

From Sanctuary to Screen: Sacred Sound, Staged Meaning, and the Broadcasting of Sacred Music as Performative Theatre

Iyanuoluwa Ajayi¹ & Olubunmi Adaramola²

Department of Performing Arts, School of Humanities, Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology (BOUESTI), Ikere-Ekiti

*Corresponding Author: Iyanuoluwa Ajayi

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20019025>

Article History	Abstract
Original Research Article	<p><i>The ways that sacred music is performed and its conceptual underpinnings have changed as a result of its growing dissemination outside of conventional liturgical contexts and into the theater and television. The migration of sacred sound from sanctuary to screen creates a hybrid performative form in which aesthetic, ritual, and theological meanings are altered, according to this article, which explores sacred music at the nexus of composition, theatrical performance, and broadcast mediation. The research, which is situated within the current language of interdisciplinary humanities, emphasizes sacred music as a dynamic cultural practice as opposed to a set liturgical item. In order to understand sacred music performance as an embodied, dramaturgical, and mediated experience, this study develops a theoretical framework based on sacred musicology, performance theory, ritual studies, and media mediation theory. According to this framework, sacred sound is defined as meaning that is acquired through the interplay of gesture, sound, place, visual framing, and technology. The study provides a qualitative and interpretive examination of modern sacred music performances that are televised, looking at how media technologies and theatrical staging affect audience engagement, reception, and the sense of sanctity. Broadcasting is viewed as an active agent in meaning-making that converts congregational ritual into a mediated performance for audiences that are spread out, rather than as a neutral means of transmission. The article also shows that sacred meaning is neither only lost nor blindly maintained in broadcast performances. Rather, it is constantly renegotiated in a transitional area where digital media, theater, and liturgy meet. This study adds to ongoing discussions in Sacred Musicology, Theatre and Performance Studies, and the Digital Humanities by articulating an interdisciplinary analytical model for comprehending sacred music as performative theater in media environments. It also emphasizes the need for interdisciplinary approaches to sacred art interpretation in a cultural landscape that is becoming more and more mediated.</i></p> <p>Keywords: Sacred sound, Theatre and Performance studies, Digital Humanities, Cultural Landscape.</p>
Received: 10-03-2026	
Accepted: 15-04-2026	
Published: 04-05-2026	
<p>Copyright © 2026 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.</p>	
<p>Citation: Ajayi, I., & Adaramola, O. (2026). From sanctuary to screen: Sacred sound, staged meaning, and the broadcasting of sacred music as performative theatre. <i>UKR Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (UKRJAHS)</i>, 2(5), 9-16.</p>	

Introduction

Sacred music has always played a significant role in religious liturgy and cultural expression, serving as both an embodied ritual and an aesthetic art form that allows communities to experience the transcendent. Whether it be hymnody, choral polyphony, or indigenous liturgical expression, musical sound functions within ritual frameworks that influence spiritual experience, theological

meaning, and communal identity across all religious traditions. The blending of Western liturgical forms with indigenous rhythmic, melodic, and performative sensitivities in African Christian traditions is a distinctive feature of sacred music, creating hybrid musical idioms that traverse faith, culture, and performance practice (Adedeji, 2007). As a result of the interplay between local creative

agency and missionary legacies, Nigerian religious music has developed into devotional forms that are socially communicative, artistic, and theological.

Femi Adedeji's contributions continue to be fundamental to Nigerian scholarship's comprehension of African sacred music as a cultural performance and a theological discourse. Christian music, according to Adedeji, is a practical and metaphysical medium that articulates and embodies religious meaning rather than just being a sonic adornment of worship (Adedeji, 2007). According to Adedeji (2017), his in-depth analysis of the native music of the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) shows how sacred music shapes worship rituals, group identities, and religious consciousness in Pentecostal spirituality. Additionally, he argues that indigenous musical logic is still essential to the theological and aesthetic integrity of modern sacred music in his joint work on teaching Nigerian gospel artists, which emphasizes African sensitivity as a key component of performance practice (Adedeji & Loko, 2019). These studies recognize the changing performative and communicative aspects of Nigerian sacred music while firmly placing it within living ritual contexts.

