ABSTRACT
Music is a common feature of funerals, both in terms of sacred music and also secular music when a funeral is personalized to the individual who has died. Drawing on data from research exploring Scottish funeral practices, this article examines some of the ways in which music can be used during a funeral. It suggests five specific uses of music in the funeral context: the use of music as a means of control; the use of music as a means of inclusion and exclusion; music as a source of collective activity; music as a means of creating or shifting emotion; and music as a means of evoking the memory of the deceased person. These uses of music are described and discussed, and suggestions made for further research exploring the use of music in funerals.

INTRODUCTION
Music is a ubiquitous feature of 21st century life. In public spaces such as shopping centers and bars music plays continuously, and music forms a familiar background at the cinema and on television, during both the programs and advertisements (Sim, 2007). People gather together in many different kinds of venues to perform music and to experience those performances, while in private spaces people use music in myriad ways, and while doing so they tacitly acknowledge that music can be powerful and important (DeNora, 2003). Most people are familiar with the sounds of music and can identify what counts as music rather than a collection of random noises, but music as a
concept is difficult to define. The Oxford English Dictionary (2010) defines music as “vocal or instrumental sounds put together in melodic, harmonic, or rhythmical combination, as by a composer,” but this is not particularly helpful to the individual trying to understand why it is that listening to Barber’s “Adagio for Strings” is emotionally moving yet listening to the sound of shunting trains is not (Powell, 2010).

Music in varying forms has long been a key part of the human rituals and ceremonies which accompany significant events and situations in people’s lives, including religious ceremonies and funerals (Honigsheim, 1989). When a group of individuals gathers together to mark an important event in the life of one, or more, of their number, the manner in which this is done often takes on the formulaic aspect of ritual. Ritual is composed of words and actions which take on a significance through repetition and also by virtue of the occasion on which they are being used. The familiarity of ritual which comes about through using the same kinds of ritual words and actions repetitively on similar occasions provides a sense of safety and security for those taking part (Berger, 1967). This sense of security is of particular importance when an individual dies, for nothing threatens humans’ sense of safety in the world so much as the death of others who are important to them, and ritual has the capacity to aid survivors in the process of coming to terms with and making sense of the death.

Although the literature on music in funerals is not extensive, it is clear that music as an element of funeral ritual is neither new nor confined to Western societies. The use of a Libyan flute and pipes, for example, were referred to by Euripides in his play Helen as an aid to mourning (Whitwell, n.d.). In northern Borneo the Berawan possess a large drum which is only played during funerals and there is a special rhythm reserved for this purpose, and this is supplemented by gongs which are sounded to the same rhythm (Metcalf & Huntington, 1991). The authors suggest three possible reasons for this noisy funeral behavior. First, there may be a symbolic link between the beat of the drum and the beat of a heart, and the drum takes over when the heart has ceased. The second possibility is that one of the roles of percussion in music is to mark time, and in the funeral context percussion instruments such as drums and gongs can be used to mark a status change brought about by the end of someone’s time alive. The final suggestion made is that percussion makes a loud noise, and this facilitates the communication between the living and the supernatural worlds (Metcalf & Huntington, 1991).

In the Christian tradition music has long been an accompaniment to death and its aftermath, particularly the sound of voices singing, for angels are recorded in the New Testament as singing at the birth of Jesus. Instrumental music has a less easy history in the Christian church. In 1237, for example, Bishop Friedrich III banned the use of instrumental music during funerals at Eichstadt (Whitwell, n.d.). In 19th century England, clergymen differed in their views on the propriety of music in funerals, and some would permit hymns to be sung, while others would not (Gammon, 1988). In these different contexts music had the capacity to
aid the process whereby the social group began to reconstruct itself after the
death of one of its number (Durkheim, 1976).

As a component of ritual, music continues to play a role in the contemporary
funeral. Sacred music has a place in funerals, but so too does secular music for,
as individuals try to arrange a funeral that reflects the character and person-
ality of their deceased relative, they often turn to music for assistance (Garces-
Foley, 2002-2003). Historically religious music dominated the British funeral
(Honigsheim, 1989), but since the late 1970s the nature of funeral music has been
changing, particularly in the crematorium setting, so that contemporary music is as
likely to be played as a hymn (Parsons, 2008).

