

SOUNDING THE SPIRIT: BRASS MUSIC AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN DIFFERENT FAITHS

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Abstract: The study explored the potential of brass music to bridge divides and foster understanding between different faiths. The data suggests that brass music can resonate with people from diverse backgrounds due to its ability to evoke powerful emotions and create a sense of shared experience. The survey and interviews highlighted how melodies, rhythms, and collaborative performances transcend religious boundaries. Uplifting brass arrangements in Hindu wedding processions, for instance, create a sense of joy, while mournful shofar calls in Jewish ceremonies evoke collective reflection. Familiar brass band traditions associated with specific religious ceremonies can also create a sense of shared history and cultural understanding. Both interviews and focus groups emphasized the power of collaborative music-making in breaking down barriers and building bridges. Participating in multi-faith brass bands allows people from diverse faiths to work towards a common goal – creating beautiful music together. Exposure to brass music from other faiths cultivates respect for their unique musical traditions and religious practices. People gain appreciation for the historical context, cultural significance, and symbolism associated with specific instruments and their use in ceremonies. Brass music can also serve as a gateway to exploring the broader musical landscape of different faiths.

Keywords: Faiths, Spirit, Brass Music, Melodies, Rhythms, Shared Experiences and Religion.

1. INTRODUCTION

The field of religious studies has undergone a significant shift in recent years, with a growing emphasis on lived religion and materiality (Hackett, 2012; Meyer et al., 2011). This shift encourages scholars to consider the role of aesthetics in shaping religious experiences. Furthermore, the move away from a focus on beliefs and texts towards practices and sensory experiences has opened up new avenues for exploring religious communication and mediation (Morgan, 2010). However, despite the undeniable importance of sound and hearing in human experience, music and other forms of sound have received surprisingly little attention within

the discipline. Scholars of religion have been slow to engage with the burgeoning field of sound studies, which has seen significant growth in recent years (Keeling & Kun, 2012). A defining feature of most Indian weddings is the *baraat*, the groom's ceremonial procession to the bride's home (Abrol, 2023). This vibrant spectacle is often accompanied by dazzling lights, fireworks, music, and dance. In urban India, brass bands have become the most popular musical accompaniment for the *baraat*. These unique ensembles present intriguing subjects for ethnomusicologists, raising questions that extend beyond the specific context of Indian bands. These questions examine the process of adaptation and preservation of traditional social structures and professional practices within music groups. Furthermore, they explore the role of music in facilitating social mobility and economic opportunities for musicians. Additionally, the impact of rural-urban migration, the historical roots of cultural exchange, and the influence of mass media on musical activities and folk traditions are all areas of investigation. The core instrumentation of these bands primarily features Albert system clarinets, trumpets, baritone horns, and percussion instruments (snare, tenor, and bass drums). Tenor and alto saxophones, valve-trombones, cymbals, and sousaphones are also commonly encountered, though less frequently. Modernization has led to the incorporation of singers and electronic keyboards (generically called "Casios") through the use of battery-powered sound systems. Band sizes fluctuate depending on the client's budget and the social event's significance. While ensembles can range from eight to 50 musicians, bands with 18 to 25 members are considered the most typical. During the latter half of the 19th century, brass bands emerged as a powerful force in British community music (Herbert, 2000). Estimates suggest a remarkable presence, with some sources citing as many as 40,000 active bands by the turn of the century (Source needed). This translates to a potential pool of over 800,000 musicians actively involved in brass bands. The popularity of brass bands extended beyond participation. Audience figures for open-air competitions were equally impressive. Following the 1900 National Brass Band Contest held at the Crystal Palace, newspaper reports placed attendance estimates as high as 160,000. While this figure might be an exaggeration, it reflects the widespread public interest in these events. Prior to Queen Victoria's reign (1837-1901), "brass band" simply referred to any ensemble where brass instruments were prominent (Newsome, 2019). However, by the end of her reign, the term had acquired a more precise definition. Brass bands became a driving force for a significant segment of the British music industry and fostered a complex organizational structure largely managed by the working class. The standard instrumentation for British brass bands solidified by the late 19th century. This ensemble typically consists of cornets (Bb Soprano x1, Eb Soprano x1, Bb Solo x4,

