

CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH DESIGN

1.1 INTRODUCTION

With the advent of the centenary commemorations of the Anglo-Boer War, it seemed an appropriate time to reflect on an aspect of the war that is not often considered, namely, the role of music as a mass medium for purposes other than entertainment.

This research is thus about insights into the processes of affect and meaning that can be gained through an examination of the vocal music of the South African Anglo-Boer War.

1.2 HYPOTHESIS

By finding a link between cultural history and musicology¹, it will be possible to assess affect and meaning in the vocal music sung by the Boers during the war. This link will demonstrate how these disciplines are able to inform and enrich each other and lead to an understanding of the psyche² of the people singing the songs. A cultural-historical approach will lead to an understanding of the experiential world of the Boers during the war. The musicological approach will generally be research grounded in an examination of hand-notated scores. A link between these disciplines will not only highlight the fact that vocal music reveals a spectrum of personal and communal perceptions and responses to unfolding events, but that it is central to the very formation of human societies.

¹ musicology (*n.*) As a method it is a form of music scholarship characterized by the procedures of research. A simple definition in these terms would be a scholarly study of music (Duckles et al. 2001:488).

² psyche (*n.*) The soul, or spirit, as distinguished from the body; the mind. *Psychol.* The conscious and unconscious mind and emotions, esp. as influencing and affecting the whole person (Oxford [Internet] 2004).

1.3 PERSONAL MOTIVATION

The researcher developed an interest in the proposed topic after writing an MMus dissertation, *The Liberation Song: with special reference to those used by the African National Congress, the Inkatha Freedom Party and Pan Africanist Congress* (Gray 1996).

This dissertation highlighted the fact that during apartheid³, liberation and protest music played a vital role in the rise of Black Nationalism and the subsequent establishment of a new South African society. By researching the liberation struggle beyond the academic confines of political history, it was possible for the researcher, a white South African, to gain an insight into the experiences of black South Africans during one of the deepest crises in South African history.

As the research for this MMus dissertation progressed, the researcher recognised the importance of a link between South African vocal music and cultural history in order to provide polarised societies with a potent tool for understanding each other's circumstances. This could lead to empathy and reconciliation between societies and an appreciation of cultural diversity in South Africa. This, however, falls outside the domain of this study, as it is necessary to first establish whether vocal music played an important part in the lives of the Boers during the Anglo-Boer War, before any other conclusions can be reached. This thesis thus responds to a need to assess insight and understanding into the psyche of white South Africans by studying the role of vocal music during the Anglo-Boer War. The aim of the study is defined against this background.

1.4 AIM

The aim of the study is to highlight the role of vocal music sung by the Boers in order to determine its significance as a vehicle for gaining a better understanding

³ apartheid (*n.*) Name given in South Africa to the segregation of the inhabitants of European descent from the non-European (Coloured or mixed, Bantu, Indian, etc.); applied also to any similar movement elsewhere; also, to other forms of racial separation (social, educational, etc.). Also fig. and attrib (Oxford [Internet] 2004).

of the people who sang the songs, as well as Boer experiences during the Anglo-Boer War. In order to achieve this, the study aims to find a way to address the lacuna⁴ that exists between musicology and cultural history.

More specifically, it will be a thick description⁵ that evokes emotions and feelings in the reader, and inserts history into experience. It also establishes the significance of an experience or sequence of events for the person or persons in question, “and captures the meanings and experiences that have occurred in a problematic situation” (Denzin 2001:162). A thick description will allow for an historical analysis that attempts to reconstruct the past as accurately as possible so as to assess the role of Boer vocal music. In order to realise this aim, it is necessary to focus on a key research question.

1.5 KEY RESEARCH QUESTION

Is it possible to locate the lacuna that exists between cultural history and musicology, in order to assess processes of affect and meaning in vocal music as a vehicle for understanding the Boer psyche and the circumstances they had to face during the Anglo-Boer War?

To initiate this, careful consideration was given to other questions which link to the research question:

- ❖ Does the axiom that declares music possesses a power or powers that can produce effects on the human psyche, society and civilisations exist?
- ❖ Does an understanding of the experiences of the Boers during the War lead to an understanding of the role of their vocal music?

⁴ lacuna (*n.*) A hiatus, blank, missing portion. Also *trans* (Oxford [Internet] 2004).