This article is concerned with using sociological theory to help make sense
of the way in which music use is organized within the context of a funeral.
This will be illustrated by drawing on data from a research project exploring
Scottish funeral practices and begins with a description of the project which
forms its basis, before going on to consider the sociological theories of music of
DeNora (2000, 2003) and Honigsheim (1989) in so far as they are relevant to
the study of funeral music.

The article will then introduce and discuss the five uses of music found in the
research. The first category is the use of music as a means of control, and this
relates to the ways in which some Scottish Presbyterian denominations limit
the music that is permitted in the funeral, in terms of collective singing, the
playing of instruments, and the use of recorded music. The next category to be
considered is the use of music as a method of including individuals as members
of a specific group, or alternatively as a way of excluding non-members from the
group, and again this is particularly pertinent to funerals conducted under the
auspices of Scotland’s churches. Music as a source of collective activity is the
next topic for consideration, and this is followed by a general discussion of
music and emotion as a prelude to the specific discussion of using music as a
way of creating an appropriate mood for a funeral and a look at music as evoca-
tive of the memory of the deceased individual. The article concludes with a
discussion of some of the issues raised and makes some suggestions for areas
in which research into funeral music could be useful.

RESEARCH INTO SCOTTISH FUNERALS

The primary aim of the research was to explore Scottish funeral practices
from the perspective of some of the individuals involved, either on a profes-
sional or a personal basis. It became clear that music was a key element in the
funerals discussed, and also that music was considered and used in a number of
different ways. Data collection was carried out during 2007 in three different
sites, namely Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis in the Western Isles, Inverness in
the Highlands, and Edinburgh, the capital of Scotland in the south of the country.
The choice of these sites was guided by a desire to explore practices in locations
with diverse histories and social configurations. Stornoway offered a location where religion and tradition continued to play a significant role in the conduct of funerals, while in Edinburgh there was an expressed concern to provide a funeral that could be considered personalized to the deceased individual and thus was neither particularly traditional or religious (Caswell, 2010). As the capital of the Highlands, and a newly created city, Inverness was in a state of flux with a population growing more quickly than anywhere else in the country (Miller, 2004), and this was reflected in its funerals which continued to be largely Christian but were beginning to take on the trappings of personalization.

The main data generating tool was the unstructured interview, the focus of which was those aspects of a funeral that the informant considered to be important. In total, 66 interviews were conducted, of which 56 were with funeral professionals and 10 with bereaved individuals who had arranged funerals. The professionals comprised: funeral directors; ministers, priests, and elders who conducted funerals; secular humanist funeral celebrants; crematorium managers; and one gravedigger. The bereaved individuals were three widows, three widowers, two daughters, one niece, and one friend. Half of the bereaved informants were recruited through professional participants acting as gatekeepers and passing on information about the research, while the other half were recruited through letters to the local papers in the areas where the research was located. The decision was made to recruit bereaved individuals in this way because it gave them the power to decide whether or not to contact the researcher, and this was considered important given that the topic of the research was potentially sensitive (Lee, 1993).

All interviewees spoke of music as a significant factor in the funeral setting. In some cases this was about music as something that had been important to the individual who died, and therefore was chosen to reflect the individual in the course of the funeral. One of the daughters interviewed, for example, spoke about her deceased mother’s love of music and how she had enjoyed singing in a choir. For the funeral her daughter chose Bach, because that had been the deceased woman’s request, and two pieces by Glenn Miller because the daughter and her siblings particularly associated this music with their mother. Music was, however, also spoken of by research participants as something that has no place in the conduct of a service of religious worship such as a funeral, and this is a topic that will be revisited in more detail later in the article. First, however, the sociological theories of Honigsheim and DeNora.

**SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES OF MUSIC: HONIGSHEIM AND DE NORA**

There are a number of sociologists who have contributed to the development of music as a focus of interest for sociology including, for example, Dilthey, Simmel, Adorno, Sorokin and Silbermann (Honigsheim, 1989). For the purposes
of this article, however, two theorists are of particular interest and their work will briefly be reviewed here as it pertains to the consideration of funeral music.