Bb 2nd x2, Bb 3rd x2, Bb Repiano x1), flugelhorn (Bb x1), tenor saxhorns (Eb x3), baritone saxhorns (Bb x2), euphoniums (Bb x2), Eb basses (x2), Bb basses (x2), tenor trombones (x2), bass trombone (x1), and percussion (varied). This standardized instrumentation, driven by competition regulations, became the norm for published brass band music. While percussion instruments were excluded from brass band contests for a significant portion of the 20th century, they were reintroduced in the 1960s. However, percussion parts were often still included in musical scores for use during concerts. Examples include the Preston United Harmonic Brass Band in Lancashire, advertising engagements in 1838 for a specific fee and provisions. Another notable instance is the Cyfarthfa Band, formed by Robert Thompson Crawshay in 1838. This virtuoso ensemble, composed of professional and skilled amateur musicians, stands out from the norm in the late 1830s. Most brass or mixed brass/wind bands of the era were likely less accomplished and organized. These pre-existing bands, while crucial precursors, should not be directly equated with the brass band movement that would flourish later. The association between specific sounds – environmental, vocal, or instrumental – and divine or spiritual beings is a ground for exploration by scholars attuned to the power of sound (Bull, 2019; Geer, 2024; Thorpe, 2020). Anthropologist Rodney Needham, in his seminal work "Percussion and Transition" (1967), investigates the widespread use of noise-making instruments, such as a shaman's drum, in establishing contact with the spirit world. Through cross-cultural comparisons, he reveals a link between the evocative power of percussive sounds and rituals of transition in many cultures (Hackett, 2012). Another captivating example is the eerie, whirring sound of the bullroarer, a tool long associated with ancestral spirits in Aboriginal Australia, Oceania, and parts of Africa. Anthropologist Donald Tuzin argues for a "biocultural" approach to understand the connection between "the auditory apparatus and a specific sensation widely interpreted as signifying a supernatural presence" (Tuzin et al., 1984). This approach combines the study of the physiological impact of sound stimuli (like the anxiety triggered by the bullroarer's unsettling sound) with its religious and cultural interpretation (or resolution) within specific environmental contexts, such as regions known for frequent thunder.

- *Rationale and Main Objective*

Brass ensembles, with their global presence and rich cultural significance, offer a unique platform for fostering interfaith dialogue and understanding. This study explores the potential of brass music to serve as a bridge between diverse faith

traditions. By examining the shared musical elements and performance practices across faiths, we aim to explore how brass music can transcend religious boundaries and cultivate a spirit of unity.

2. METHODS

- *Study Design*

Our study employed a mixed methods approach to investigate the role of brass music in fostering interfaith dialogue and understanding. This approach combined qualitative and quantitative techniques to gain a comprehensive perspective. Qualitative data collection methods, such as semi-structured interviews, and focus groups, were used to explore the subjective experiences and interpretations of musicians, religious leaders, and audience members from diverse faiths. Quantitative data was gathered through surveys distributed at brass band performances and religious events.

- *Data Collection*

- *Surveys*

A standardized survey instrument was administered to a randomly recruited sample of 50 participants from diverse faith backgrounds. The survey included demographic questions and 10 questions focused on musical preferences and how music fosters interfaith understanding. All participants received an information sheet and signed consent forms before completing the survey. However, the final response rate was 78%, with only 39 usable surveys collected out of the 50 distributed. All data were anonymized to ensure participant confidentiality and used solely for research purposes.

- *Semi-Structured Interviews*

Our study employed semi-structured interviews conducted with diverse faith groups. These interviews, lasting between 10 and 20 minutes, were administered to groups of 5 to 8 participants, including musicians, religious leaders, and audience members. The focus of these interviews was to explore personal experiences and perceptions of how brass music fosters interfaith understanding. Our study also incorporated focus group discussions. These sessions, lasting approximately 20 to 25 minutes, brought together 10 participants from diverse faith backgrounds. The

discussions centered around their experiences with brass music in religious contexts, aiming to identify shared meanings and potential bridges fostered by this musical tradition across different faiths.

• *Data Analysis*

Qualitative data from interviews and focus groups underwent thematic analysis and coding to identify recurring patterns and central themes in participants' experiences and perspectives. Quantitative data collected through surveys was analysed using descriptive statistics software (GraphPad Prism, version 10.2.0) to summarize and describe trends in musical preferences and perceptions of music's role in interfaith dialogue.

3. RESULTS

Our survey included 39 participants from various faiths: Christianity (15, 38.5%), Islam (10, 25.6%), Hinduism (8, 20.5%), Buddhism (4, 10.3%), Judaism (2, 5.1%) (see Figure 1).

