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Radix

mcgill chaplaincy's multi-faith newsletter



february 2007

About the Cover: This issue's cover features an original plaster sculpture hand-carved by our cover-designer Aaron Ricker Parks. Entitled "dancing bowing cross," the sculpture's graceful form is meant to answer the often harsh, even phallic, depictions of this symbol - and to remind us of that thread within Christianity, from its first-century beginnings to the present, which attempts to respond to violent power structures with grace rather than bigger violence, with fun rather than force. Aaron is an M.A. student in Religious Studies.



4-part Film Series

"Parables in Light and Shadow: The Gospels & Liberation in the Cinema" is facilitated by Mario deGiglio-Bellemare, filmmaker and PhD candidate in South American Liberation Theology. A biopic, a film noir, a Euro art-house flick, and a recent documentary will be discussed against a backdrop of Jesus' parables. The series deliberately selects film texts that highlight sinister and oppressive contexts in order to uncover "resurrectional" hope. **Location: United Theological College basement** (3521 University). **Time: 6pm.** Wed Jan 24: **Romero.** Wed Jan 31: **The Night of the Hunter.** Wed Feb 7: **Viridiana.** Wed Feb 14: **Darwin's Nightmare.** \$2 sugg. donation to help cover snacks. Co-sponsored by the Student Christian Movement.

The Email That Made the Editors' Day:

I really admire the journal as a whole and all the work you put into it. It's a beautiful thing that really is a strong manifestation of Oneness and unity and therefore a move to peace, in and of itself. Thank you.

:) Sara

Religious Studies/Atmospheric Science

Radix is produced by McGill students for McGill students,

so...

the views expressed are those of our contributors and are not (necessarily) shared by McGill Chaplaincy Services or its chaplains.

We're proud to print on **recycled paper.**

Unless you save up your *Radix*s for a rainy day,

please double the recycling by handing this magazine on to a friend.

(Then make sure they recycle, too!)

Submission Guidelines:

We welcome student articles, art, reviews, responses, photos, comics, poetry, and anything else you might think of. Submissions from all faith perspectives are encouraged. Artwork must be accessible in black-and-white or grayscale. Article length is about 500 words. Submissions are subject to editing for length, content, and style. Contributors retain copyright, but *Radix* retains the right to reprint submissions in our online archives. Submissions may be made to the editor at radix@mail.mcgill.ca.

You can also visit *Radix* online at

<http://www.mcgill.ca/chaplaincy/radix/>

WRITE/RANT/CARTOON FOR OUR NEXT ISSUE!

The theme for our February/March *Radix* is:

(in)equality

We are: Sara Parks Ricker & Aimee Patterson Read, co-editors /layout ♦ Amanda Carpenter, Atheist/Agnostic rep ♦ Tamar Gefen, Jewish (Hillel) rep ♦ Zeke Kaplan, Orthodox Jewish rep ♦ Graeme Lamb, Catholic rep ♦ Tara McElroy, Catholic rep ♦ Aileen Morrison, Protestant rep ♦ Aaron Ricker Parks, cover artist /Quaker rep ♦ Raveena Seetal, Sikh rep ♦ Isra Jeelani Wani, Muslim rep ♦ Stuart Wright, Anglican rep ♦ **SEEKING: ANY REP YOU DON'T SEE HERE!**

MOKSA Rocks Poverty's Socks

Throughout my McGill career, I've attended some entertaining musical concerts: James Brown, Robert Randolph, Bela Fleck, String Cheese Incident, Steve Vai, and Michael Franti to name a few. While these concerts offered a taste of musical excellence, none inspired me like the *End Poverty Now Benefit Concert* last Wednesday evening at Café Campus. Featuring three extremely talented groups, the benefit gained the attention of over 200 music fans who came out to support the cause, as well as some serious rock music.

The concert, organized by End Poverty Now, purposed not only to put together a trio of great rock bands, but to raise money and awareness for the important cause of world poverty. Aside from the full room of fans, the event was also covered by CBC, the Canadian Jewish News, and several Montreal papers.

The evening began with an explosive 45-minute set by MOKSA that got the crowd out of its seats and onto the dance floor. Led by frontman Adam Jesin, MOKSA's popularity in the Montreal music scene has been growing, creating a strong fan base. About the benefit, Jesin enthused, "Playing music is always fun. But to play for such an important cause is something I will never forget." MOKSA's next local show will be on February 3rd at Les Minots, joined by friends "The Rhythm Method" and "Skullcap."