**Honigsheim**

According to Honigsheim (1989), special occasions in the lives of members of a particular society are frequently marked by some form of religious expression, and “such moments are enriched by music that is supposed to be of religious character” (p. 60). A funeral is one of those occasions that may be marked by religious ritual, and music often forms part of that ritual. Protestant churches form the bulk of Britain’s churches today, and the different denominations have different relationships with music, depending upon their origins and history. Martin Luther was an influential figure in the 16th century European Reformation, and one result of the Reformation was the transition of Britain from a Roman Catholic into a Protestant state (Wilson, 2008). Luther was a man of musical talent, for whom congregational singing was an essential part of the worship of God, and this has an enduring influence today in the Church of England, for example, which has church choirs and makes much use of musical expression during its services (Honigsheim, 1989).

However, the development of Protestantism in Scotland took a different route, with Jean Calvin proving a stronger influence than Luther (Mackie, 1978). In musical terms, Calvinism did not “prohibit congregational singing; rather, it restricted the number of songs permitted” (Honigsheim, 1989, p. 130). Honigsheim cites the example of the Christian Reform Church of the Dutch in the United States, a denomination that only permits psalms to be sung during its services from a belief that any other form of music is too secular to be suitable. Unlike Luther, Calvin was not keen on the use of musical instruments during the worship of God, and some strict Calvinist churches continue to exclude instrumental music from their services today (Honigsheim, 1989).

In addition to providing background information on the issue of music in the course of Protestant worship, Honigsheim (1989) also discusses the uses of music. He suggests that music can be used in many different situations to educate and indoctrinate people, and this may often be the aim of a musical performance. He writes that, “many religions have elaborated systems of indoctrination, for which special forms of music or the prohibitions of certain instruments are used” (Honigsheim, 1989, p. 58). For example, while a religious group which only permits the singing of psalms justifies this with reference to its theological belief that other forms of singing are too secular, such a position vis-à-vis music also acts to indoctrinate members into the church’s system of beliefs. It does this by highlighting the church’s difference from, and perceived superiority to, other religious groups and this is reinforced by using music in a way that is deemed to be more in keeping with the group’s Calvinist roots (Honigsheim, 1989).
DeNora

DeNora’s approach to the sociology of music is different to that of Honigsheim. She has carried out research exploring, among other things, the role of music in social life and the ways in which individuals use music as a resource “for producing the scenes, routines, assumptions and occasions that constitute ‘social life’” (DeNora, 2000, p. xi). One key way in which individuals and groups of individuals use music is as a device for engaging in emotion work. When a piece of music is performed it is not static, rather it moves through time and, when two or more individuals listen together to the same music, it “unfolds across socially shared time” (DeNora, 2003, p. 83). In her research DeNora (2003) found that sometimes individuals use certain pieces or types of music either to create a particular mood or to shift their emotional state, and thus they engage in emotion work. An individual, for example, who is feeling sad, may choose music which feeds into this sadness and thus reinforces the mood. Alternatively, an individual who is feeling sad may select music that is cheerful and has the capacity to lift the listener’s mood (DeNora, 2003).

In a group setting music can also act on the emotions of the audience, so that collectively a group may laugh at musical comedy. It is also possible for music to act as “a device of collective ordering, how music may be employed, albeit at times unwittingly, as a means of organising potentially disparate individuals such that their actions appear to be intersubjective, mutually oriented, co-ordinated, entrained and aligned” (DeNora, 2000, p. 109). Thus, a group of disparate individuals may be drawn together by the shared experience of music into what appears to be a coherent group, whose members share a sense of purpose and direction.

In a particular social setting individuals may collectively learn how to behave, what to feel, and what their demeanor should be by listening and responding to music. Actors in a social situation frequently fall in with musical structures without making a conscious decision to do so, and without any awareness that they have done so. However, in order for music to operate as a cue to behavior and feeling in this way it is necessary for the individuals listening to it to understand the given cue. This understanding may work at a non-cognitive level owing more, perhaps, to the individual’s emotions than to his or her powers of reasoning (DeNora, 2003). Music is a familiar feature in people’s lives, but most people would struggle to define what music is, or to explain in any meaningful way how it can produce the effects that it does (Powell, 2010).