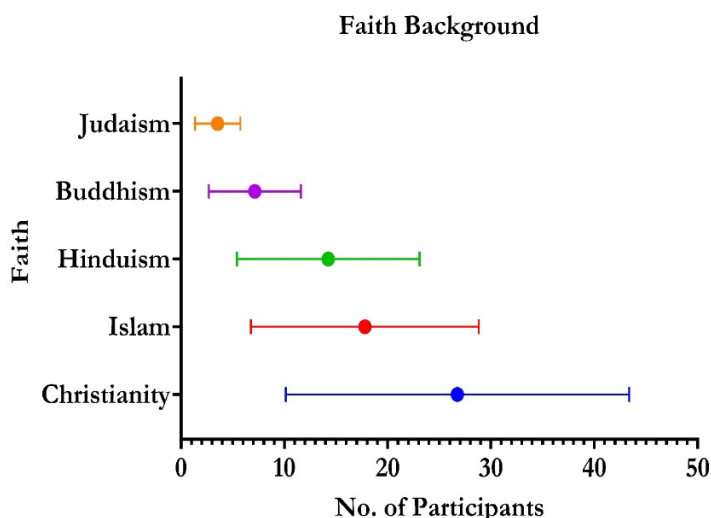


Figure 1: Analysis of the Participant Demographics Based on their Faith Background

In Figure 2, The survey explored the perceived role of music in interfaith dialogue. A majority of participants agreed that music fosters shared experience (35) and emotional connection (30) between faiths. Collaborative music-making (28) and familiarity with other faiths' music (32) also received high agreement, with very few disagreements (2-3) across all categories.

