



THEOLOGISCHES SEMINAR



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**Expert Opinion in Support of "Adhan" Project**

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Dear Sir or Madam,

In these times of globalization and increased immigration in our societies, city residents are constantly coming into contact with new experiences: new people, new customs, new points of view. But it is also the immigrants themselves who are confronted with many novelties in the form of accommodation or aversion, support or prohibitions. We can currently see how local residents attempt to protect their identities—identities which they were previously unaware of—against the influx of immigrants, how they take up arms in the name of protecting a value system which does not yet exist. Events in the past, when the world still seemed to make sense, often serve as a point of orientation in this struggle. The sheer amount of information crashing down upon concerned citizens—much like the inward flow of immigrants itself—strengthens the sense of longing for personal identity and values, and the fear of losing one's own self.

Immigrants who are forced to flee in the face of such fears and their violent effects in the hope of a better life in allegedly free and safe countries are exposed, at times, to precisely the same conditions they left behind: mistrust and prejudice from people who do not know them and who are afraid of being forcefully run over by them. They are not seen as refugees trying to protect their families, but as enemies who want to force their way into a foreign land and steal its identity.

Awareness programs are important. Public understanding needs to be shifted towards diversity in a lasting way in order to relieve fears of simple-mindedness. But direct experience is also necessary in order to eliminate other fears that may arise. As early as Greek antiquity, music played a vital role in state affairs. Plato included treatises on music in his most famous work – The Republic –, which was seen as being extremely important for educating the population. In fact, training in music served as education. Above all, persons in positions of powers received fundamental training in music "because rhythm and harmony," writes Plato, "find their way into the inward places of the soul; on which they mightily fasten, imparting grace, and making the soul of him who is rightly educated graceful."

Music, therefore, provides direct access to the heart of the listener, bypassing the thinking mind. This also means that music is able to speak to listeners without the origins of the instruments and melodies coming into play.

This communicative opportunity is skillfully employed in the "Adhan" project. The focus in this performance is not on the religious affiliations of the instruments, nor is it on the ritual functions they fulfill. Rather, the three instruments employed in Adhan—a carillon, a shofar and the voice of a muezzin—represent the possibility of peaceful coexistence within society. The instruments neither lose their religious affiliations nor their cultural origins as a result of their use in this manner. Adhan allows the public to see the commonalities between different peoples living in a single society. There are, of course, many differences—and that's perfectly fine! As in an orchestra, where instruments of varying shapes, sizes and sounds come together in harmony, it is possible for the diversity of experiences and customs held by differing peoples to meet in a unified act without losing their unique identities. The striking presence of bells in our society makes the sound of the carillon unmistakable. Bell towers also fulfill an implicitly vital function. While Islam is a religion which can be freely practiced in Germany, for example, the call to prayer of the muezzin (adhan) may not be performed to the same degree as church bells. Likewise, minarets are only tolerated in a few cities. The combined sounding of the carillon and the muezzin in Adhan represents an initial reconciliation of the two traditions.

Such conflicts, however, are not always as public as the one that currently exists between Christians and Muslims. Germany's historical development has created a lasting disparity between Christians and Jews, and Christianity's Jewish roots are frequently forgotten. The Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament tells of the Holy Spirit descending upon the apostles and disciples during the Jewish feast of Shavuot, a harvest festival which also serves as a reminder of how the ten commandments were received. In the Christian context, this day is known as Pentecost and is celebrated as the founding of the church.

A performance of Adhan, as envisioned by its composer, Maximilian Marcoll, deserves support for two reasons: firstly, within the Jewish context, it commemorates the commandments which today have become fundamental values in our society. Adhan reminds us of our common ground. Secondly, Adhan calls for a new start, as in the Chris-

tian tradition. The relevance for society comes into play when these instruments of varying origin sound together on Pentecost.

Adhan consequently deserves a great deal of support. Beyond its reduction to religious content, music as an art form is capable of uncovering social grievances and offering solutions. Adhan is capable of addressing the supposed disparities that exist between different religions at the sociocultural level and directing attention to the many commonalities they share. But more than that, Adhan can actively create new commonalities by combining instruments that have never been played together before. Thus, the sounding of Adhan *is* the solution.

On account of the reasons given here, I urgently recommend lending support to this intercultural project.

With best regards,

Dr. Tony Pacyna