When individuals in a situation, however, have the necessary understanding to respond to the musical cue, that does not mean that everyone will react in the expected or preferred manner. The power and influence of music moves along a continuum from non-existent through neutral to profound so that its effects vary from person to person; quite simply people’s musical taste differs so that what is enjoyable to one is dull to another and some individuals simply do
not like music (DeNora, 2000). In a group setting if an individual is part of a minority that either does not understand the cues given by the music or is not moved by the music specifically intended to affect their emotions, then this “can serve as the source of social discomfort” (DeNora, 2000, p. 124).

One further use of music described by DeNora (2003) is of importance here, and that of music as a device to trigger memory. A key finding of her research was that “one of the first things respondents used music for was to remember key people in their lives, for example loved family members who had died” (DeNora, 2000, p. 63). The relationships described by respondents tended to be close or intimate ones and the musical memory was often linked with a particular event (DeNora, 2000). This has a resonance for the use of music in funerals, which we shall move on to discuss.

MUSIC IN FUNERALS

Parsons (2008) suggests that the music played at funerals in Britain has changed dramatically over the last 30 years or so and that, while hymns are still played and sung, contemporary music is now a common choice. A large British funeral chain carried out surveys of funeral music used in the funerals it organized in 2005 and 2009. The survey found that musical choices are changing, and that it is increasingly common for bereaved families to choose popular songs or themes from television programs, as well as classical music and hymns (Co-operative Funeralcare, 2009). A similar picture emerged in my research, although there are variations which will be discussed below.

As already noted, research informants talked about music when describing funerals with which they had been involved. Sometimes professional informants spoke as if bewildered by the musical choices made by bereaved families. A Church of Scotland minister in Inverness, for example, was surprised and amused to find himself leaving the chapel in a funeral home to the strains of Andy Stewart singing “Donald, Where’s Your Troosers?” On other occasions, interviewees expressed amusement at some of the songs chosen for playing at a crematorium, such as “Burn, Baby, Burn” by Ash or “Ring of Fire” by Johnny Cash, and the playing of “Silver Tongued Devil” by Kris Kristofferson surprised one Christian minister at a funeral he conducted, by its apparent unsuitability.

Some informants focused on the varieties of music that are to be heard at funerals, like this crematorium manager from Edinburgh, who said:

Music’s changed a lot as well, in that traditionally it was church music, now we get requests for music that isn’t able to be played on an organ. We’ve had music such as Runrig, or some music that the deceased person liked. The other thing we get is sometimes we get a string quartet (or) jazz band, you know, particularly for somebody that’s maybe in the Salvation Army or has worked in a company that’s had its own brass band or an interest in jazz.
While it makes interesting reading to explore the differing choices that individuals and families make when it comes to funeral music, the purpose of this article is rather to explore the ways in which such musical choices are used in funerals. Five possible uses of funeral music were identified from my research, and each will be discussed in turn using research data to illustrate them and the theories of Honigsheim and DeNora for purposes of clarification.

Controlling the Use of Music

As a result of schisms that have taken place over the last 2 centuries, there now exist in Scotland a number of free Presbyterian churches, in addition to the Presbyterian Church of Scotland which is the national church and the largest of the Presbyterian denominations. The free churches, which are free in the sense of not being subject to the interference of the state, exhibit differing levels of strictness in their practices and beliefs (Free Church of Scotland, 2010). These denominations are centered in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland and, although each of them has churches outside the country, they remain small in terms of the numbers of churches and congregations that they have (Brown, 1997).