After the concert, there was only one question I needed answered. "What the heck is MOKSA?" I sneaked backstage and found lead guitarist, Zeke "The Rodster" Kaplan, packing up his equipment. I subtly masked my question as light conversation and received a twofold answer. First, Kaplan explained his orthodox Jewish roots, which involved the prohibition of many practices on the Jewish Sabbath, considered to be "moksa." MOKSA does not perform on the Sabbath, so as not to commit Moksa! His second interpretation is derived from Sanskrit, where *moksa* means to liberate. Kaplan explained, "Together with its Sanskrit meaning, we liked the duality that the name MOKSA represented and tension it solved." I quickly realized how symbolic this interpretation was. Liberation is exactly what our society needs to bring to those in poverty. Moksa's doing their part. It's now our turn.

~ Brandon Luft

Brandon is a U3 B.A. Student, with a Major Concentration in History and a Minor in Humanistics

End Poverty Now is committed to raising awareness and aid for worldwide poverty. They believe that education is the first step toward change, and encourage all individuals to take the time to learn about the devastation of poverty. For more information, visit www.endpoverty.ca.

Yellow Door: Canada's Longest-Running Coffeehouse Right Here in the Ghetto

chaplaincy programs

Located on 3625 Aylmer, in the heart of the McGill Ghetto, is a magical musical basement that houses a surprising wealth of Canadian Cultural History. Canada's oldest and longest-running venue of this sort, the Yellow Door Coffeehouse began in 1967, when some activists, peaceniks, and artistic folk gathered 'round to talk about protest, war, and love. Legend has it that now-greats such as Leonard Cohen, Stan Rogers, and Bruce Cockburn have all paid a visit to this little basement. Among them were singer/songwriter Jesse Winchester, a Vietnam "draft dodger," who found refuge in Montreal and became a name associated with the Yellow Door, along with the newly-named "Canada's Lady of Folk," Penny Lang. Both artists returned to play at the musical venue's 35th anniversary, held at Café Campus five years ago.

After four decades, the Yellow Door Coffeehouse is still going strong with eclectic musical shows every single Friday and Saturday night, serving light refreshments like cookies and tea for a small donation, and offering up an astounding range of musical acts. We host old Montreal mainstay folkies, a Klezmer group called the "Yiddenes," instrumental guitarists, East-Coast fiddlers, French-Canadian artists, Christian acoustic songwriters who sing about spirituality, and other performers from all over Canada who want the unique Yellow Door experience.

The nice thing for me, Holly Fleming, as the Coffeehouse Co-ordinator, is that music is not the only function in our charming, earthy, acoustically-sound basement. One Thursday a month, there are poetry readings hosted by Montreal's Ilona Martfoni. On Friday afternoons, McGill Chaplaincy supports "The Rabbit Hole Café" and "Food for Thought" – a collective vegetarian kitchen and emergency food bank for McGill students who resort to unhealthy diets of instant noodles and cafeteria food due to growing student loans and maxed-out credit cards. There are also weekly community support-groups. In addition, the Yellow Door is home to a number of important projects that, through a volunteer spirit, better the nearby community (notably the elderly in the area). The coffeehouse is one small part of this larger ideal of fostering community, support, and creativity. All Yellow Door events and projects include the themes of expression of ideas, creativity, shared struggle, and positive change.

On Friday nights, there is an open mic where many McGill or Concordia students come to try their talents in an accepting environment. Virtually every artist and audience member who comes to the Yellow Door seems to say the same thing; that "it's like being in a friend's basement"! Unlike some other musical venues, there is no alcohol served. Instead, the recently-renovated venue is set up like a mini concert hall (although denim couches replace auditorium seating...), so the room is unbelievably quiet and appreciative. This can both excite and intimidate the performers, since people *really* come to listen to the music. Generally, in order to compete with the Montreal music scene, press releases are sent out to the local media, and there is now a growing e-mail list that

receives weekly musicians' bios and details of upcoming shows (all of which normally have a student cover charge of only \$5 or less for an intimate, high-quality experience).

As the co-ordinator, I can confidently say that every Friday and Saturday night I am in awe at the talent that comes through our humble basement. I also feel that the warmth and ambiance of years of music and spoken word resonates within the walls. Some artists believe there are ghosts at the Yellow Door. I *know* they are there...