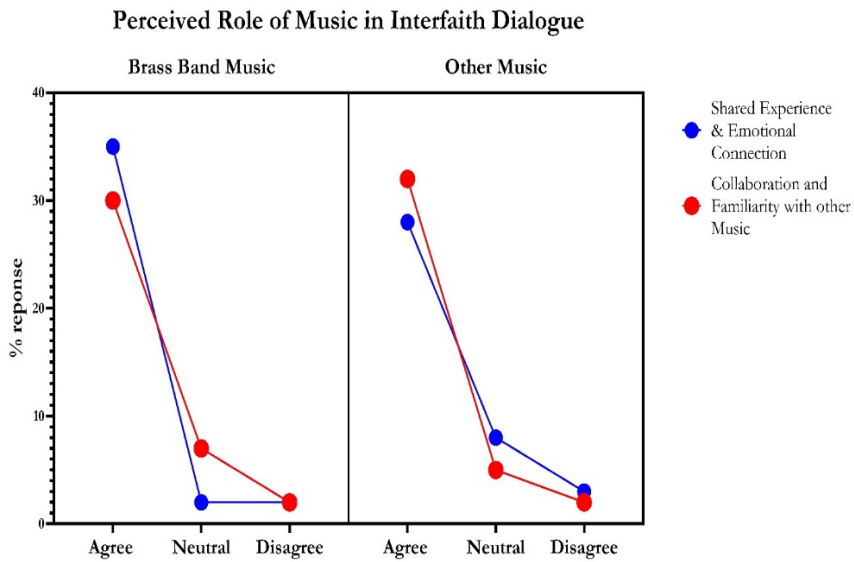


Figure 2: Survey findings on the Perceived Role of Music in Interfaith Dialogue

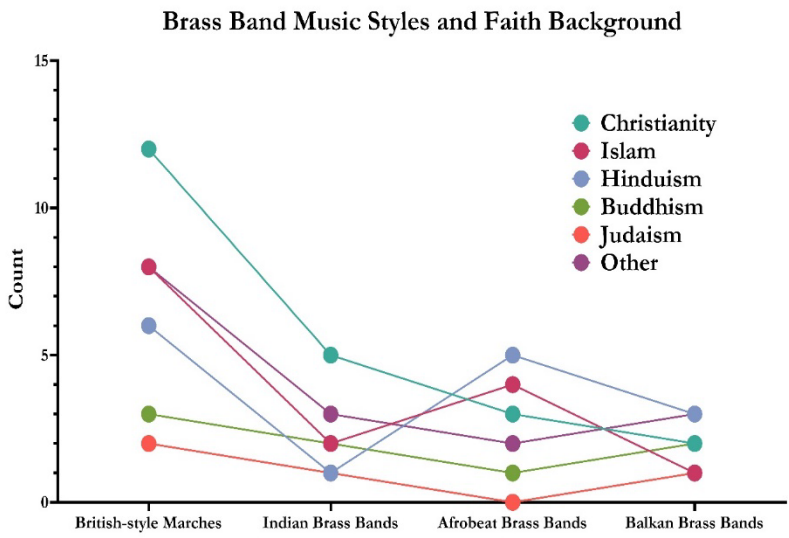


Figure 3: Participants Brass Band Music Styles and Faith Background

In Figure 3, the survey explored familiarity with brass band styles across faith backgrounds. Christianity showed the highest preference for British-style marches (12), followed by Islam (8). Hinduism leaned towards Afrobeat (5) and Balkan styles (3), while Buddhism displayed a more balanced distribution. Judaism and "Other" categories showed a mix of preferences, with Judaism favoring marches (2) and "Other" favoring British marches (8) and Afrobeat (2).

Instrumentation and Faith Background

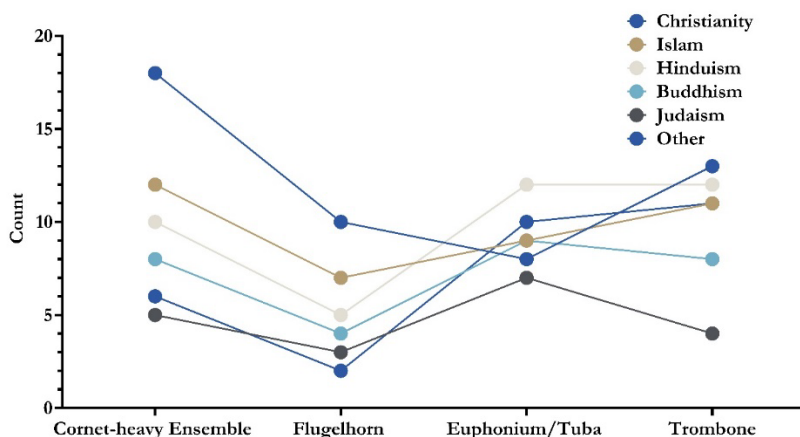


Figure 4: Analysis of reported Instrumentation and Faith Background

In Figure 4, the survey investigated instrument preferences within religious contexts, focusing on Cornet (high-pitched, bright sound), Flugelhorn (mellower, warmer tone), Euphonium/Tuba (low-pitched bass instruments), and Trombone (versatile for melodies and harmonies). Christianity showed a strong preference for cornet-heavy ensembles (18), while Islam and Buddhism leaned more balanced across instruments. Hinduism favored euphonium/tubas (12) and trombones (12), while Judaism and "Other" categories displayed a mix of preferences. Notably, "Other" showed a strong preference for euphonium/tubas (10).

Regional Brass Band Traditions and Faith Background

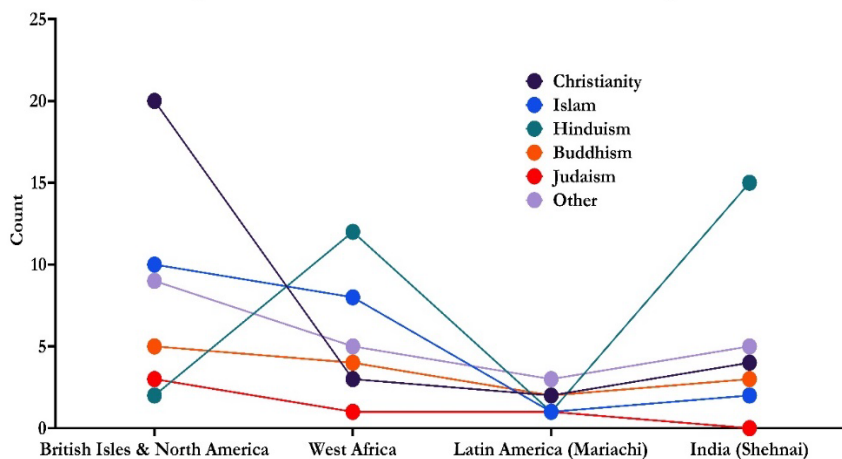


Figure 5: Regional Brass Band Traditions and Faith Background

In Figure 5, Christianity showed the strongest preference for British Isles & North America styles (20), while Hinduism unsurprisingly favored the Shehnai tradition from India (15). Islam leaned towards West African traditions (8), followed by Christianity (3). Latin American Mariachi music found some appreciation across most faiths, with Hinduism showing the least familiarity (1).