In terms of funeral music, a minister from the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in Inverness said that there would be the singing only of unaccompanied psalms and he went on to state that “we never have other music, there’s no reading of poems, no eulogies, no special service, there’s nothing, it’s as plain and simple as we can keep it.” The Free Church of Scotland takes a similar approach. On the Isle of Lewis, where the Free Church is predominant, many funerals are conducted without instrumental music of any sort and with only psalms being sung. Psalms will sometimes be sung in Gaelic and in that case a precentor (Campbell, 2005) will be used:

when the singing is in Gaelic the line will be presented by the singer, or precentor, so that the first two lines of a psalm would be sung . . . then the precentor would chant out . . . the next line and the congregation would join and repeat that line . . . they would go through two or three verses like that.  
(Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland minister, Stornoway)

The Free churches describe themselves as reformed churches, with practices and beliefs based upon the Bible which represents the word of God (Free Church of Scotland, 2010). This means that psalms, which are biblical and thus the inspired word of God, are permitted during the course of worship, while other forms of music such as hymns are not the inspired word of God and thus are not permitted. However, the free churches are not immune to the influences of the wider society within which they exist and their attitude to funeral music is informed by more than their perception of the word of God.

A Free Church minister in Stornoway said:
The focus at a funeral would be on the Bible, I mean I think traditionally a funeral service was not to venerate the person who died but to bring comfort to the bereaved. That’s the purpose of a funeral service, there’s nothing you can do about the person who has died but what you can do is that you can read passages that actually mean something to the person who is now a widow or to the widower the family.

For the Free Presbyterian minister in Stornoway a funeral is a solemn affair whose purpose is “I would say first of all to worship God, I don’t think there’s anything more healing than to be in the presence of God. I feel my task (is) to conduct a funeral in a manner so full of dignity, solemnity, sobriety that a sense of the presence of God is among us.” For these ministers, the key features of a funeral are to worship God and in doing so to provide some comfort for the bereaved family. There is no room in their view for “the levity, the hilarity that characterises so many funerals” (Free Presbyterian minister, Stornoway). Music need not produce a sense of hilarity or levity, but it does have the capacity to create and mould emotion and it can also bring the minds of mourners to focus on the deceased as an individual human being (DeNora, 2000, 2003). For these ministers from the Free and Free Presbyterian Churches this is precisely what they do not want to occur; they want mourners at a funeral to focus on God and “the ultimate issues life, death, eternity, heaven and hell” (Free Presbyterian minister, Stornoway). Music other than psalms would be a distraction from this and could lead mourners to focus on aspects of the process that, to adherents of the free churches, are extraneous. Thus music here is used in a limited way as a means of controlling the focus of worship.

Music for Inclusion/Exclusion

When individuals who are native to the Isle of Lewis attend a funeral they know what to expect, so that they are aware there will be no music and they are used to the concept and practice of singing psalms without accompaniment. For those who are regular church attenders there is also the fact that they will be familiar with the psalms and have an understanding of the place that the psalms have in their religious worship, while they will also be familiar with the words and tunes. In this way, those who attend church regularly are able to take their places at any funeral as being among the cognoscenti; they are in the know and thus are included in the religious elite (Honigsheim, 1989). For those who are not members of the church, attending a funeral in one of the free churches can be a difficult experience: “I had two friends who went to one (Free Presbyterian funeral) and they came out and said, ‘whose funeral was that again?’ No names were mentioned . . . it was all church” (Funeral Director, Inverness). Non-adherents of the free churches may thus be excluded by their lack of awareness about the proceedings, including their lack of understanding of the place of music and their inability to participate in the unaccompanied singing of psalms.
In mainstream Protestant funerals conducted by ministers from the Church of Scotland, the national church, hymns are commonly sung with the accompaniment of an organ. Again, the adherents of the church know the hymns and know what the expected behavior is when hymns are to be sung. However:

People don’t know what to do, people don’t know . . . the cultural social behaviour in church or a chapel and . . . you don’t just say “let’s sing the Lord’s my Shepherd, its psalm 23,” and the organist gives a line and they’re all still sitting fumbling for the page; so you’ve got to say you know “let’s sing the Lord’s my Shepherd, that’s one of the psalms and its number 14 in the hymn book.” . . . You’ve got to say, “we stand to sing,” it’s not enough for the organist to start. And that happens more often now, the organist will even start and then he’s played the intro, paused and started and I’m starting “the Lord’s,” and they’re beginning to stand up . . . people don’t know these things now, so people find it hard to sing. People tend to try and sing if it’s a big funeral. I’ve been at big funerals where it’s very, I hate this phrase, but people who are used to going to church and singing hymns; when its non-church folk, it’s almost as if I’m singing a solo. (Church of Scotland minister, Edinburgh)