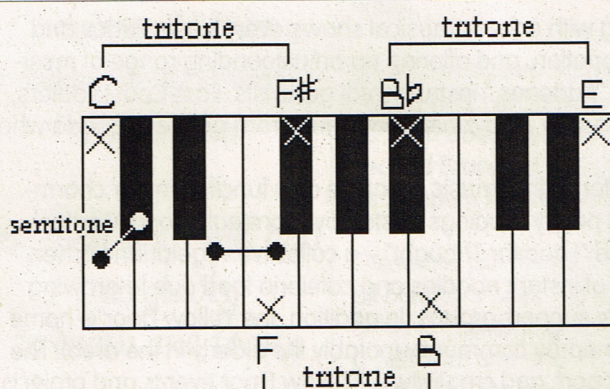
~ Holly Fleming

Yellow Door Coffeehouse co-coordinator
3625 Aylmer
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398-4886
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The Yellow Door coffeehouse is looking for Volunteers for the 2007 winter term. The oldest coffeehouse in Canada (located on Aylmer in the heart of the McGill Ghetto) produces folk/blues concerts every Friday and Saturday night and would love enthusiastic individuals who could volunteer some time doing something they like at the coffeehouse. If you have an interest in sound, promotion, computer graphics for posterizing, setting up and tearing down shows, or simply helping with refreshments, contact Holly at ydcoffeehouse@gmail.com or call (514) 489-7565.

The Tritone: Tool of Satan

Just as distances between places are measured by some sort of system, so are distances between two notes (or pitches) in music. We refer to these distances as intervals. Intervals range from a semi-tone – which is the smallest possible distance between two notes, at least in the Western scale – to theoretically any larger distance, although commonly, the largest referred to is the octave. Most intervals, when the notes are played simultaneously or one after the other, sound consonant or “harmonious.” One, however, is famous or rather, infamous – for its dissonance: the tritone. If you count up six semi-tones from any note, you will form such an interval (see diagram). Take for instance the first two notes of the theme from “The Simpsons.” The first two notes (“The Simp-”) form a tritone. Try singing it. You’ll want to go to the “-sons”! It is harmonically “unstable,” that is, it *wants* to resolve into consonance.



Legend has it that the tritone was considered so abhorrently dissonant in the Middle Ages, that it was dubbed “the Devil in Music,” or *diabolus in musica*, and that if anyone was caught by the church performing or composing a piece with a tritone in it, he or she would be excommunicated, or even executed. While this makes for fantastic stories, it hasn’t actually ever been proven. The truth is simply that it was generally avoided because it was dissonant and difficult to sing. Instances where it *was* used would have been ones in which it was properly – that is, according to strict theoretical rules – resolved into consonance.

Throughout Western classical music history, the tritone has become increasingly accepted, to the point where today, it is actually *celebrated* in atonal music, jazz, and popular music like the “Simpsons” theme. To our modern ears, it has lost most of its “offendability.” But it *does* get the imagination going, doesn’t it?

...A long time ago, sometime in the 13th century, an unidentifiable corpse was discovered, floating amongst the reeds of the river that ran along the quiet little Italian village. Meanwhile, rumours were circulating that the local priest had been inserting latent Satanic musical messages into his Mass. The rumours had reached Rome, and a very learned Bishop visited the church in disguise. Upon hearing the *Gradus* of the Mass, the Bishop immediately stood up and left. The priest soon received orders to leave the church, and only days later disappeared....

Meditating-Music

Perfect and pure meditation, I suppose, would require no noise at all, or at least a complete *tuning out* of noise. But for those of us who need a little help centring ourselves, focussing, concentrating, or zoning out into a meditative-like state, sometimes music can help. And some musics are better than others.

Perfect zoning out (or zoning in) music should be simple, uncomplicated, and undisturbing. Too much texture, layering of voices, harmonic complexity, or too many dynamic changes provide too much to think about. Beethoven’s symphonies may be amazing, but they are dynamic and exciting; Chopin’s Nocturnes for piano may be beautiful, their melodies sweet and plaintive, but they are complex. Many types of Western Classical music are great for *inspiration* with their great climaxes, beautiful harmonic progressions, and heart-wrenching melodies, but they are ultimately distracting.