Table 1: Thematic Analysis of Shared Emotional Connection

Theme	Explanation	Example Quote
Emotional Resonance	Brass music, with its powerful melodies, rhythmic energy, and collaborative performances, can transcend religious boundaries by evoking emotions that resonate universally. Indian wedding ceremonies, for instance, can create a sense of shared joy and celebration, while the mournful calls of a Jewish shofar can evoke a sense of collective reflection, regardless of faith background.	<i>"The energy of the dhol beats in Hindu wedding processions (baarats) gets everyone moving, regardless of faith. It's a celebration of life that we all connect with."</i> (Hindu participant)
Evoking Empathy	The beauty and expressiveness of brass music can foster empathy and understanding between different faiths. The mournful melodies played by a flugelhorn during a Christian funeral procession, for example, can evoke a sense of shared grief that transcends religious beliefs.	<i>"Listening to the mournful melodies of a Jewish shofar ceremony made me reflect on the universality of human experience, including grief and loss."</i> (Christian participant)
Collective Memory	Familiar brass band traditions associated with specific religious ceremonies can create a sense of shared history and cultural understanding. For instance, the sound of a mariachi band during a Catholic mass in a Latino community might remind participants of their cultural heritage and create a sense of connection despite being in a new religious setting.	<i>"The sound of the mariachi band during a Catholic mass reminded me of my childhood in Mexico. It felt like a piece of home in a new religious setting."</i> (Latinx participant)

In Table 1, emotional Resonance highlighted how melodies, rhythms, and performances transcend religion to evoke shared emotions (e.g., joy in Indian weddings, reflection with a Jewish shofar). Evoking Empathy emphasized how the beauty of brass music fosters understanding between faiths (e.g., mournful melodies in Christian funerals). Collective Memory explored how familiar traditions create a sense of shared history (e.g., mariachi bands in Latino Catholic masses).

Table 2(a): Thematic Analysis of Collaborative Music Making

Theme	Explanation	Example Quote
Breaking Down Barriers	Participating in musical activities together, such as playing in a multi-faith brass band, can break down barriers like cultural stereotypes, preconceived notions about other religions, and discomfort with unfamiliar musical styles. By working towards a common goal – creating beautiful music together – participants build bridges of understanding and respect.	<i>"Playing the shehnai alongside Muslim musicians during a Sufi ceremony was a powerful experience. It transcended language and created a bond through music. We learned each other's musical traditions, appreciating the intricate melodies of the shehnai and the rhythmic power of the qawwali vocals."</i> (Hindu participant)

Table 2(b): Thematic Analysis of Collaborative Music Making

Theme	Explanation	Example Quote
Learning from Each Other	Collaboration in brass music allows participants to learn about and appreciate musical traditions from other faiths. This can involve learning new melodic structures, rhythmic patterns, and performance practices. It can also involve understanding the cultural and religious significance behind specific musical pieces used in different faith traditions.	<i>"Participating in a Buddhist chanting ceremony with brass instruments opened my eyes to the beauty and complexity of their musical traditions. Learning how the deep, resonant tones of the brass instruments complemented the chanting created a truly unique and spiritual experience."</i> (Christian participant)
Building Community	Shared musical experiences can foster a sense of community and belonging among people from diverse faiths. This can happen through regular rehearsals, joint performances at religious festivals, and social interactions that develop over time. The shared experience of creating music becomes a powerful tool for building bridges across religious divides.	<i>"Our multi-faith brass band performs at different religious festivals. It's a way to celebrate our diversity and create a more inclusive community. People from different backgrounds come together, learn from each other's musical traditions, and build friendships through the shared love of music."</i> (Muslim participant)

In Table 2, breaking down barriers highlighted how collaboration (e.g., multi-faith bands) reduces cultural stereotypes and promotes respect. Learning from Each Other emphasized knowledge sharing of musical traditions and their religious significance. Building Community focused on creating a sense of belonging through shared musical experiences and performances.

