“MUSIC AS A LITURGICAL
SUBLIMATION OF THE
CHARISMATA: AUGUSTINE
TO THE HIGH MIDDLE AGES”

Professor Marsh will present a case study focused on the linguistic history of one word—iubilare—tracing its semantic development from Roman antiquity, and later Augustine of Hippo, through to Durand of Mende and beyond. “Liturgical commentary” (from Amalar of Metz [c.780-850] to Durand of Mende [1230-1296]) has received little or no attention in its own right as literature, or indeed as a coherent body of historical evidence. Neither has it been the subject of a book-length study in any discipline. The reason for this is revealed in the nature of the genre itself, founded on the antique, patristic style of “allegorical method”, a modality situated well outside the methodological priorities of early positivist scholarship. Yet, it is clear today that the genesis of liturgical commentary had been established on a concrete system of literary classification prevalent in Medieval exegesis since Bede. Within musicological circles, the genre has received increasing attention in studies that attempt to shed light on the obscurities of chant notation and corresponding variants between the musical sources, as well as the light these obscurities and variants can potentially shed on performance practice. Thus far, however, such approaches have centred on a limited number of generic liturgical chants, guided solely by inconsistencies and vagaries of the musical sources. The literary method deployed by ritual commentators from the ninth to the fourteenth centuries is remarkably consistent. Ritual commentary therefore provides the analyst with a relatively stable domain through which to trace changes and continuities across periods of historical instability. Commentators from the ninth to the fourteenth centuries exercise the same taxonomy in reference to ritual music. Professor Marsh has argued elsewhere that this perspective is essential in understanding not only the church’s supportive (and restrictive) views on ecclesiastical music during the high Middle Ages, but also forms an appropriate cultural basis on which to grasp the increase and growing complexity of newer polyphonic forms and practices that flourished during the centuries immediately preceding the Reformation.

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29 January • 5.30pm • Maple Room, Indiana Memorial Union • reception to follow