The Ancient Treasure House

by David Erb, New Saint Andrews College

In the second book of C. S. Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia, *Prince Caspian*, the four Pevensie children are magically transported from England to another world—an overgrown, uninhabited, forsaken island upon which they discover the ruins of a castle. Eventually they begin to realize that the castle ruins are the remains of Cair Paravel, where they had once reigned for years and years. The epiphany of the truth occurs in chapter two, entitled "The Ancient Treasure House," [1] as the children locate the door and stairs to the treasure chamber. As they reach the bottom of the stairs, all the children say at once, "O-o-o-oh!!"

"For now all knew that it was indeed the ancient treasure chamber of Cair Paravel where they had once reigned as Kings and Queens of Narnia. There was a kind of path up the middle (as it might be in a greenhouse), and along each side at intervals stood rich suits of armor, like knights guarding the treasures. In between the suits of armor, and on each side of the path, were shelves covered with precious things—necklaces and arm rings and finger rings and golden bowls and dishes and long tusks of ivory, brooches and coronets and chains of gold, and heaps of unset stones lying piled anyhow as if they were marbles or potatoes—diamonds, rubies, carbuncles, emeralds, topazes, and amethysts. Under the shelves stood great chests of oak strengthened with iron bars and heavily padlocked. And it was bitterly cold, and so still that they could hear themselves breathing, and the treasures were so covered with dust that unless they had realized where they were and remembered most of the things, they would hardly have known they were treasures. There was something sad and a little frightening about the place, because it all seemed so forsaken and long ago. That was why nobody said anything for at least a minute.

"Then, of course, they began walking about and picking things up to look at. It was like meeting very old friends. If you had been there you would have heard them saying things like, 'Oh look! Our coronation rings—do you remember first wearing this?—Why, this is the little brooch we all thought was lost—I say, isn't that the armor you wore in the great tournament in the Lone Islands—do you remember the dwarf making that for me?—do you remember drinking out of that horn?—do you remember, do you remember?' " [2]

Later in the story we learn that 1300 years have passed in Narnia, albeit only one earth year. The castle ruins of Cair Paravel are overgrown and unknown to everyone as it is now situated on an island considered to be haunted. The human race of the Telmarines, who conquered Narnia, has completely suppressed any talk of the history of Old Narnia. Even the majority of the underground remnant of "Old Narnians" does not really believe there even *were* real kings and queens named Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy or that Aslan is real.

I think this story serves as a fitting analogy for the relation of the contemporary church in America to its history and heritage with regards to liturgy, music, and worship. Most of us have no idea that there is a treasure chamber and since we do not recognize the treasures as old friends when we see or hear them, we dismiss them. Our heritage has been lost and buried, hidden from sight, long forgotten. We do not remember.

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Once upon a time the best music and the best musicians were to be found in the churches of God. There really were skillful, faithful church musicians named Leonin and Perotin, Praetorius and Palestrina, Buxtehude and Bach who walked in the ways of their fathers David and Cheneniah. And they left us a storehouse beyond measure: psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, masses, motets, anthems, cantatas, oratorios—dear old friends in which we may delight, if only we would take the time to reacquaint ourselves with them.

So where are these musical treasures? They are most commonly found as "museum pieces" in secular universities and concert halls. The most glorious songs of praise in the history of the Church are sung more frequently and with greater fervor by people and institutions who do not purpose to glorify the Triune God of Scripture. The secular "keepers of the artistic canon of the brotherhood of mankind" claim

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our treasures as *their* heritage. But we are the rightful heirs of this ancient treasure house; we are the kings and queens who are to be faithful stewards of what has been bequeathed to us.

Now the goal is not to merely uncover these musical treasures, study them, and deposit them in Christian universities and concert halls. God does not call us to be musical curators or sideline spectators. He calls us to participate actively as musical worshippers. God's people have always sung. Think of Israel after they passed through the Red Sea under Moses and Miriam; or David, the great psalmist of Israel; or Mary, Zechariah, Simeon, and on and on. Recall the description of heavenly worship in the Book of Revelation with the choir of the four living creatures, the choir of the twenty-four elders, the choir of angels, the choir of every creature which is in heaven and on earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them. The question is not if you are in the choir, but rather, which choir are you in?

As Christians we cannot deny that we are to sing unto the Lord. Yet it is not uncommon to hear many Christians state that they don't sing as a matter of fact—a situation that they have no intention of changing either. But there is no "get out of jail card" for singing unto the Lord. The command to sing is never qualified by "if you sing well," or "if you like to sing," or "if you took music lessons when you were a kid." There are qualifications, however: sing with understanding, sing skillfully, sing with a loud joyful voice. And they are for all God's people, not just for professional musicians.

