

A man with a beard and long hair is shown in profile, wearing large blue headphones. He is looking out over a city skyline at night, with lights from buildings and a bridge visible in the background. The scene is captured with a soft, bokeh effect, creating a warm and contemplative atmosphere.

**University
Church**

Music & Mind



A three-part series on Wednesday nights in 2nd, 4th and 6th week, exploring concepts of music, transcendence, and psychology. Old Library, 19:30-21:00.

24 Jan Mellifluous Music in Early Western Christianity - Canon Prof Carol Harrison

Although we have no music from the early Church, this talk will examine the work of some early Christian theologians in the West who were prompted to reflect on the nature, role and effect of music while hearing and performing it in various contexts. The 'sweetness' of music was one of the most common ways in which they articulated these reflections. We will explore what this idea of sweetness reveals about some of the theological, practical and affective qualities attributed to music in this early period.

Carol Harrison is the Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity and Canon of Christ Church, Oxford. Her research focusses on early Christianity, especially Augustine of Hippo, and her publications include: *Revelation and Beauty in the Thought of Saint Augustine*, *Augustine: Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, and the forthcoming volume *Reading Augustine on Music: Sense, Affect, Voice*.

7 Feb Music, Modernity and Meaning - The Revd Dr Jonathan Arnold

Amidst widespread illiteracy in late-medieval Europe, aesthetic experience was a gateway to the numinous and transcendent. Renaissance humanists' criticisms of Church musicians unwittingly paved the way for a new age of logocentricism where words, language and doctrine dominated as the fundamental expression of the divine, thus transforming the nature of aesthetic religious expression. But in the modern secularised West increasing levels of biblical and religious illiteracy, and decline in membership of institutional religions, has seen a concurrent increase in the appetite for aesthetic spiritual experiences. We will explore how this search for the numinous, mystical and transcendent interpretation through musical aesthetics has parallels with pre-Reformation spirituality and asks what the implications are for the future of institutional Christian religion in the west.

Jonathan Arnold is Dean of Divinity and Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford. He is a former member of St. Paul's Cathedral Choir and The Sixteen and co-founder of the Oxford girl choristers' choir *Frideswide Voices*. His publications include *The Great Humanists* and *Sacred Music in Secular Society*. His next book will be entitled *Music and Faith: Western Sacred Music and its Audience*.

21 Feb Listening Well: Managing Modern Life with Music - Dr Gulliver Ralston

How do we rearticulate musical meaning in the contemporary world? Recent work in music psychology has explained away much of the mystery of music, and the academy's revision of the canon of great composers and 'monumental works' makes any such reverence problematic. However, ethics and aesthetics are linked in that they both ask questions about value, and when our listening is informed by values, we have a conscious role in determining how music affects our identities. This talk examines our listening choices and looks at the responsibilities which come with them.'

Gulliver Ralston studied music at Oxford as a choral scholar at New College, completing a doctorate at St. Peter's College with philosopher Sir Roger Scruton. He has lectured for the Royal Academy of Arts and is currently Director of Music both at Oxford's University Church and at the University of Roehampton in London.