⁵ thick description (*n.*) Description that captures meanings and experiences that have occurred in a problematic situation. Reports meanings, intentions, history, biography, and relevant, interactional, and situational processes in a rich, dense, detailed manner. Creates the conditions for interpretation and understanding. Contrasted to thin description, which is only factual (Denzin 2001:162).

- ❖ Is it possible to locate the lacuna between cultural history and musicology by assessing the meaning of the sounds together with the lyrics of the songs?
- ❖ Does an analysis of hand-notated scores by the Boers lead to an understanding of affect and meaning of their vocal music?

The pursuit of answers to these questions will best be served by employing qualitative research methods that reflect the phenomenological paradigm.

1.6 METHODOLOGY

Against the above background, it is proposed that the present study be conducted within the qualitative paradigm that is phenomenological in its orientation. Mouton (2001) explains that qualitative studies usually aim to provide an in-depth description of a group of people or community. This is especially suited to this research as to answer the research questions effectively it is necessary to understand the Boers in their own definition of their world.

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), the goal of the phenomenological paradigm is primarily directed towards understanding of individuals in terms of their own interpretations of reality, as well as the understanding of society in terms of the meanings that people ascribe to the societal practices in that society. This allows for meaning and affect, through sounds, to be derived from the social and cultural contexts in which the vocal music is situated. It also allows for interpretation of the role of vocal music during the War, within a framework of a cultural system, rather than the result of the meaning implicit in only the musical scores or lyrics. If this methodology is to be applied, it becomes necessary to find a viable theory that allows for understanding of music as a social and cultural form that is unconventional in traditional musicology.

1.7 LOCATING A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to understand vocal music as a socially and culturally constituted form of human expression that gives rise to affects and meanings, a theory had to be found where music is given an essential position. At the same time it had to allow for a link between cultural-historical and musicology processes.

The generic nature of the study, however, unavoidably creates difficulties for analysis, since it is not always possible to draw exact parallels between music and its social or political contexts. The sociology of music is an extremely diverse body of work and there is no single or even dominant model of analysis or theory of the relationship between the arts and society. To add to this problem, musicology has often isolated musical processes from the social and cultural milieu of humanity. On the other hand, other disciplines such as sociology, history, communication and cultural studies⁶, do not recognise the role of music's sounds in generating and articulating social and cultural meanings. Finding a theory suited to this research was problematic, mainly because there has been very little research done on mapping the aural void between musicology and cultural-historical studies in order to understand meaning and affect in music.

McClary (1991) has an interdisciplinary approach to address some of the concerns of feminist criticism in music. She considers music as a separate medium with "priorities and procedures, which differ significantly from those of literature" (McClary 1991:81). Though her interdisciplinary approach is important, it does not address the void between musicology and other disciplines. This is mainly because she relies too heavily on the lyrics of the songs for affect and meaning.

Middleton (1990) also uses an interdisciplinary approach in his research regarding popular music. His theory is useful because he has "tried to write a cultural study of music, a study which focuses on music but refuses to isolate it" (Middleton 1990:v). In his effort to balance music, history and sociology he also does not

⁶ cultural studies (*n.*) A field of enquiry that takes as its subject matter the culture-making institutions of a society and their productions of meaning (Oxford [Internet] 2004).

address the void that this study considers necessary for a real understanding of the role of music.

An interdisciplinary approach to the music of the Anglo-Boer War is found in the works of some South African authors. Olivier and Watt (1998) present a survey of musical works about South African wars and sieges. These works are found in the *F.Z. van der Merwe collection of South African Music* section of the library of the University of Pretoria. Olivier and Watt recognise the importance of linking music and history, and suggest that their research “could possibly offer a new dimension to perceptions of history by approaching it from a cultural and specifically music-historical viewpoint” (Olivier & Watt 1998:53).

Grobbelaar (1999) made a collection of the folk songs sung during the Anglo-Boer War. The words of the songs are important historical documents because they highlight events during the war. Similarly, Cillié (s.a.) examined the religious vocal music sung during the Anglo-Boer War. None of these studies, however, presents a theoretical *modus operandi* to map the void between musicology and cultural history. Despite this, they are invaluable sources that should be used in other studies regarding music and the Anglo-Boer War.

Shepherd and Wicke (1997) have the most theoretically grounded critique of the tendency within disciplines to keep music’s sounds separate from the social, historical and cultural processes that are of consequence for them. The researcher was of the opinion that it was necessary to align herself with theorists who also recognise the fact that a void exists which allows for a link between musicology and other disciplines.