Sacred music has historically been inextricably linked to corporeal ritual in actual places of worship. But how sacred music is created, disseminated, and experienced has changed dramatically as broadcast technologies have grown from early radio and television to modern digital streaming platforms. According to media scholars, mediatization the process by which media logic is incorporated into religious organizations and rituals is how broadcasting actively transforms religious practice rather than just disseminating religious information (Hjarvard, 2008; Hjarvard, 2013). By reconfiguring sacred space, temporal rhythm, and participative presence, this method turns congregational worship into a mediated performance that may be viewed by audiences that are spread out. This change is in line with advancements in Nigerian theater and performance practice, where researchers have shown how live performance, media technologies, and promotional tactics are increasingly combining. According to studies on modern Nigerian theater, stage plays are progressively incorporating multimedia and mixed-media techniques to improve visual appeal, match performance with media aesthetics, and reach a wider audience (Mark & Emasealu, 2018; Olatunji, 2025). According to research, social media platforms are becoming essential instruments for audience engineering and theater PR outside of the stage, influencing how performances are publicized, shared, and viewed by online audiences (Mbede et al., 2024). Even though they frequently receive little coverage, traditional media outlets like newspapers and television channels still have an impact on theater attendance and exposure, underscoring the

ongoing significance of media-performance connections in Nigeria (Diakpomrere, 2018).

These changes highlight a larger trend in which performance, whether it be religious or dramatic, takes place in a media-rich setting where publicity, spectacle, and ritual all come together. This phenomenon is further referred to by ritual and media scholars as the "televisionization of ritual," a process whereby broadcast technologies create new forms of co-presence and affective engagement by obfuscating the distinction between mediated spectatorship and embodied participation (Kopytowska, 2018). This makes sacred music played on television and digital platforms a hybrid art form, rooted in ritual tradition but altered by media circulation, visual framing, and theatrical staging. Therefore, there are important concerns about authenticity, theological framing, ritual meaning, and audience response when sacred music moves from sanctuary-based ritual to mediated performance. This work addresses mediated sacred music as a dynamic site of negotiation where liturgy, theater, and media converge, rather than seeing mediation as a straightforward loss or maintenance of sanctity. This paper examines how broadcast technologies reinterpret sacred sound as performative theatre in modern media landscapes by placing sacred music within Nigerian sacred musicology and Nigerian theatre-media scholarship. It does this by integrating sacred musicology, performance theory, ritual studies, and media studies.

Problem Statement

Historically, sacred music has operated within well-defined liturgical and ceremonial contexts, with its compositional structures, theological texts, and performance techniques focused on fostering spiritual development and collective worship. However, sacred music has increasingly been moved from the sanctuary to staged and mediated settings like concert halls, television studios, livestream platforms, and digital archives due to recent advancements in theatrical presentation and broadcast media. This change has increased religious music's popularity and reach, but it has also brought up important issues regarding audience reaction, performance authenticity, and the evolution of sacred meaning. Sacred music, theater, and broadcast media are frequently treated as separate fields of study in existing scholarship, which leads to disjointed analyses that ignore their expanding interconnections in modern performance practice. While theatre and media studies usually concentrate on visual dramaturgy and mediation without sufficient engagement with sacred sound and ritual meaning, musicological studies may place a higher priority on compositional and theological analysis. Because of this disciplinary divide, there is a theoretical void in our

knowledge of how broadcast technologies, theatrical staging, and musical composition all work together to generate sacred music as a hybrid performative form. This study fills this vacuum by addressing the need for an interdisciplinary analytical framework that can explain how holiness itself is negotiated throughout the recontextualization and reinterpretation of sacred music as performative theater within broadcast media venues.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this article is to examine critically the transition of sacred music from liturgical ritual to mediated performance, by examining the ways in which broadcast media, theatrical staging, and sacred music composition interact to create new kinds of sacred experience, meaning, and reception in modern performance settings.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this article are to:

1. Examine sacred music as a theological and creative activity, emphasizing the ways in which traditional liturgical settings use musical structure, language, and sound to convey sacred meaning.
2. Examine how dramatic staging functions in performances of sacred music, paying special emphasis to gesture, visual symbolism, embodiment, and spatial dramaturgy as means of generating interpretive meaning.
3. Examine how recording, transmission, and visual framing technologies alter audience perception and engagement as you examine the mediating function of broadcast media in sacred music performances.
4. Examine how congregational ritual gave way to mediated spectatorship and consider how this change may affect how sacredness, ritual authenticity, and performative identity are understood.
5. Develop a comprehensive analytical approach to sacred music in modern media settings by utilizing interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks from media studies, ritual studies, performance theory, and sacred musicology.
6. By suggesting sacred music performance in broadcast circumstances as a model for combining music, theater, and digital media study, you can add to the body of knowledge on interdisciplinarity in the humanities.

Theoretical Framework

An interdisciplinary theoretical framework that incorporates viewpoints from media mediation theory, ritual studies, performance theory, and sacred musicology forms the basis of this investigation. By highlighting the connection between musical form, text, and spiritual

meaning, sacred musicology offers the groundwork for comprehending sacred sound as a theological and symbolic medium. Sacred music performance is interpreted as an embodied and ritualized event that goes beyond just aural experience through the use of performance theory. The transition of sacred music from collective worship to staged performance is further clarified by ritual theory, which emphasizes changes in authority, symbolism, and involvement.

Media Broadcasting is examined using media mediation theory as an active participant in meaning-making as opposed to a passive medium. The spatial, temporal, and perceptual aspects of sacred music performances are altered by broadcast media through visual framing, sound engineering, editing, and distribution channels. A comprehensive analysis of sacred music as a performative and mediated phenomena embedded in modern digital culture is made possible by the merging of various frameworks.

Sacred Sound and Theological Meaning

Sacred music is a theological expression that is woven into the daily activities of religious worship; it is more than just beautiful music. Sacred music serves as sound that mediates belief, reflects doctrine, and enhances spiritual experience in all religions. Sacred music has symbolic implications that influence worshippers' experiences with the divine and strengthen group identification, from early Christian chant to modern choral compositions (Foley 2015).

Sacred Music as Theological Expression

Sacred music is viewed in theological debate as a component of divine worship that contributes to liturgical activity and reveals spiritual truth. Sound itself is positioned as a theological vehicle in official liturgical documents like Sacrosanctum Concilium, which emphasize that sacred music contributes to "the glory of God and the sanctification of the faithful" by its connection with sacred text and ritual. Similarly, Pope Benedict XVI (Joseph Ratzinger) maintained that sacred music is liturgical because it expresses belief via sound and beauty, and that it does more than just accompany worship. (Online sources, Vatican publications).

Liturgical theology, which views chant and hymnody as ways that music contributes to the proclamation of faith, emphasizes the theological significance of music's capacity to envelop the sacred text in a way that makes the words ring in the heart and mind.

Composition, Text Setting, Harmony, Sound and Symbolism

The theological voice of sacred music is expressed and made audible through innovative techniques that blend storytelling, harmonic language, and symbolic musical structures. With melodic designs that are thoughtfully designed to highlight theological meaning and lead emotional and spiritual response, sacred music in Christian worship traditions usually lays a heavy focus on textual importance. By permitting melodic contour and modal inflection to follow the natural rhythm and semantic weight of liturgical texts, Gregorian chant, for instance, was created to encourage contemplative worship by emphasizing prayerful meditation above musical exhibition (Hiley, 1993; McKinnon, 1998).