Oddly enough, one finds the best music for meditation (or at least /do) at the ends of the chronological spectrum of Western classical music. (I wish I were an authority on other world musics, some of which I’m sure would lend themselves perfectly to such an endeavour.) Gregorian chant, from as early as 400 CE, is incredibly soothing, steadying, and “timeless” in its mono-melodic, cathedral-reverb simplicity. It also is highly suggestive of a space for personal reflection or prayer and offers a sort of isolation from the outside world. It is truly beautiful, and can certainly be listened to for its own sake, but it can also easily serve as an “atmosphere setter” and form a cushion around our consciousness, drowning out noise and worries, and granting us the serenity that some find in a quiet church or a quiet forest...

If you don’t know what Gregorian Chant sounds like, imagine in your mind’s ear, a group of men singing one melodic line in unison, stretching Latin words over many notes, in a rhythmically free manner. It may stay on the same pitch for the entire time, or the melody may wind beautifully for a long time. And of course, it’s best sung in a big cathedral where the reverb is rich and enchanting.

Travelling now nearly to the other end of the time spectrum, we find Minimalism. Minimalism was a reaction against the complexity that twelve-tone composers celebrated at the beginning of the 20th century. Developed during the 1960s and early 70s, it embraced simplicity; it was based on the notion of reduction, the paring down of materials in a musical work. Every musical element – harmony, rhythm, dynamics, instruments – remains fixed for the duration of the piece or changes very slowly. It is “intentionless” and without climaxes. Composers were inspired by the time-suspending qualities of Indian, African, and Balinese music, and by Eastern philosophies, meditation, and sometimes even by the harmonious simplicity, steady pulse, and rhythmic drive of drug-oriented rock and roll. (It was the 60s, after all.)

In trying to imagine what a minimalist piece may sound like, take, for example, any five notes in a simple rhythm. Repeat it over and over and over, maybe changing one of the notes (and keeping it changed) for the rest of the piece. Gradually you may decide to change the other notes one at a time, as well. And that’s it—a *bona fide* minimalist piece! Works by Philip Glass, Steve Reich, or John Adams are great to listen to.

Listening Suggestions (found at your friendly neighbourhood McGill Music Library):

- Gregorian Chant:
Glory of the Angels – CD 8089
Chant Grégorien Propre des Messes du Cycle de Noël – CD 164
- Minimalism:
Steve Reich: *Piano Phase* – on CD 2486
John Adams: *Phrygian Gates* – on CD 6790

~ Krissy Keech

Krissy, who wrote both articles on this page, is a first-year Masters student in Music Education and a classical music evangelist.

Michigan University Integrates Contemplation into Music Degree

I recently came across a curriculum design for a four-year undergraduate programme at the School of Music of the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, entitled "Bachelor of Fine Arts in Jazz and Contemplative Studies," designed and advocated by Michigan professor Ed Sarath. The full text is available at the following link: <http://www.springerlink.com/content/p24317786575578r/fulltext.pdf>.

The stated aim of this curriculum is to "combine meditation practice and related studies with jazz and overall musical training [as] part of a small but growing movement in academia that seeks to integrate contemplative disciplines within the educational process." Within the conventional competitive conservatory environment at the University of Michigan, the core of the curriculum is the "Contemplative Practice Seminar," which students take for four terms, during which they are required to sustain a regular meditation practice (30-40 minutes daily). Each class session begins with a short (10-15-minute) group meditation, followed by discussion of experiences and readings related to corresponding theoretical, philosophical, cultural, and historical issues. Students are encouraged to seek more involved meditation training outside the university (at their own expense), at any number of local meditation centres operating in various spiritual traditions.

In his advocacy of the curriculum to his colleagues, Sarath addresses issues of compatibility of meditative practice with academic rigour, separation of religion and state (UMich is a public institution in the United States, after all), assigning credit for meditation, and the extrication of contemplative disciplines from their original spiritual traditions. He argues that, given the state of tensions and violence currently at play in the world due to religious ideologies and loyalties, the integration of cross-traditional contemplative practice in the academic world may be just the avenue needed to address and develop what he calls trans-traditional identities, "rooted, first and foremost, in an interior experience, rather than shaped by exterior, institutional, or denominational influences." Further, "while the highly specialized tendencies of the academic world often keep [top practitioners in the sciences, arts, and humanities] apart, contemplative studies may provide fertile ground for faculty members in the most disparate of fields to come together." Sarath also argues that this cross-traditional approach need not negate the spiritual traditions that the practices come from, nor any other. On the contrary, "the cultivation of a trans-traditional spiritual vision may lay groundwork that enhances such affiliation." This is directly descriptive of my own experience as a committed Christian who is eager to explore and glean wisdom from other spiritual paths: my Protestant faith and practice are strengthened by my engagement with Anglo-Catholic liturgy, Marian spirituality, Buddhism, yoga, Sufism, Zen, Native American spiritualities, and many others.