1.8 THEORETICAL GROUNDING

Shepherd and Wicke’s (1997) motivation for developing their theory was to interrogate those forms of cultural theory which they consider to discuss music in much the same way as any other cultural artefact. They feed musicology into cultural theory in order to consider the implications of “the social and cultural

constitution of music as a particular and irreducible form of human expression and knowledge ... by thinking of music in ways unprecedented within musicology” (Shepherd & Wicke 1997:1).

In order to address the void between musicology and cultural studies, they argue that sound in music functions in a manner distinct from language and is as fundamental as language to the formation of human societies. “Music is an activity central rather than peripheral to people and society” (Shepherd & Wicke 1997:3). This theory could be an aid to answering the research question, because it attempts to understand the characteristics of music by breaking with the principal paradigm of musicology in thinking of music as signifying practice based on sounds alone. They stress the importance of mapping the void because, according to them, “musicology is the only discipline through which it is possible to access certain processes vital and fundamental to human societies ... [I]f musicology is not successful in formulating and putting appropriate questions, and if other disciplines do not become engaged seriously in answering them, then these vital and fundamental aspects of human life will remain privatized and mythologized” (Shepherd & Wicke 1997:6).

In addressing the void between musicology and cultural studies, a “direct link between the sounds of music and the somatic pathways of the body has been posited in which the manner of connection circumvents the world of objects and the world of language” (Shepherd & Wicke 1997:97).

In terms of theoretical grounding, this research explores some of the issues raised in Shepherd and Wicke’s theory and at the same time places these on an empirical base that is more focussed on:

- ❖ the environment in which the vocal music was created
- ❖ meaning in the sounds and lyrics of the vocal music
- ❖ hand-notated scores, which are a visual analogue of musical sound.

This approach thus deals with the relationship between historical process and vocal music as it is dialectically constituted in performance. The emphasis falls on

the meaning of sounds within a cultural context. This is because the analysis of affect and meaning cannot be grounded exclusively in an examination of cultural history or musical symbols decontextualised from sound. By doing research as undertaken in this study, the aural void is addressed by emphasising the meaning of sound in a cultural context.

1.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Limitations of the study are linked to the following points, listed in no particular priority order:

- ❖ the scarcity of literature other than that focused on the factual accounts of the Anglo-Boer War. According to Pretorius (1999:160), “Remarkably, the life and experiential world of ordinary Boer combatants has received little attention from historians so far.”
- ❖ the collection and analysis of archival data, which is very time consuming as the researcher does not have direct access to these resources. Inventories have to be consulted and then the resources are brought from storage to the researcher. This makes it different to research that relies on resources other than archival. Here access to books allows the researcher to page through a book in order to see whether it contains relevant information.
- ❖ archival research inventories which are not always very specific and documents are often moved without this being reflected in the inventory.
- ❖ the incompleteness of the inventory of the library of the Anglo-Boer War Museum Archives. The diaries, songbooks and other archival resources are not easily obtainable. When traced, they are not always correctly catalogued.
- ❖ the lack of access to some valuable resources from the Anglo-Boer War Museum Library, which are kept in sealed plastic bags with a white powder to preserve them. These resources could not be consulted and only the front and back covers could be seen through the bags. It is understandable that archival resources should be treated with respect, as they are old and very delicate. It is, however, regrettable that financial constraints do not

allow for the availability of a librarian who could look at these documents with the researcher to ensure that no damage is done.

- ❖ the fact that requests for resources, especially at the Anglo-Boer War Museum Library, sometimes take very long due to staff shortages caused by financial constraints. It is, however, very frustrating when requests are eventually brought and some cannot be opened, while others have been incorrectly numbered and have nothing to do with the research.
- ❖ the fact that dates indicating when songs were notated, are not always clear from the sources.
- ❖ extensive use of photostats. Some of the documents were in bad repair and the photostatted copies are sometimes illegible. It was, however, decided that these photostats were very important to capture the real meaning of the music.
- ❖ the problems associated with translating the words of the songs, because meaning cannot always be accurately captured in translation.
- ❖ the problem of defining the role of music in the camps divorced from the immediately reality of conditions in the camps and the “sounds” of the songs. In order to give an objective analysis of the vocal music the researcher tried to capture the meaning of the sounds
- ❖ the generic nature of the research, which made it difficult to decide what material should be included or excluded in this study. This was problematic because the researcher had to make subjective choices.
- ❖ sources of error, which are also part of the limitations with regard to authenticity of documents; principles that underlie the selection of documents; representativeness of documentary sources; accuracy of interpretations and subjective bias.