Sacred music's harmonic and textural structure frequently conveys symbolic theological meaning in addition to melody. Consonance and stable harmonic structures have been linked to order, balance, and divine harmony in Western sacred traditions, while the use of dissonance and its resolution has often been interpreted as a musical metaphor for theological tension and spiritual reconciliation (Taruskin, 2005). Theological ideas of divine perfection and communal worship have also been associated with polyphonic textures, especially in Renaissance and Baroque sacred music, as metaphors of cosmic order and oneness (Butt, 1997).

Sacred composers frequently use voice leading, harmonic progression, and modal or tonal structure to communicate theological intricacy and spiritual influence, as further evidenced by musicological studies. Chorale-based composition is a prime example of this integration in Lutheran sacred music. By combining collective memory, scriptural text, and creative composition, the cantus firmus technique which involves embedding a well-known congregational hymn melody into broader contrapuntal or cantata structures serves both musical and theological purposes (Leaver, 2007). Canonical instances of this method are found in Johann Sebastian Bach's church cantatas, where liturgical function, theological symbolism, and musical structure come together to provide a complex sacred discourse (Dürr, 1991).

Hymns like *Amazing Grace* or *sacred, sacred, sacred* are examples of how doctrinal themes of grace, holiness, and divine mystery are reinforced in Christian liturgies through the use of harmonised four-part arrangements and melodic lines drawn from plain chant. Both theological remembrance and societal engagement are facilitated by their harmonic clarity and recurrence. Cantatas like George Frideric Handel's *Ode for St. Cecilia's Day* (1739) Although it is played outside of a rigorous liturgical context, uses theological concepts of *musica mundi* (music of the spheres) to connect musical harmony with divine creation and theological cosmology. Likewise,

Choral works that demonstrate how harmony, modal writing, and choral texture may bring to light theological issues of sacrament, praise, and liturgical drama include Tchaikovsky's *Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, which is a cohesive musical cycle that sets the texts of the Divine Liturgy.

Through text setting, artistic structure, and symbolic meanings woven into musical form, these examples demonstrate how sacred music whether it is liturgical chant, hymnody, or large-scale choral composition constantly negotiates sound and theology.

Staged Meaning: Theatrical Interpretation of Sacred Music in Broadcasting Media

Theatre as Embodied Meaning-Making

Beyond merely aural or liturgical contexts, theatrical performance theory provides a strong lens through which to interpret sacred music. According to performance studies, theater is a process of embodied meaning-making in which actors interpret and convey cultural and spiritual narratives through gesture, space, voice, and symbolism. It is not just a pictorial art form. Ritual and theater share underlying structures and expressive strategies for mediating human experience, according to Richard Schechner's seminal work in performance theory, which re-defines theater as an expanded field that encompasses ritual, everyday social performance, and staged events (Schechner 2003). Schechner contends that the distinction between the performative and the sacred is blurred since both ritual and theater are made up of standardized, repeating behaviors that serve to transform participants and onlookers.

According to this theoretical stance, performances of sacred music, whether in a sanctuary or on television, are embodied enactments that place religion in the lived bodies of both the performers and their viewers rather than just being sound occurrences. The way that artists convey meaning through posture, gesture, movement, and spatial presence is known as embodiment in performance theory. Sacred music relies heavily on these embodied qualities to convey theological and spiritual substance. Chorus singers' choreographed movements or conductors' symbolic gestures, for instance, shape narrative and emotional response in a manner similar to dramaturgical staging in theater.

Gesture, Spatial Arrangement, Costume, and Symbolism

How audiences understand sacred music as staged meaning is greatly influenced by the visual and physical elements of performance gesture, spatial arrangement, and attire. Theater academics contend that performers use nonverbal cues like gesture and spatial arrangement as semiotic tools to create stories and emotional meaning. Similar to

theatrical *mise-en-scène*, chorister gestures, the placement of actors in liturgical space or on a broadcast frame, and the use of liturgical vestments or symbolic garments all serve as communicative cues.