As Sarath argues further, the deliberate use of contemplation and meditation in intellectual, ethical, or creative inquiry is not novel, but rather a return to tradition. In European-centred musical discourse, this tradition goes back as far as Pythagoras and his experiments in the physical properties of sound, if not further. Pythagoras was a mystic! Other traditions are much more ancient still. Sarath goes on to compare improvisation and composition, formerly core activities for any highly trained musician, but now the separate domain of academic specialists, to meditation as related to overarching human growth. "Just as improvisation and composition enhance overall musicianship, meditation can enhance overall personal, transpersonal, and intellectual development."

In terms of specifically musical endeavour, Sarath relates musicians' experiences of altered, transcendent consciousness while making music to similar experiences reported and sometimes sought by athletes, scientists, and all sorts of other professions. He argues that meditative traditions are conceived and designed with these experiences as the aim, rather than some exterior goal, such as fine music, long-distance triathlon endurance, brilliant legal insight, or scientific discovery. Thus integrating contemplative practice into education as a whole will teach more deliberately the skills of creative synthesis of ideas and insights, self-awareness, and the growth of wisdom and compassion. "Contemplative disciplines, unlike activities that might induce contemplative states [as a by-product], are linked to theoretical and philosophical models of consciousness and its development. Thus, while long-distance athletes or environmental engineers may invoke contemplative experiences in their respective activities, there is no corresponding body of knowledge in their fields that explains these states, the mechanics through which they are invoked, the ways they differ cognitively from ordinary experience, and the stages corresponding to their development over time."

I find this curriculum and advocacy extremely inspiring as a McGill student. That such a curriculum has been implemented at another University of the same magnitude as McGill in terms of volume of people and entrenchment of status-quo academic learning models, is extremely hopeful. Many educational and intellectual traditions, often musical, begin with contemplative discipline as their basic intellectual, emotional, and ethical tool. Perhaps we, chronic quantifiers on one hand and impulsively instinct-driven on the other, can rediscover its benefits, and meet ourselves and our higher powers anew in the balance between insight and information, emotion and intellect. This balance is the goal of any great music, and any great religion.

~ Loren Carle

*Loren is nearly a Master of Music, according to McGill University. This informal piece was written in contemplating his last seminar paper – an innovative curriculum design based on music and yoga training.
[ed's note: Loren also has a long braid and a rather nice beard going on.]*

Bach: An Atheist's Priest!

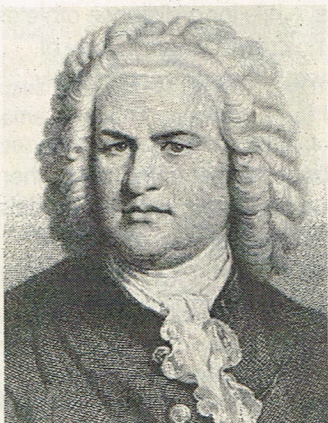
Bist du bei mir

Bist du bei mir,
geh' ich mit Freuden
zum Sterben und zu
meiner Ruh'.

Ach, wie vergnügt
wär' so mein Ende,
es drückten deine
schönen Hände
mir die getreuen
Augen zu!

Be thou with me, and
I go gladly
to death and to my
rest.

Ah, how contented
were my end,
for that thy fair
hands
pressed shut my
faithful eyes!



-Translation: Stuart Wright

I remember distinctly the first time I found myself wanting to believe in God. Since I was an atheist and rather defensive about it, you can well imagine what surprise the thought provoked in me. If it gave me feelings of peace, it also unsettled my mind; I didn't know what to make of it, and after some thought I settled on the daring plan of not making anything of it at all. But I suspect that, had I had a means of communicating what I was feeling to my minister of the moment (a portly fellow who wore a kindly smile and a remarkably persuasive wig), he would not have been the slightest bit surprised. He had felt it himself, after all, and had filled his homily to bursting with it. He was, however, quite out of earshot, as he had written this particular bit in the year 1731.

I refer, of course, to Johann Sebastian Bach, and the fourth movement of his Cantata No. 140, Sleepers Awake (*Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*), which I heard for the first time at the age of 15. The Cantata is Bach's setting of a Lutheran hymn; and its fourth movement has tenors sing the hymn itself while a treble instrument (in the original score, a kind of oboe) and continuo play an original melody in counterpoint. It is a simple tune that manages to be at once contemplative and uplifting, full of both Christian joy and quiet faith; when combined with the plain chorale, the effect is such as to make a Herod weep.