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So what shall we do? First of all, ***we must remember***. We must remember our musical heritage. We must recover and restore; we must reclaim and rebuild. Like Josiah when the Book of the Law was rediscovered, we too must tear our clothes and humble ourselves and submit to the Word of God and the example of our faithful forefathers.

Secondly, we must roll up our sleeves and go to work; we must purpose to change our paradigm. As many have rightly understood, to effect such a change one must begin with children. The wise builder starts with the foundation and builds upon it. ACCS schools are well positioned to implement musical instruction in such a way which would have, I believe, a monumental long-term effect on worship and culture, not only in our constituent churches, but throughout the nation.

Achieving such ends can only come by the grace of God. For our part, we need to provide skillful K–12 instruction; we need to teach music as a language, not as a cultural accoutrement to be appreciated. Music is a language with a great wealth and variety of genres. The purpose of learning a language is to achieve full literacy: the ability to read, write, speak, and comprehend with skill and understanding. This is no different in English, Latin, or music. As a language, the teaching and learning of music is well suited to the structure of the Trivium: (1) *grammar*–learning the basic structural elements of music (rhythm, melody, harmony, timbre, texture, form, dynamics), (2) *dialectic*—learning how the elements are used to create music (i.e. music theory), and (3) *rhetoric*—learning how to assess, perform, and create music skillfully and with understanding.

The educational philosophy and method of Zoltán Kodály is amazingly well suited to the classical approach. It is a linguistic approach to music education as opposed to a subject-logic approach. Kodály believed in musical literacy for all people. Just as it must have been impossible to think of a literate society five hundred years ago, it can be equally so with regards to musical literacy today. But it is possible and has happened before. In the span of roughly forty years, Kodály and his musical disciples transformed the entire country of Hungary from musical illiteracy to musical literacy.[3] If all students are taught music K–12 in a systematic fashion by a qualified teacher, this can be accomplished in one to two generations.

This is not art for arts' sake; it is for the glory of God. Music is first and foremost a means by which we are to let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one

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another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord.[4]

May God direct us to discover the former riches in our treasure house and grant us eyes to see them and hearts that delight in them. May we endeavor to be diligent to acquire the skills of musical literacy necessary to sing and play skillfully. May God grant us yet more glorious treasures today, tomorrow, and forevermore. *Soli Deo gloria.*

NOTE: This article is a revision of the 2008 Convocation Address at New Saint Andrews College in Moscow, ID.

ENDNOTES

1. C. S. Lewis, "The Ancient Treasure House," in *Prince Caspian* (NY: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1970), chap. 2.

2. Ibid. p.21-23.

3. Lois Choksy, *The Kodály Method I: Comprehensive Music Education, 3rd ed.* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1999), 1-4.

4. The Apostle Paul, Colossians 3:16-17, in *The Holy Bible*; *New Geneva Study Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995).

The Necessity of the Visual Aesthetic in Classical and Christian Education

by Heidi Stevens

Classical and Christian educators have been about the task of "rebuilding the ruins" for many years now, and have done so with a conscious bias toward building around the framework of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. Yet most educators would probably feel some discomfort in trying to enumerate exactly what a purposeful study of Beauty, especially visual beauty, should look like. We're confident that Truth and Goodness will be revealed through the perspicuity of Scripture and the providence of general revelation, but we're less sure that we can draw from these same sources guiding principles regarding a visual aesthetic. While we would never leave Truth or Goodness to flounder in such lack of definition, we're suspicious that Beauty lies inscrutably, as the world has taught us, "in the eye of the beholder," and that we have little right to wrest it from its comfortable position there. We elevate sensate judgment to a role as the final arbitrator of Beauty in a way that we would never expect conscience to be an exclusive judge of Goodness or natural reason to be a solitary source of Truth.

Ultimately, we either recognize the role God calls us to in relation to the visual world He has created, or admit that we are treating an unavoidable realm of our existence as if it is outside His concern. Dutch theologian Hermann Bavinck pointed out that: "There are only two paths open—either humanity, with all its culture, is a means for the unconscious, unreasonable, and purposeless world-power, or it is a means for the glorifying of God. The first can . . . never be believed by humanity, for it is tantamount to suicide. The second . . . brings indeed the True, the Good, and the Beautiful to eternal triumph." [1]

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As we consider these two alternatives, we must begin by seeing that the way we think about the visual arts and indeed all our aesthetic judgments and pursuits (or lack of them) is deeply connected to our theology. What we believe about the Fall and about Redemption has a direct impact on the value we place on training our students to embrace their dual creative call: the call to both critique and create visual beauty.

In Genesis, we learn that God created man to care for His creation but that man perverted that plan through sin. All of creation now bears the mark

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