More than only identifying roles, theological notions of holiness, sin, and grace are embodied by costumes and sacred vestments in liturgical theater, turning the visual field of performance into a symbolic theology. Similarly, spatial arrangements that convey relational hierarchy, sacred orientation, and ritual progression include the positioning of choirs in choir lofts, semi-circular choir arrangements, and the usage of sacred architecture. Sacred music is reframed through camera angles, edits, and visual arrangement in ways that accentuate or reinterpret its symbolic content. These theatrical norms are passed down from centuries of liturgical performance.

Sacred Music Performance as Ritualised Theatre

Important similarities between ritual and theater have been observed by scholars; these similarities are particularly noticeable in broadcast circumstances when sacred music is both a mediated performance and a religious act. Symbolic action, repetition, and regular behavior structure collective involvement with the divine in performance and ritual, which are intertwined phenomena. Similar to theater's significance in social storytelling and symbolic transformation, ritual functions are ingrained in theatrical enactments: they signify sacred time, express collective belief, and strengthen social ties. According to performance studies, sacred music performances, whether in a studio setting or a sanctuary, have both aesthetic (theatrical presentation) and effectiveness (ritual impact) components. According to Schechner's performance theory, there is an effective entertainment braid where ritual and theatrical components coexist and support one another: performances of sacred music relay theological content while simultaneously enthralling listeners on an aesthetic and emotional level. Thus, performances that are later televised constitute ritualized theater; they use theatrical conventions to transmit meaning to scattered audiences while maintaining a foundation in sacred tradition.

Dramaturgical Reading of Sacred Musical Performance

A dramaturgical interpretation of sacred music performances looks at how meaning is shaped by the performance's structure, narrative, and symbolic dynamics. Dramaturgy is the term used in theater to describe how dramatic action is articulated, how scenes are arranged, and how symbolic components contribute to thematic development. Similar dramaturgical logics can be used in sacred music, where theological truth is told through the combination of liturgical development, musical form, textual setting, and visual frame. Through editing, camera

positioning, and timing, broadcast media amplify this dramaturgy, turning the performance into a mediated narrative event as well as a ritual activity. This viewpoint is in line with performance studies literature, which views theater as a system of communication in which space, sound, and gestures create multi-layered meanings that engage audiences on an intellectual, emotional, and spiritual level. Scholars can investigate how performances convey intricate theological concepts, how broadcast framing reorganizes sacred dramaturgy, and how audiences perceive these performances as both art and worship by examining sacred music through a dramaturgical perspective.

From Sanctuary to Screen: Broadcasting Sacred Music

Broadcasting as Mediation, Not Neutral Transmission

Religious broadcasting is viewed in modern media studies as an active mediation process that influences the creation, reception, and interpretation of religious meaning rather than as a passive channel that merely transmits sound or images. Instead of serving as impartial channels for the dissemination of sacred content, media logics including formatting, narrative structuring, financial imperatives, and visual framing are integrated into religious communication and practice, according to mediatization theory (Hjarvard 2008; Hjarvard 2013). This perspective reinterprets broadcast media as a condition that reorganizes religious experience: it contributes to the construction of what audiences believe to be sacred, genuine, or significant in addition to disseminating sacred music outside of the sanctuary.

The very broadcast technologies television cameras, microphones, lighting, editing suites, and sound engineering systems are argued to serve as interpretive agents by media and religious scholars. By favoring some acoustic components over others, these technologies affect rhythm, tempo, tonal balance, and even theological meaning. As a result, in a broadcast situation, what viewers perceive as "sacred music" is a mediated creation influenced by editing and production decisions that go well beyond the initial liturgical context.

Camera Angles, Sound Engineering, Editing, and Narrative Framing

By intentionally creating staged meaning through visual and aural framing, broadcast media reconfigures sacred music. Camera angles dictate how architectural or ritual locations are represented, which performers are foregrounded, and which actions are emphasized. The harmony of voices, the prominence of melodic lines, the ambient acoustics of performance venues, and the general "feel" of sacred music as an auditory experience are all

influenced by sound engineering. The narrative arc of a performance, the length of silences, and the narration of piece or ritual transitions are all determined by editing. For example, it has been demonstrated that the televisual mediation of ritual blurs traditional sacred location and time by enabling viewers to feel emotionally and affectively "present" in rituals taking place elsewhere by fostering a sense of co-presence among scattered audiences. Sacred sound can no longer be internalized by audiences as a one-time, fleeting rite that takes place in a sanctuary, but rather as a performance that can be reproduced, accessed, and shared internationally thanks to televisualization. As a result, broadcasting is not neutral; rather, it is a component of the semiotic and artistic machinery that translates sacred music for a large audience. Like the conductor's baton, the camera's eye becomes a part of the way religious meaning is expressed and conveyed.

