. On the emphasis the reformers placed on singing with sincerity and from the heart, see W. Fuhrmann, ‘Heart and Voice—A Musical Anthropology in the Age of Reformation’, in A. Eusterschulte and H. Wälzholz, eds., *Anthropological Reformations—Anthropology in the Era of the Reformation* (Göttingen, 2015), pp.87–111. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. [www.bbc.co.uk/events/enxbp6](http://www.bbc.co.uk/events/enxbp6); broadcast 20 August 2017 on BBC4. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. John Butt, ‘Johannes-Passion’ (liner notes to Linn ckd419), p.17. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. *Ibid.*, p.20. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. [www.linnrecords.com/linn-john-passion.aspx](http://www.linnrecords.com/linn-john-passion.aspx); accessed 20 August 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Butt, ‘Johannes-Passion’, p.17. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. [www.dunedin-consort.org.uk/video/reconstructing-bachs-john-passion](https://www.dunedin-consort.org.uk/video/reconstructing-bachs-john-passion/); accessed 20 August 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. *Prom 49: Bach’s St John Passion*, broadcast 20 August 2017 on BBC4 (at 2′00). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Robin A. Leaver and Paul McCreesh, ‘Lutheran Epiphany Mass: Leipzig c. 1740’ (liner notes to Archiv 457 631-2), p.14. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. *Ibid.*, pp.11–12. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Leaver and McCreesh, ‘Christmas Day Vespers at the Dresden Court Chapel c. 1664’ (liner notes to Archiv 463 046-2), pp.9–10. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. *Ibid.*, p.10. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Leaver and McCreesh, ‘Michael Praetorius—Christmas Mass’ (liner notes to Archiv 439 250-2), p.7. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. *Ibid.*, p.10. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. [www.torontoconsort.org/watch-listen/buy-cds/praetorius-christmas-vespers](https://torontoconsort.org/watch-listen/buy-cds/praetorius-christmas-vespers); accessed 20 August 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. <http://www.marquisclassics.com/335_praetor.aspx>; accessed 20 August 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. See n.000. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. F. K. Gable, liner notes to CPO 999 646-2, p.21. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. See a review of this disc on p.000. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. I discuss the task faced by the reformers in getting thousands of untrained musicians to sing psalms at the beginning of the Genevan Reformation in D. Trocmé-Latter, ‘The Psalms as a mark of Protestantism: The Introduction of Liturgical Psalm-Singing in Geneva’, *Plainsong and Medieval Music*, 20, no. 2 (2011), pp.149–67. Joseph Herl also discusses similar struggles in Lutheran Germany in *Worship wars in early Lutheranism: choir, congregation, and three centuries of conflict* (Oxford, 2004). [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. On the other hand, given Herl’s findings (see n.000), perhaps even these recordings that include less-than-perfect congregational participation might simply be perpetuating the stereotype of Lutherans as hearty chorale-singers. Perhaps for a truly realistic experience we ought to consider the online tracks accompanying Christopher Marsh’s *Music and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2010) sung by the Dufay Collective. (To access these, visit [www.cambridge.org/musicandsociety](http://www.cambridge.org/musicandsociety) and click ‘Resources’.) Three of these (tracks 44–46) are imitations of English liturgical psalm-singing. Track 45 is particularly painful to listen to, but believable for exactly that reason. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Gable, ed., *Dedication Service for St. Gertrude’s Chapel, Hamburg, 1607* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1998). [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Quoted in Gable, ‘Introduction’, *Dedication Service*, p.viii. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. *Ibid.*, p.vii. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. *Ibid.*, p.ix. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. *Ibid.*, p.xxxi. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Namely Praetorius’s *Ostermesse*, and even this dates from the tail-end of the century. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Even Wittenberg, often (somewhat ironically) assumed to have been a place where choirs probably sang the chorales rather than the congregation, had a congregational hymnal of its own, possibly as early as 1524. See Leaver, *The whole church sings: congregational singing in Luther’s Wittenberg* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2017), pp.102–116. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. See Stefan Menzel’s article in this issue of *EM*, pp.000–000. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. On Reformation England, see P. le Huray, *Music and the Reformation in England 1549-1660* (London, 1967; *repr.* Cambridge, 1978), Marsh, *Music and Society* *in Early Modern England* and J. Morehen, ed., *English Choral Practice, 1400–1650* (Cambridge, 1995). [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. [www.wode.div.ed.ac.uk](http://www.wode.div.ed.ac.uk); accessed 20 August 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. *The forme of prayers and ministration of the sacraments &c vsed in the English Church at Geneua, approued & receiued by the churche of Scotland wherevnto are also added sondrie other prayers, with the whole psalmes of Dauid in English meter* (Edinburgh, 1564). The psalter shares much of its contents with the English *The whole booke of Psalmes collected into Englysh metre by T. Starnhold, I. Hopkins, & others* (London, 1562), but it is a distinct publication. See J. Reid-Baxter, M. Lynch and E. P Dennison, *Jhone Angus, Monk of Dunfermline & Scottish Reformation Music* (Dunfermline, 2011), p.35. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Jamie Reid-Baxter asks ‘what (if anything) ordinary, illiterate Scots, long used to viewing England as “the auld inimy,” made of having to sing the praise of God in what was, after all, still very much a foreign, if closely-related language’. Reid-Baxter, ‘Metrical Psalmody and the Bannatyne Manuscript: Robert Pont’s Psalm 83’, *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 30, no.4, p.44. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. [www.wode.div.ed.ac.uk/resources.html](http://www.wode.div.ed.ac.uk/resources.html); accessed 20 August 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. [www.churchservicesociety.org/wode](http://www.churchservicesociety.org/wode); accessed 20 August 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. [www.churchservicesociety.org/singing-reformation-2016](http://www.churchservicesociety.org/singing-reformation-2016); accessed 20 August 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. [www.churchservicesociety.org/singing-reformation-2016](http://www.churchservicesociety.org/singing-reformation-2016); accessed 20 August 2017. The service recording can be found at [www.churchservicesociety.org/str/condensed-worship-re-creation-1600-recording](http://www.churchservicesociety.org/str/condensed-worship-re-creation-1600-recording). Marsh’s online recordings of English psalm-singing have a similar aim (see above, n.000). [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. [eurs.eusa.ed.ac.uk/recordings.shtml](http://eurs.eusa.ed.ac.uk/recordings.shtml); accessed 20 August 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Reid-Baxter, Lynch and Dennison, *Jhone Angus*. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Jamie Reid-Baxter is instrumental in organising many of these. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Butt, *Playing with history*, p.193. On the other hand, historical accuracy can quickly become a slippery slope (see Butt, *Playing with history*, p.195). [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. As noted above, *The Experience of Worship* has reenacted some such services but apparently not recorded them. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. See, for example: Herl, *Worship wars in early Lutheranism*, pp.62–5; Leaver, ‘Lutheran Vespers as a context for music’, in P. Walker, ed., *Church, stage, and studio: music and its contexts in seventeenth-century Germany* (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1990), pp.143–61 (at pp.155–6); Trocmé-Latter, *The singing of the Strasbourg Protestants, 1523–1541* (Farnham, 2015), pp.110–111; Stefan Menzel’s article in this edition of *EM* (pp.000–000 (at pp.000–000)). [↑](#footnote-ref-56)