Thus, non-church attenders are excluded by their lack of insider knowledge, and this can be a source of discomfort not only for those excluded but also, as illustrated by the above quotation from a Church of Scotland minister, for those who are in the know (DeNora, 2000). People attend funerals for a variety of reasons concerned with saying goodbye to the person who died, mourning his or her death, supporting the bereaved family, and publicly marking the death of an individual who was important in their lives in some way (Walter, 1990). What they do not usually do, however, is attend for reasons directly related to music, but musical knowledge and understanding can have an impact on an individual’s experience of a funeral, as illustrated by the use of participatory music.

**Participatory Music**

Singing together provides a collective activity that can help mourners at a funeral feel a connection with other mourners and a sense of shared, rather than individual, mourning (DeNora, 2000). For this to be effective, those participating in the singing need to know the song and the tune, and they also need to feel comfortable singing in public. Among a Church of Scotland congregation hymns can fulfil this function, and such services, including funerals, typically include hymn singing, in which those attending the service join, often to the accompaniment of the organ.

It is not the case, however, that everyone attending a funeral in 21st century Scotland knows the hymns. A Church of Scotland minister from Inverness, for example, said “in almost all (funerals) I’ve conducted we’ve sung hymns . . . in the funerals of people who don’t have much church connection, usually the hymns are
23rd psalm and ‘Abide with Me.’” Another Church of Scotland minister from Inverness remarked on people’s increasing distance from the church and its forms of worship and said, “certainly in the past I’ve said, if you don’t know any hymns or anything or don’t really want to sing them, I’ve said then let’s not, you don’t have to sing hymns and I think that’s something that’s sometimes welcomed by people.” A hospice chaplain from Edinburgh also remarked that bereaved families arranging funerals sometimes do not want to sing hymns during the service for, as he said, “people don’t sing in public any more, people sing appalling badly at funerals, even with the traditional hymns . . . which is a problem . . . if we can’t sing corporately.”

The idea of collective singing during a funeral ceremony is one that transcends the boundaries of religion, with secular humanists, for example, endeavoring to find songs that are suitable: “People sometimes want to sing and that can be difficult, because trying to find a song that everybody knows that doesn’t have a god reference can be incredibly challenging” (Secular humanist celebrant, Inverness). In one secular funeral:

he (the deceased man) loved singing as he went about the house with his grandchildren “Puff the Magic Dragon” . . . so they (the bereaved family) decided they were going to have “Puff the Magic Dragon” sung like a hymn . . . it’s a great memory I have of being in the crematorium with all these notable people going (sings) “Puff the Magic Dragon.” The widow absolutely loved it. (Secular humanist celebrant, Edinburgh)

Singing together in this way is likely to occupy only a short period of time, perhaps two or three minutes, and yet it may be a key part of “fostering a new and ‘postmodern’ form of communitas—a co-subjectivity where two or more individuals may come to exhibit similar modes of feeling and acting” (DeNora, 2000, p. 149). Mourners may be drawn together into a shared sense of being part of a coherent group or community, the members of which are experiencing the same emotions, albeit on a temporary basis. Collective action may draw people together in a way that sitting and listening to others’ speaking is unable to achieve, particularly in a setting where many of those present at a funeral do not have the privileged knowledge that allows them to understand fully the context within which the funeral is taking place.