Other composers occasionally produce in me a spiritual sentiment – a couple of Corelli's concerti grossi, and his Christmas concerto in particular, spring to mind – but none so often or so powerfully as Bach does. The first movement of his second keyboard concerto in E major is joy distilled, and the second Brandenburg concerto likewise; Brandenburg No. 6 is suffused with the same peaceful quality as Sleepers Awake, and the Goldberg variations speak in a more introspective voice of the same kind.

These are just the most notable examples, and then only a bare few: a prayerfulness pervades nearly all of Bach's work. He is so strongly identified by this musical piety that when his contemporaries achieve something similar, often it is misattributed to Bach! I'm thinking in particular of *Bist du bei mir*, a beautiful aria and in my opinion the equal of Sleepers Awake, which is popularly thought of as Bach's despite having been written by his well-regarded peer, Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel. (I've included the song's lyrics, in German with English translation, with this article.)

It's no coincidence that Bach was a Lutheran: music, and the idea of praying musically to God, has been central to the Lutheran movement since its inception. Luther himself practically invented the hymn as we know it, and wrote many, among them the famous "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." My own church also adopted the practice, and the Anglican hymnal soars to majestic heights indeed in the hands of an Elgar or a Vaughan Williams. There's something wonderfully democratic, and gladdening, about a congregation singing together in worship. A taste of it is preserved in the secularised tradition of singing Christmas songs, but the old carols are still the best.

That comparison leads me back to the point of this little reflection: you may notice that I have said nothing of our great religious works – Mozart's Masses, Händel's *Messiah*, or indeed Bach's own Passion oratorios. They are, of course, mighty, and I adore them. For the devout, they are solemn and noble occasional works; for nonbelievers, they are fantastic pieces of music. But there is no prayer in them; or rather, they are full of ornate public prayer. The rest of Bach's music, though, thrums with a private, humble piety, as if the setting of each note to paper had been a word spoken to God. I thank heaven that Bach had the generosity to write his prayers down: in them he shares enough of his large heart to make a cynic cry out for the Lord.

I enjoy cranking up my recording of the King's College Choir and bellowing along with the *Messiah* as much as the next bloke (actually, probably rather more than the next bloke). But when I'm feeling prayerful, I go into my room, and shut my door, and listen to Bach.

~ Stuart Wright

Stuart is an Anglican U2 student in English literature who, as may be evident to the discerning reader, greatly enjoys playing and listening to Bach's music.

New Earth Voices

Almost ten years ago, a few students and chaplain Gwenda Wells began to sing together. They wanted to pull together an out-of-the-way *a capella* repertory on spiritual themes. It had to be inclusive, and sensitive to justice issues and feminist concerns. The selections had to include songs from non-Eurocentric cultures, and music by women composers and by Canadians. Every member was to have a say on selection and interpretation of music. The group, which dubbed itself "New Earth Voices" (fondly nicknamed "Nev"), soon did a special performance to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Montreal Massacre. As the choir grew and became more formal, it eventually became a full-fledged SSMU club with an active executive.

The group's inclusive ideals were not without difficulty. Joel Nothman, an exchange student from the University of Sydney, explains the problem: "NEV has a challenge ... a very interesting one, in selecting its repertoire. It attempts to spread a message of unity by bringing together music from a wide selection of religions and cultures, but at the same time is restricted by being an *a-capella* (SATB) choir. Most music set for this type of group comes from certain Christian and, to a lesser extent, Jewish communities (and even when music is found from non-western parts of the world, it is still often Christian, arranged for the demand of church groups in the West). When you leave the western paradigm, it is also much harder to define what makes music religious or spiritual: will the traditional folk songs of some small community suffice? So the choir is bound to have a western bias, both in spirit and in musical genres." New Earth Voices has cleared this hurdle in the past by turning up lots of African music, a lilting set of tunes by a Costa Rican woman, Rocio Sanz, worldbeat-influenced tunes with a message of peace and solidarity, new music by several Canadians, and jazz- and Gospel-influenced pieces, introducing novice singers to the rhythmic and harmonic swing of the late twentieth century. Nonetheless, Joel admits that after dropping the Choral Society for NEV, he soon became quite critical of it. He "felt there was an excess of Christian music (albeit from a variety of cultures), and (despite) a significant portion of Jewish music, I didn't see it really being in a spiritual mindset. I felt (NEV) wasn't really standing up to its advertised image. I voiced my concerns and challenges. I am coming from a religious Jewish perspective myself, but think that if the choir wants to show pluralism, then it needs to attempt to stretch out a little further, look a little harder, and make sure that its message isn't merely superficial."