Transformation of Audience: Congregation to Viewers

The reconfiguration of audiences is one of the biggest changes brought about by broadcast mediation. Congregation groups that are co-present in a common physical and ceremonial location, participating collaboratively in worship, experience sacred music in traditional sanctuaries. Broadcast media, including television, radio, and livestream platforms, provide geographically scattered but practically unified spectatorial audiences. The way that audiences interact with sacred music is changed by this transition from congregational participation to mediated spectatorship. Viewers frequently experience sacred sound as content consumption an aesthetic and emotional encounter influenced by the logic of broadcast programming, viewer attention, and platform interactivity instead of as a component of corporeal liturgical action. Instead of only absorbing divine messages as liturgical form, audiences in mediated situations actively interpret them, negotiating personal meaning, as highlighted by cultural studies of religion and media. According to Stewart Hoover's research on media audiences, people understand religious content in the context of larger media usage patterns, identity formation, and cultural norms, making media a key location for meaning practice in daily life. According to this method, viewers are interpretive agents rather than passive consumers, and their experiences with sacred music are influenced by their technological, social, and personal circumstances.

Sacred Music as Performative Theatre for Mass Audiences

Sacred music frequently transforms into a type of performative theater a staged performance created for large audiences that blends narrative, visual, and aural

components when it enters broadcast media. By redefining sacred music within artistic activities that appeal to a wider audience while maintaining spiritual resonance, this does more than just transform ritual into entertainment. According to media studies on religion, religious content in the media frequently serves as a narrative spectacle as well as a ritual performance, with audiovisual storytelling approaches enhancing emotional depth and participation. In this regard, sacred music on television is similar to theatrical performances in that it is framed, edited, and presented to highlight the dramatic arc, visual symbolism, and emotional impact. This framework makes sacred music accessible to listeners around the world whose perception of the sacred is mediated through screens, in addition to believers.

To put it briefly, broadcast media changes sacred music from a liturgical form rooted in particular ritual contexts to a mediated performative event. This event is influenced by broadcast technologies, organized by narrative and artistic framing, and understood by audiences outside of the sanctuary. This shift necessitates multidisciplinary research into the ways that media studies, performance, musicology, and theology interact in modern sacred soundscapes.

Sacred Music as Performative Theatre in Media Space

A difficult balancing act between sacred function and theatrical aesthetics is highlighted by the movement of sacred music from sanctuary-based ritual settings to broadcast and digital media spaces. This study has demonstrated that religious music in mediated environments neither fully dissolves into secular spectacle nor merely maintains its unique liturgical identity. Instead, it resides in a performative area that lies between media logic, aesthetic design, and ritual aim. Performance theorists like Turner (1982) and Schechner (2003) have long maintained that theater and ritual are overlapping forms of symbolic action rather than mutually exclusive concepts. This overlap is demonstrated by sacred music broadcasting, which shows how theological meaning can be enacted through staged performance while maintaining its ritualistic roots.

Negotiation between Sacred Function and Theatrical Aesthetics

To effectively convey meaning to large audiences, sacred music is increasingly using theatrical tropes such as dramaturgical pace, visual symbolism, embodied gesture, and narrative framing in broadcast contexts. In addition to improving accessibility and emotional involvement, these artistic techniques reinterpret sacred music as something that should be seen as well as heard. What Small (1998) refers to as musicking a social act in which interactions between performers, audiences, and environments produce meaning is reflected in this negotiation. These connections are extended

beyond the local congregation through broadcasting, which turns sacred music into a performative act influenced by both theatrical presentation and ritual efficacy.