**Music to Evoke Emotion**

Emotion is an abstract concept similar to music in that individuals know the meaning of it until they try to define it. Barbalet (2002) describes emotion as the “experience of involvement” with someone or something “that necessarily matters to them, proportionately” (p. 1). Emotions are experienced, and the way in which an individual experiences his or her emotional life appears, at first sight, to be based in the personal and private sphere so that one person’s emotions are hidden from and uninfluenced by all other individuals (Barbalet, 1998).
However, social science research indicates that members of different societies express their emotional experiences in very different ways, suggesting that the social setting has a key influence on emotion and its expression (Barbalet, 1998, p. 9). Over time, individuals are socialized to feel the appropriate emotion for an occasion by the social and cultural influences they experience (Riis & Woodhead, 2010) and, as Hochschild (1983) suggests, individuals may also train themselves to exhibit signs of an emotion that is deemed to be socially appropriate.

Mourners at a funeral know that the occasion is a sad one, and that they are expected to show signs of distress or unhappiness. Music can assist with creating the appropriate funereal atmosphere and provide a cue to action for mourners, often without them realizing what is happening (DeNora, 2000). Although mourners may lack awareness of the effects of music, those who conduct funerals are aware of it and they temper the advice or guidance they give to bereaved families organizing a funeral accordingly.

Some funeral officiants try to manage the use of music in the funerals they conduct in an effort to limit the emotional effects. This may be by trying to persuade the bereaved family that the particular piece of music should be played at a time in the funeral when mourners’ attention will not be focused only on the music and its meanings. As a Church of Scotland minister from Inverness said:

> Sometimes they want music at the committal, which I tend to steer them away from. It’s a difficult thing, sometimes they want something played, taped, during the service; again based on experience I tend to steer them away from that idea because a three minute track can seem like a lifetime when you’re sitting in the crematorium, so I’ll say why don’t we do that when everyone’s going out.

An Edinburgh chaplain, however, took a different tack:

> It doesn’t bother me if they have “Simply the Best” . . . I used to work in the Southern General (Hospital) in Glasgow next to Ibrox (football stadium) and I got sick of it, as it’s the Rangers (Football Club) song, but . . . what I will say to them is you realise for the rest of your life when you listen to that you’ll associate it.

Some officiants believe that the emotional power of music is a positive aspect of a funeral. The secular humanist celebrant from Inverness said:

> (the) chap who died and he played the fiddle and his friend who taught him to play, played at his funeral. And it was just the most divine piece of music oh it was absolutely glorious and I could hardly speak it was just so powerful, absolutely beautiful and everyone in the room was touched by it.

With “everyone in the room” touched by this one piece of music there is again the sense of music as a force to draw people together in a difficult situation, by creating emotion that is shared among the group (DeNora, 2000).
Music is thus perceived as emotionally powerful by those who conduct funerals, but it would be a mistake to attribute too much to its effects. There are people to whom music does not speak (DeNora, 2000) and even for those who find music moving there are other emotional influences in a funeral which affect their “experiences of involvement” (Barbalet, 2002, p. 1). How close they were emotionally to the person who died and the confrontation with the fact of the death which the funeral may bring about are two factors that may also influence an individual’s emotional status during a funeral. However, music has power, in combination with other factors, to create or shift emotion and this notion is closely linked with the final category for consideration here, the use of music to evoke thoughts and memories of the deceased individual.

**Music to Evoke Memories of the Deceased Person**

DeNora (2000) noted that individuals commonly used music to remind them of some important person who had died, and in contemporary funerals which are intended to be personalized to the deceased individual, music is a common means of referencing the person (Parsons, 2008). Singing the song “Puff the Magic Dragon” as mentioned above was not only a case of using music as a form of participation in the funeral, it was also reminiscent of the man who had died for he used to enjoy singing the song with his grandchildren. Although a virtually unknown practice at funerals in Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis, mainland funerals in Inverness and Edinburgh quite commonly have music played with the intention of referencing the person who died.

A daughter whom I interviewed during the course of my research said that her mother had told her before she died that she wanted Bach’s Cantatas playing at her funeral, and that Glenn Miller was her favorite musician. The family decided on two pieces of music by Glenn Miller, “In the Mood” and “String of Pearls,” and, at the suggestion of a granddaughter, “In the Mood” was played at the end of the funeral as the coffin was carried from the church. The daughter said, “people’s heads were down . . . as the strains of ‘In the Mood’ began people’s heads came up and small smiles came onto their faces. It gave people a lift at the time it was most needed, and it was so mum.” At this funeral, music was played which brought memories of the deceased woman, but it was simultaneously used to lighten the mood. In a similar vein, a woman who organized the funeral of her friend who loved country and western music chose Don Williams’ “To all the girls I loved before” to be played at the end of the service, because “I thought it would have amused (my friend), and people did smile . . . it gave them a lift.”