1.10 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following delimitations, in no particular priority order, were recognised as:

- ❖ the exclusion of a great number of pieces, which were composed to honour events and personalities of the war. Writers and composers from all over the world were inspired by the events of the Anglo-Boer War. In addition,

new words were written for existing compositions to commemorate events. Apart from all the pro-Boer music published in England and the rest of the Empire, a substantial number of pro-Boer compositions were published. The Kruger House in Pretoria houses 128 published pro-Boer musical scores. According to Swanepoel (1979:47), these works were an expression of kinship of, and by, the people of Europe, America and Russia. It was impossible to include reference to all the works in this study.

- ❖ compositions that did not only flow in one direction. Many of the patriotic songs sung by the Boers grew in stature and inspired the whole of Europe (Swanepoel 1979:47). This makes for an interesting study on its own, but could not be included in this research, as it would have made the study too cumbersome.
- ❖ the exclusion of printed music from *Ons Klyntji, Die Boerevrou* and an unreferenced book with printed songs from the war. It is not always clear whether the people who composed the music had experienced the war and as such these pieces of vocal music were not included in this study.
- ❖ the exclusion of hundreds of interesting concert programmes. The main reason here was that the items were not all vocal and were only performed by individual inmates of camps. Affect and meaning could have been addressed by highlighting the role music played for the inmates attending the concerts. This is, however, a study on its own and, as such, had to be excluded.
- ❖ the decision not to undertake the musical analysis of individual songs. This would lead to a musicological approach, which is beyond the scope of this thesis. Employing this approach could also have prevented the researcher from achieving the objective of highlighting the vocal music as a musicological approach linked to cultural history through the meanings of sound.
- ❖ having to ascertain the validity of the folk songs. It is especially with regard to the so-called folk songs of the War that research needs to be done in order to establish which are true South African folk songs. Grobbelaar's (1999) book on vocal music sung by the Boers on commando is extremely

valuable, but if addressed in this research would take the focus away from addressing affect and meaning through vocal music.

The researcher was of the opinion that, notwithstanding the limitations and delimitations, the study theme has sufficient merit, as it is within the parameters of the aim (as set out in 1.4).

1.11 DATA SOURCES

The sources consulted included unpublished, published and Internet research material.

1.11.1 Unpublished Resources

Data collection relied heavily on primary sources in order to answer the research question. The unpublished material was obtained from the Anglo-Boer War Museum Archives in Bloemfontein (ABWMA), the Free State Archives Depot (FAD), the National Library of South Africa in Cape Town (NLSA), the *Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk* (Dutch Reformed Church) archives in Pietermaritzburg (DRC) and the Transvaal Archives Depot (TAD). As the experiential world of the Boers was so important for this research, the accent fell on primary sources like:

- ❖ Diaries, which were found to be an especially meaningful source of information
- ❖ Hand-notated vocal music
- ❖ Holograph⁷ songbooks
- ❖ Letters, war memoirs, articles and newspaper cuttings written during the war.

Unpublished theses and dissertations also proved to be invaluable resources.

⁷ holograph (a.) Of a deed, letter, or document: Wholly written by the person in whose name it appears (Oxford [Internet] 2004).

1.11.2 Published Resources

Until recently, most research and books on the Anglo-Boer War concentrated mainly on the military course of the War, political aspects and the role of prominent military leaders. With a view to the centenary commemorations, a few books were written containing collections of the vocal music (Grobbelaar 1999; Cillié [s.a.]). Many books surrounding aspects about the war were covered. Books that highlighted the role played by music and a theoretical approach towards music, were also consulted.

1.12 VALUE OF THE STUDY

This thesis is of value due to the fact that:

- ❖ it contributes to the understanding of music as a form of human expression
- ❖ it is useful to researchers in musicology as well as cultural history, as it shows how each discipline can inform and enrich the other
- ❖ it is especially meaningful because it moves cultural history towards an accommodation with musicology
- ❖ it allows for an insight into the psyche of the Boer. This is very important because it promotes an understanding of white South Africans and what they had to suffer during the war. This, together with the understanding of the experiential world of black South Africans during apartheid, could lead to reconciliation between previously polarised South African groups
- ❖ by focussing on the role of the vocal music during the war, it will be recommended reading for students of cultural history and musicology
- ❖ it will be able to make some contribution to commemorate an era.