Preservation versus Transformation of Sacred Meaning

Whether theatrical and broadcast mediation preserves or changes sacred meaning is a major question in mediated sacred music. The idea that sacredness is not merely lost nor unquestioningly maintained is supported by this investigation. Rather, religious meaning is placed in a new context. According to Hjarvard's (2008; 2013) notion of mediatization, media alter how religion is perceived, understood, and practiced rather than eradicating it. This process is best illustrated via broadcast sacred music, where audience spectatorship, editing, and visual framing filter the meaning of theological texts and sacred sounds while keeping them present. From a theological standpoint, scholars like Ratzinger (2000) warn against aesthetic excess that masks sacred music's transcendent direction. However, as evidenced by performance-oriented sacred music study (Steuernagel, 2021), when used to promote interpretative clarity and ritual coherence, embodiment and theatricality can enhance theological communication rather than weaken it. As a result, sacred meaning becomes dynamic and is negotiated between continuity and change, tradition and innovation.

Ethical and Theological Implications

From a theological standpoint, scholars like Ratzinger (2000) warn against aesthetic excess that masks sacred music's transcendent direction. However, as evidenced by performance-oriented sacred music study (Steuernagel, 2021), when used to promote interpretative clarity and ritual coherence, embodiment and theatricality can enhance theological communication rather than weaken it. As a result, sacred meaning becomes dynamic and is negotiated between continuity and change, tradition and innovation.

Contribution to Digital Humanities and Humanities Innovation

This study contributes to the Digital Humanities by positioning sacred music broadcasting as a rich site for interdisciplinary analysis. By integrating sacred musicology, performance theory, ritual studies, and media studies, the paper demonstrates how digital and broadcast media reshape cultural artifact without severing them from their historical and theological roots. Sacred music as performative theatre in media space offers a model for humanities innovation one that embraces hybridity, interdisciplinarity, and critical reflection on technology's role in meaning-making.

Conclusion

The shift of sacred music from sanctuary-based liturgical practice to staged and broadcast performances has been studied in this research, and it is argued that this movement represents a hybrid type of performative theater in the media sphere. The study has demonstrated that broadcasting is not a passive act of transmission but rather actively contributes to the formation of sacred meaning by examining sacred music as theological utterance, embodied performance, and mediated event. The results show that there is a dynamic contradiction between ritual function and dramatic aesthetics when it comes to religious music in broadcast settings. Sacred significance is not always negated by mediation, even when it changes modalities of involvement and reception, changing audiences from congregations to watchers. Rather, dramaturgy, audience interpretation, and visual framing are used to re-negotiate sanctity.

These observations emphasize the significance of deliberate use of staging, embodiment, and media technology as theological instruments rather than merely decorative additions for composers and performers of sacred music. The study emphasizes broadcasters' moral need to preserve religious music's spiritual integrity while modifying it for large audiences. In order to create frameworks that can handle the complexity of religious performance in digital culture, the study concludes by urging greater interdisciplinary cooperation amongst musicologists, theologians, theater professionals, and media scholars. To further increase the importance of sacred music in modern humanities inquiry, future research might examine comparative religious traditions, audience reception studies, or new platforms like virtual and immersive media.

References

1. Adedeji, F. (2007). *Christian music in contemporary Africa: A re-examination of its essentials*. *Koers: Bulletin for Christian Scholarship*, 72(1), 85–100.
2. Adedeji, F. (2017). *Music, culture and religion: Perspectives on Nigerian sacred and gospel music*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Kraft Books.
3. Adedeji, F. (2021). *The indigenous music of Christ Apostolic Church in Nigeria and the diasporas: A proof of Christian transformative musicality*. *African Musicology Online*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.58721/amo.v7i1.27>
4. Adedeji, F., & Loko, O. (2019). African sensibility in the training of Nigerian gospel musicians.