Table 3: Thematic Analysis of Appreciation for Diversity

Theme	Explanation	Example Quote
Respect for Traditions	Exposure to brass music from other faiths can cultivate respect for their unique musical traditions and religious practices. This includes appreciating the historical context, cultural significance, and symbolism associated with specific brass instruments and their use in religious ceremonies.	<i>"Hearing the powerful sounds of the naqqara khana (kettle drums) used in Islamic ceremonies gave me a new appreciation for their rich musical heritage. The rhythmic intensity of the drums added a sense of urgency and passion to the prayers."</i> (Hindu participant)
Expanding Musical Horizons	Brass music can serve as a gateway to exploring the broader musical landscape of different faiths. By encountering new instruments, melodies, and performance styles in brass music, participants are encouraged to explore other vocal traditions, instrumental ensembles, and musical genres associated with different religious practices.	<i>"Since joining the interfaith choir, I've discovered so many beautiful hymns and chants from different religions. Many of these hymns are also accompanied by brass instruments, and learning about these traditions has broadened my musical horizons."</i> (Buddhist participant)
Celebrating Differences	The diversity of brass music across different faiths can be appreciated and celebrated as a reflection of the richness of human culture. This includes appreciating the variations in instrumentation, melodic structures, rhythmic styles, and performance practices that reflect the unique cultural and religious expressions of different faith traditions.	<i>"The world is a symphony of different sounds and traditions. Brass music allows us to celebrate this diversity and find beauty in our differences. From the soaring melodies of British brass bands to the energetic rhythms of West African fanfare bands, each tradition brings its own unique flavor to the table."</i> (Interfaith leader participant)

In Table 3, Respect for Traditions emphasized understanding the history, cultural significance, and symbolism of instruments in religious ceremonies. Expanding Musical Horizons highlighted brass music as a gateway to explore broader musical landscapes of different faiths. Celebrating Differences focused on appreciating the variations in instrumentation, melodies, rhythms, and performances that reflect unique cultural and religious expressions.

Table 4: Thematic Analysis of Shared Ritual and Symbolism

Theme	Explanation	Example Quote
Collective Performance	The act of performing brass music together in religious contexts can create a sense of shared ritual and community, even among people from diverse faiths. The focus on the shared activity transcends religious differences and fosters a sense of unity.	<i>"During the multi-faith procession, it felt powerful to be playing together, regardless of our individual beliefs. We were all contributing to a shared experience."</i> (Participant from a Buddhist background)
Symbolic Meanings of Instruments	The specific instruments used in brass bands can hold symbolic meanings that resonate across different faiths. For example, the trumpet's bright sound might symbolize celebration or divine communication, finding parallels in various religious traditions.	<i>"The deep, resonant sounds of the tuba during the Hindu puja ceremony reminded me of the Islamic concept of Barakah (divine blessings). It felt like a shared invocation of something sacred."</i> (Participant from a Muslim background)
Evoking Sacred Space	Brass music can be used to create a distinct sonic environment that evokes a sense of sacred space, regardless of the specific faith tradition. The specific melodies and rhythms associated with religious ceremonies can contribute to this shared experience.	<i>"The opening fanfare of the brass band at the beginning of the synagogue service always creates a sense of reverence and sets the tone for prayer."</i> (Participant from a Jewish background)

In Table 4, Collective Performance emphasized creating a sense of unity through shared musical activity in religious contexts. Symbolic Meanings of Instruments highlighted how instruments like trumpets can hold meanings that resonate across faiths (e.g., celebration). Evoking Sacred Space focused on using brass music to create a distinct and shared sacred atmosphere during religious ceremonies.

Table 5(a): Thematic Analysis of Power of Music and Transcendence

Theme	Explanation	Example Quote
Emotional Connection Through Music	The emotional impact of brass music can transcend religious differences and create a sense of connection among participants. Uplifting melodies, mournful dirges, or the sheer power of the sound can evoke shared emotions that bridge faith backgrounds.	<i>"The energy of the brass band at the Christian youth retreat got everyone moving and feeling joyful, even those who weren't familiar with the hymns."</i> (Participant from a Hindu background)
Music as a Universal Language	Brass music, with its ability to evoke emotions and tell stories without words, can act as a universal language that transcends spoken languages and religious doctrines. It allows for a deeper level of communication and understanding.	<i>"Even though we didn't necessarily understand the words being sung during the interfaith choir performance, the music itself conveyed a powerful message of unity and hope."</i> (Participant from a Sikh background)