The Edinburgh hospice chaplain quoted above said of music that “now the expectation is that for 19 funerals out of 20 it would be bracketed by music beginning and end…and that music is of a very wide spectrum, and almost always it comes from people’s genre.” The choice of music made by those organizing a funeral is of great diversity, as it “ranges from classical to the latest pop music . . . a
wide variation” (Crematorium manager, Edinburgh). Music such as this, which is either a favorite piece of music of the person who died or a piece which reminds everyone present of the deceased individual, can act as a trigger to mourners’ memories (DeNora, 2000). The specific memories will be as varied as the individual mourners themselves, as will the emotions provoked by those memories, but the power of this emotional experience will come from the specificity of the memories; people will be drawn into remembering a particular incident or situation related to the person who died, as opposed to thinking about them in an abstract way.

**DISCUSSION**

The funeral officiants who took part in my research all understood the power of music, and sometimes they used that knowledge to advise or caution the bereaved families with whom they were working. However, this was not in a pro-active way of helping the family decide what effect they would like the music to produce and then helping them to achieve this. On the contrary, funeral officiants tended to give advice based upon their own perception of how emotive music could be and their own beliefs about whether this is a good thing or not. Officiants who like to promote emotional expression in a funeral encourage the use of music that has a particular resonance for the bereaved family at points in the service when mourners can concentrate on the music. There are also officiants who, while not wanting to prevent bereaved families playing the music that is important to them, think that such music should not be listened to at times when mourners can concentrate on the music and are thus vulnerable its full emotional effects. Such officiants would encourage the family to play the particular piece of music as mourners are gathering or dispersing, so that the power of the music is diluted by the fact that mourners are doing something else while listening to it.

I did encounter situations in my research in which music was actively managed to achieve certain effects, but these tended to be in the course of religious funerals, where musical expression is controlled. By limiting the kinds of music permitted during a funeral, and banning the use of musical instruments, the stricter Presbyterian denominations are able to control the focus of the funeral and prevent mourners’ attention from straying from the overt religious purpose of the service.

All the funeral officiants who took part in the research were aware of how powerful music can be, and how important a part it can play in a funeral; this was something they had learned from experience. Despite this, while most of them would advise bereaved families about the timing of musical pieces, none of them expressed a perceived need to discuss the deeper implications of music with families. Music is such a common feature of our everyday lives (DeNora, 2000), albeit a poorly understood one (Powell, 2010), that we tend to take it for granted. In this way funeral officiants are no different from everyone else, even
when it comes to the consideration of music within the confines of their area of expertise, a funeral ceremony.

What all the different forms of musical usage in funerals have in common, whether it is the Berawan of Borneo playing drums and gongs or the Scots of Edinburgh selecting pieces of popular music, is the social context of their use. A social group comes together to mourn a deceased individual in a way appropriate to the specific time and place. Whether the music is used as a way to mark a change in status from living to dead, or as a means of evoking emotion, its use is collective; “. . . a community activity which sets group hopes and power over those of the individual” (Davies, 2002, p. 199). Today in the west there is perhaps less overt emphasis on group identity and the need to reconstitute the social group after a death, but music remains a social activity in which meaning is teased out in the interplay between a piece of music and its listeners (Roy & Dowd, 2010).

Music was something that all informants mentioned, highlighting its importance as an issue in 21st century Scottish funerals. A more open understanding of the ways in which music can be used within the context of the funeral, would enable individuals and families who are planning funerals to make informed choices that suit their circumstances. To this end, further research exploring officiants’ understandings, experiences, and beliefs about the use and importance of music in the funeral would be helpful, as would research investigating the experiences and beliefs of bereaved families about the role of music within the funeral.

REFERENCES


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