Journal of Nigerian Music Education (JONMED), 11(1).

5. Adedeji, F., & Loko, S. (2019). Sacred music, identity, and performance practice in Nigerian Christianity. *Journal of Nigerian Music and Media Studies*, 4(1), 45–62.
6. Ayorinde, O., & Ajose, T. S. (2022). Music and spirituality in Africa: Gospel music, spirituality, and everyday meaning-making in Nigeria. *Religions*, 13(12), Article 1227. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13121227>
7. Benedict XVI (Ratzinger, J.). (2000). *The spirit of the liturgy* (J. Saward, Trans.). San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press.
8. Butt, J. (1997). *Music education and the art of performance in the German Baroque*. Cambridge University Press.
9. Couldry, N. (2012). *Media, society, world: Social theory and digital media practice*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
10. Diakpomrere, V. O. (2018). Impact of newspaper coverage on theatre publicity, popularity and patronage in Nigeria. *Facta Universitatis: Visual Arts and Music*
11. Dürr, A. (1991). *The cantatas of Johann Sebastian Bach*. Oxford University Press.
12. Foley, E. (2015). Music and spirituality. In E. Foley (Ed.), *Worship music: A concise introduction* (pp. 1–18). Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press.
13. Hiley, D. (1993). *Western plainchant: A handbook*. Oxford University Press.
14. Hjarvard, S. (2008). The mediatization of religion: A theory of the media as agents of religious change. *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook*, 6(1), 9–26. https://doi.org/10.1386/nl.6.1.9_1
15. Hjarvard, S. (2011). The mediatization of religion: Theorising religion, media and social change. *Culture and Religion*, 12(2), 119–135. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14755610.2011.579719>
16. Hjarvard, S. (2013). *The mediatization of culture and society*. London, England: Routledge.
17. Hoover, S. M. (2006). *Religion in the media age*. London, England: Routledge.
18. Kirby, D., & Cusack, C. (Eds.). (2017). *Religion and media*. London, England: Routledge.
19. Kopytowska, M. (2018). *Televisualization of ritual: Spirituality, spatiality and co-presence in religious broadcasting*. In *Religion, Language and the Human Mind* (pp. 162-183). Oxford University Press.
20. Leaver, R. A. (2007). *Luther's liturgical music: Principles and implications*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
21. Mbede, A. U., Johnson, E., & Effiong, J. (2026). Exploring social media as an apparatus for audience engineering in the Nigerian theatre milieu. *Vision Towards*.
22. McKinnon, J. (1998). *The advent project: The later seventh-century creation of the Roman Mass proper*. University of California Press.
23. Meyer, B. (2011). Mediation and immediacy: Sensational forms, semiotic ideologies, and the question of the medium. *Social Anthropology*, 19(1), 23–39.
24. Olatunji, O. F. (2025). *Mixed-media directing technique and the salvation of theatre-going culture: The aesthetics of contemporary theatre in Nigeria*. *Academia Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences*, 2, 235–244. <https://doi.org/10.3126/ajhss.v2i1.79258>
25. Schechner, R. (2003). *Performance theory* (Rev. ed.). London, England: Routledge.
26. Schechner, R. (2013). *Performance studies: An introduction* (3rd ed.). London, England:
27. Small, C. (1998). *Musicking: The meanings of performing and listening*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
28. Steuernagel, M. (2021). *Church music through the lens of performance: Ritual, play, and embodiment*. London, England: Routledge.
29. Taruskin, R. (2005). *The Oxford history of Western music* (Vols. 2–3). Oxford University Press.
30. Turner, V. (1982). *From ritual to theatre: The human seriousness of play*. New York, NY: PAJ Publications.
31. Vatican Council II. (1963). *Sacrosanctum concilium: Constitution on the sacred liturgy*. Vatican City: Vatican Press.
32. White, J. F. (2000). *Introduction to Christian worship* (3rd ed.). Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.
33. Wolterstorff, N. (2015). *Art in action: Toward a Christian aesthetic*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.