The choir's pluralistic message and its commitment to celebrating cultural diversity make it unique at McGill. According to Joel, although McGill has "quite a number" of choral ensembles, New Earth Voices' inclusivity "vastly distinguishes" it. Other McGill choirs, says Joel, are either "small, competitive, poppy beat-box-boasting *a-capella* groups" or "the Choral Society, that is much more grandiose, sticking to classic works (this semester Mozart's *Requiem*). NEV tries to set itself apart, being less competitive, more inclusive, and breaking away from the paradigm of the popular love song, or only the classics. While in the main, people are in NEV for the sake of singing and its own enjoyment, it is important that it also carries a message, allowing even fun to have a purpose."

A further purpose was fulfilled when the group decided that each term, a few members would look into local charities which might benefit from the end-of-term concert. A new tradition was born: non-profit groups now come and let the audience hear a bit about their work, and the choir "passes the hat." Last term's benefit was for *i*create*, a SSMU club doing craft therapy in hospitals and shelters. (See <http://ssmu.mcgill.ca/icreate>.) This term, donations will go to *Santropol Rou-lant*, a meals-on-wheels service focused on intergenerational support and community. (See <http://www.ssmu.mcgill.ca/santropol>.)

Both purpose and fun are why Karine Gagnon, a fourth-year Art History major and NEV soprano, went in search of something like NEV. Karine remembers how she first got involved: "I was at Activities Night in search of a group to join in the hopes of ridding myself of my first-year blues. I wanted McGill to be more to me than just the place I came to go to class. I was attracted to NEV and MCS. I was looking for an easy-going choir that didn't require auditions and that had a sacred repertoire because I am a big sacred music fan. I decided that I would try out both choirs, but never even made it to the MCS practice because I fell in love with NEV from the start. They sure did the trick; I haven't felt like McGill was a drag since! They made me feel like I was part of the gang from the moment I set foot in the room. They couldn't have cared less that I had pretty much forgotten how to read music, didn't know my voice type and hadn't sung with a choir since elementary." Karine adds that though the members and the director have changed since that fateful 2003 Activities night, the spirit of the choir has stayed the same. "We are still as easy going and welcoming as ever and our repertoire is still spiritually centred, if perhaps more ambitious than before. This is because our current director has so much faith in us that she believes we can sing pretty much anything, and she's had us sing just about everything going. We're going to be singing a Chinese piece this semester! I think that says it all about her ambition, and hence ours - because she does make it contagious."

Last term, director Fredericka PetitHomme incorporated some chants and songs for solo voice, in some cases with percussion, to represent Hindu and Muslim music. Also in the programme was a Tamil piece setting a soloist and small choir against the texture of the whole group, with a shimmering 7/8 time ground sustained by the small chorus. In this term's concert, that piece will be the choir's one reprise, along with compositions ranging from Taiwanese folksongs, to a *rather* non-traditional version of the twenty-third psalm by avant-garde jazz singer Bobby McFerrin, together with a composition by alumnus Stephen Eisenhauer, and an Italian baroque Jewish setting by the Italian composer Salomon Rossi. What does Joel have to say about this term's repertoire? "After receiving a list of pieces in our first-of-term rehearsal last week, I have to say that I am very excited for Winter 2007, and we have some interesting selections from across the world and its ethno-cultural/religious communities." The final concert repertory isn't solidified yet, though. E-mails are flying back and forth with more suggestions of music - from Sufi to Japanese. This is NEV at work.



~ This article was a collective effort by New Earth alumni, members, and friends.
You can see the choir's website at: <http://www.mcgill.ca/chaplaincy/newearth>

Newman Centre

3484 Peel St., 398-4106

newmancentre@mcgill.ca

www.newmancentre.org

Did you know that
Roman Catholic Mass
is held conveniently on cam-

pus
several times per week?

Contact Newman Centre
for details.



McGill Student Parents' Network

(through Chaplaincy Services)

MSPN provides support to
students who are parents.

Regularly we offer: informal childcare,
babysitting, friendly visits to households,
and monthly support group meetings.