Table 5(b): Thematic Analysis of Power of Music and Transcendence

Theme	Explanation	Example Quote
Spiritual Connection Through Sound	Brass music can be a powerful tool for fostering a spiritual connection, regardless of one's specific religious beliefs. The music can evoke feelings of awe, inspiration, or inner peace, deepening the experience of the religious ceremony.	<i>"The sound of the shehnai during the Hindu wedding ceremony was deeply moving. It created a sense of spirituality that transcended the religious rituals."</i> (Participant from a Christian background)

In Table 5, Emotional Connection Through Music emphasized how brass music evokes shared emotions (joy, grief) that bridge faith divides. Music as a Universal Language stressed its ability to transcend spoken languages and religious doctrines, fostering deeper communication. Spiritual Connection Through Sound highlighted the power of brass music to evoke feelings of awe and inspiration, deepening the religious experience regardless of faith background.

4. DISCUSSION

Our study suggests that brass music resonates across religious backgrounds on multiple levels. A key theme emerged from both surveys and focus groups: brass music facilitates shared experiences and emotional connection. Participants reported being moved by the power, melodies, and rhythms of brass music in religious contexts. Uplifting marches in Hindu weddings or mournful melodies in Christian funerals evoked similar emotions regardless of faith. This emotional resonance creates a foundation for empathy and understanding across religious divides. Our findings highlight the power of collaborative music-making in fostering interfaith understanding. Survey results showed strong agreement on the positive role of shared musical experiences (performing together) and familiarity with music from other faiths. Focus groups emphasized how participating in multi-faith brass bands breaks down barriers and fosters a sense of community. Exposure to brass music from different faiths cultivates respect for diverse musical traditions and religious practices. Surveys showed participants were familiar with a variety of styles, from British marches to West African fanfare bands. Focus groups highlighted appreciating the symbolism of instruments and the unique sonic environments created by brass music in different religious ceremonies. Brass music serves as a gateway to explore the broader musical landscapes of various faiths, fostering appreciation for cultural and religious diversity. The use of instruments in worship remains a topic of debate. Proponents of uninhibited instrumental music cite the Old Testament as evidence for God's approval of a grand musical element in worship. They argue that God's unchanging nature translates to a consistent preference for such practices across time. However, a closer examination of the Old Testament record is necessary. Did God truly endorse "full instrumental worship"

characterized by "dancing maidens" and "powerful, rhythmic music" using "timbrels, percussion instruments, and brass"? A close reading of the biblical data suggests otherwise. The Old Testament may have permitted instruments, but their use was likely limited in type and frequency. This potentially indicates a divine intention to prevent excessive human enjoyment from overshadowing spiritual devotion. While the New Testament frees the Church from the specific regulations of the Old Testament, underlying principles may still hold relevance. Therefore, a critical analysis of the claim that the Old Testament sanctions uninhibited instrumental worship is warranted. While we commonly associate brass instruments with contemporary genres like jazz or marching bands, scripture reveals a rich history and enduring significance of these instruments in religious contexts (Armour, 2023; Saliers, 2007). Brass instruments appear in the scriptures in several ways: signifying religious observances, alluding to missionary work, representing the voices of divine beings, and even symbolizing the summoning of spirits. Art adorning our meetinghouses and homes frequently depicts the Savior surrounded by trumpet-wielding angels. Even the iconic statues of the angel Moroni atop our sacred temples hold a trumpet, not a piano, violin, or flute. This instrument, though beautiful alternatives exist, underscores the angel's role as a herald announcing the Second Coming of Christ. The Book of Mormon further emphasizes the trumpet's religious significance through Alma's yearning to play the 'trump of God'. Historical records document the significant role of brass instruments in the early days of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. An article in the *Times and Seasons*, the official Church newspaper from 1839 to 1846, details the performance of a brass band during the laying of the Nauvoo temple's cornerstone on April 15, 1841. Furthermore, the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, a weekly publication edited by future Church President John Taylor, mentions brass players stationed at the temple steeple to welcome newly arrived converts with music. Their performances were described as "as near heavenly as anything we can think of". The British brass band movement is often lauded as a pinnacle of working-class musical achievement during the Victorian era (Collins, 2019). Undoubtedly, it became a defining element of working-class culture. However, attributing its origins solely to the working class is inaccurate. Middle-class influence played a crucial role in the movement's early development. Wealthier patrons provided instruments, repertoire, moral support, and other resources that fueled the movement's momentum. Prior to the 1830s, wind and string bands, sometimes including serpents for bass lines, were commonplace in Britain. Primarily associated with rural Anglican church choirs, these ensembles likely served additional community functions. For various reasons, church bands began to decline around the 1830s. While unsubstantiated claims exist regarding the "first" all-brass band emerging in