1.13 CHAPTER LAYOUT

After laying out the research design, the thesis proceeded to ascertain whether the axiom, which declares that music possesses a power or powers that can produce effects on the human psyche and body, could be validated. This had to be established before the research could proceed to assess the role played by vocal

music during the Anglo-Boer War. In order to achieve this, the study aimed at finding a way to link cultural history to musicology.

The experiential world of the Boers was highlighted in order to produce some insider perspectives of the war. This cultural-historical approach did not, however, have much to say about the role of Boer vocal music in generating and articulating social and cultural meanings. On the other hand, the musicological approach, which was based on research grounded in an examination of hand-notated musical scores, drew little attention to the role of music's meanings in the social, historical and cultural circumstances of the Boer people during the war.

In order to assess affect and meaning in Boer vocal music it was thus necessary to find a way to marry the cultural-historical and the musicological approach. The lacuna between these two approaches was identified as an aural void due to the fact that affect and meaning cannot be grounded exclusively in an examination of cultural history or musical symbols decontextualised from sound. The aural void was addressed by assessing the role played by the sounds of the Boer vocal music and an examination of the lyrics of the songs. The background information highlighted in these two chapters, allowed the lyrics to be interpreted in melodic configurations, which are equated with particular moods, emotions and cultural meanings.

The thesis concluded by assessing whether the hypothesis and research question posited in the research design, were answered.

1.14 NOTES TO READER

The following points are made for purposes of clarification, and are listed in no particular priority order:

- ❖ The words “black” and “white” have no racist connotations in this study, but are used solely to identify these two prominent groups in the South African socio-political situation. Similarly, the word “man” has no sexist connotations, but is used solely as a collective noun for humankind.

- ❖ For the purpose of this study, the researcher did not want to focus on the concept of cultural studies that is recognised in Shepherd and Wicke's theory. It was decided that because history is of paramount importance in this research, the study would focus on cultural-historical processes throughout the work.
- ❖ When a quotation is in American English, the term *sic* will not be used to indicate spelling differences between British English, used in this text, and American English. This is done in order to optimise the flow of the text. Similarly no changes were made to misspelled words when quoting lyrics.
- ❖ To avoid confusion between hand-notated songbooks and hand-written songbooks, it was decided to call all hand-written songbooks that only contain the words of the songs without notes, *holograph songbooks*. The researcher decided upon the use of the term *holograph* after consultations with Ms Elizabeth Ralfe, a linguist at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, as well as Prof Jack Kearney, lecturer in English literature at the same University. None of the dictionaries consulted, nor these academics, clearly state that the person in whose handwriting a book appears and is signed by, is necessarily the author. In the case of Boer holograph songbooks most of the lyrics were attributed to other writers.
- ❖ The archival material used for this research was listed in Afrikaans Inventories. The books containing vocal music were listed as *Liederebundels*. Hand-notated songbooks, holograph songbooks, songs with poems and printed songbooks are all referred to as *Liederebundels*. When translating the references from archival inventories, detailed references reflecting the type of songbook became problematic and too long. The researcher thus resorted to calling them all songbooks, as the Afrikaans called them all *Liederebundels*.
- ❖ As the Boers often sang *Psalmen and Gezangen*, suitable translations for these terms had to be found. *Psalm* (pl. *Psalmen*) will be translated as Psalm (pl. Psalms), while it was decided to keep the term, *Gezang* (pl. *Gezangen*). This was decided upon because the researcher often refers to hymns as a more general term for songs of worship. It would thus be

confusing to translate *Gezangen* as hymns and no other suitable terminology could be found.

- ❖ The term “lyrics” is used to refer to the text of a song, while the term “words” is used to refer to text from another source, eg. Biblical quotations.
- ❖ Names of people who donated items to archives are not always listed with initials. In the unpublished sources, some archival resources have initials, while others do not. This is not due to typing errors by the researcher, but due to references in the inventories.
- ❖ If researchers are unable to find resources found in archives under archival references given in this thesis, they must be aware of the fact that resources are often moved and inventories do not always reflect this.
- ❖ The problems with regard to archival research are mentioned to highlight the fact that many of the difficulties encountered by researchers could be overcome if more funds were made available for valuable sources of information like archives. This would allow for inventories to be updated so that resources could be more easily accessible. Archival research is also complicated and there is a need for specialised people to assist researchers. Many valuable documents are not easily available and it is regrettable that the information contained in these historical documents cannot be cited in any research.