Interested families should contact:
Liz: 398-4104 mcgillspn@yahoo.ca

New Earth Voices

NEV is a small choir that sings sacred music
from many traditions.



Directed by a dynamic recent graduate
of the Faculty of Music, it's fun, challeng-
ing, and timed to fit busy student sched-
ules.

Tuesdays from 4:45-6:30
at the Diocesan Theological College,
3473 University St.
Phone 398-4104 for details.



St. Martha's in the Basement

McGill Ecumenical Chaplaincy's St. Martha's
shares a weekly informal worship and discus-
sion, followed by a vegetarian
supper. It is a welcoming place to
form meaningful friendships, ex-
plore faith in an inclusive way, and
bring sacredness to our lives.
Friends of Christians very wel-
come. Wednesday evenings at 6:00 in the base-
ment of the United Theological College, 3521
University. Details: Gwenda Wells at 398-4104

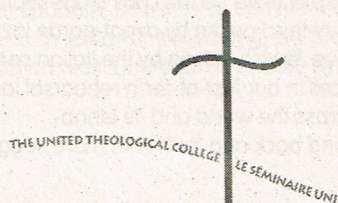


JOIN
STUDENTS
AND STAFF
OF THE
UNITED
THEOLOGICAL COL-
LEGE
(OF THE
UNITED
CHURCH OF CANADA)

EACH WEDNESDAY FOR WORSHIP AND
FELLOWSHIP.

BEGINS AT 11:45 AM
849-2042

3521 UNIVERSITY STREET



The Muslim Students Association of McGill

We offer: weekly study circles, free Islamic
educational materials, Ramadan services,
lectures/conferences, library
(Shatner building, room 430)

3460 McTavish Street, Rm. 14

ssmu.mcgill.ca/msa

msamegill@montrealmuslims.ca

Visitors from other faiths always welcome.

Share a **HOT VEGAN LUNCH** at the

RABBIT HOLE CAFÉ,

a Collective Vegetarian Kitchen

3625 Aylmer, downstairs

Fridays, 1-4 pm

Donations of \$1 or

a non-perishable food item

are appreciated.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Food depot and nutritional
tips and support.

3625 Aylmer, 1st floor

Fridays, 1-5 pm

Email: food4thought.yd@gmail.com

Hillel House

Attention, Jewish students and friends! Dis-
cussions on Jewish
topics, Jewish feminist
movement, social
events, "ask a rabbi,"
"Ghetto Shul," Torah
study, dating services,
message boards, and much more!!!



Ask for rabbi Dov Whitman.

3460 Stanley Street (Hillel library)

845-9171 rabbi@hillel.ca www.hillel.ca

McGill



Preparing
Teachers of
Jewish and
General Studies
in an
Internationally
Renowned
Setting

B.Ed. and M.A. options available

For more information contact:

Prof. Eric Caplan

514-398-6544

eric.caplan@mcgill.ca

or visit our website

<http://www.mcgill.ca/edu-jtp/>

Sikh Chaplaincy Open Meeting



Social get-togethers

Newman Centre, 3484 Peel

Contact Manjit Singh,

Chaplain

manjit.singh@mcgill.ca

International Students!

Are you freezing?

Lightly used coats, clothing,
shoes, and boots

are available

free of charge

to International Students.

Stop by Chaplaincy Services.

3600 McTavish St., Suite 4400

Monday-Friday, 9:30-4:30

398-4104



YD The Yellow Door
La Porte Jaune

Volunteers needed!

The Yellow Door Elderly Project is seeking volunteers
to work with seniors living in and around the McGill
Ghetto. No major time commitment required —
flexible hours, just a couple of hours per month!
Great opportunity to contribute to community spirit

If you would like to become
a Yellow Door volunteer
call 398-6243

or email:
elderlyproject@hotmail.com

Montreal Diocesan Theological College

3473 University Ave.

Daily Christian worship—all are welcome!

Morning Prayer, Mon.-Thurs.: 8:00 am

Evening Prayer, Mon.-Thurs.: 4:30 pm

Eucharist Wed. 11:30 am (followed by lunch),

Fri. 7:30 am

All are welcome!

Free Zen Meditation

McGill Chaplaincy

3600 McTavish, #4400

Thursdays 3-4 pm

(Discussion, Instruction,
and Q&A at 2:45)



Radix publishes ads for groups and events
with a spiritual or social-justice theme—for
FREE! Email radix@mail.mcgill.ca