the 1820s, documented evidence points to the establishment of private and professional brass bands during this period. According to Marshall McLuhan's concept of "the medium is the message" (McLuhan, 2017), the size, volume, and number of musicians in a barat procession, along with the lights and other decorative elements, all contribute to a display of the groom's family's social status, cultural background, and economic standing. While major religious festivals also feature processions with bands, the barat remains the primary source of income for these musicians. Brass band participation typically involves performing music at three key stages of the barat: 1) in front of the groom's house during preparation, 2) throughout the procession itself, and 3) upon arrival at the bride's house. The actual playing time can last around two hours depending on the distance traveled. However, bands often spend an additional hour or more waiting at the groom's house for the procession to begin. The three stages of the barat procession offer distinct challenges and opportunities for the brass band (Booth, 2008). Stage 1, at the groom's house, provides the most advantageous setting for a musical showcase. Here, musicians can select their most polished pieces, potentially incorporating improvisation. Effective organization is facilitated by a stationary position, minimal external noise, and a compact formation that allows everyone to hear the drummers and leaders. However, during Stages 2 and 3, the procession itself presents a different set of circumstances. Musicians must navigate around fireworks, lantern carriers, and potentially inebriated participants. Additionally, competing noise from generators, traffic, and pedestrians creates a less controlled environment. Furthermore, on the move, bands are expected to respond to audience requests, favoring popular hits and dance tunes. This audience interaction serves a dual purpose: catering to the celebratory mood and potentially increasing financial rewards. In many cities, tipping during the procession is customary. To maximize these tips, which are considered auspicious when waved over dancers' heads (particularly young boys), musicians have a vested interest in keeping the energy high and encouraging enthusiastic dancing. The repertoire of a brass band in India, regardless of the event, primarily draws from a common source: Hindi film music. Regional variations are minimal, with the same songs often heard across the country. Band leaders, typically the owner (malik) or their sons, curate the setlist based on perceived audience preferences. Popularity of the song and the film it features are key deciding factors. Additionally, there's a drive to stay ahead of the competition by incorporating the latest hits. However, the pervasive influence of radio, film, and cassette recordings makes this challenging. Once a song is chosen and arranged ("setting"), the lead musicians teach the parts to the band by rote memorization (Booth, 2008). During a typical barat procession, a band might play 16 to 20 pieces, with some repeats, resulting in 10 to 12 unique songs. While lead

musicians may have a broader repertoire of 40 to 80 songs and some understanding of classical music, the seasonal performance pool remains limited to these 12. This selection includes roughly half comprised of recent film hits. The remaining songs consist of enduring classics from older films (explained further below) due to their lasting popularity or specific cinematic context. Additionally, some non-film elements might be included, such as folk songs specific to the wedding's community (e.g., Gujarati, Punjabi, Marwari) or even a western march. Interestingly, the western pop hit "Tequila" also finds frequent inclusion in the repertoire. Brass band arrangements typically prioritize melody over complex harmonies. While some songs feature melodies with a "disco" or pop influence that imply harmonies, the overall approach favors solo-chorus and call-and-response structures. The lead melody is often presented by trumpets and clarinets (or amplified keyboards). Baritones typically provide contrasting melodic responses. Following one or two repetitions, the melody shifts to the entire ensemble, often led by the baritones. Brass band performances are characterized by instrumental heterophony. Lead clarinetists frequently engage in intentional rhythmic and melodic embellishments, while baritone players tend to favor a staccato, clipped approach. Both instruments are typically played at high volumes throughout the performance. However, limitations in player technique or instrument quality may restrict the ability to sustain notes beyond the initial attack. Unintentional heterophony can also arise due to musicians entering or leaving the ensemble at different times, unfamiliarity with the melody, instrument repair issues, or occasional technical errors.

5. CONCLUSION

This study explored brass music's potential to bridge divides between faiths. Both surveys and focus groups highlighted shared emotional connections fostered by brass music across religious backgrounds. Collaborative music-making, like multi-faith brass bands, was seen as a powerful tool for understanding and community building. Exposure to diverse styles of brass music fostered respect for different religious traditions. Overall, the findings suggest brass music acts as a powerful tool for interfaith understanding by fostering shared experiences, promoting collaboration, and celebrating cultural and religious diversity.

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