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### **The Projection of death and fear in western culture: the case of my early exposure to Catholicism**

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It starts with a reminiscence of my primary school days. My memory revolves around the chapel at school and a parish church in the eastern part of Hong Kong Island during the sixties of the last century. It was in the school chapel that I took part in a so-called “A Good or Nice Death Exercise” (習練善終). The exercise was a regular prayer for one to well prepare his natural death. I will go into the psychological and educational implications of its text to the minds of young students. Another ritual was the worship of the 14 points of Passion route engraved on the three walls of the church. It was a pre-Easter ritual involving readings related to the Passion from the gospel, alternating with responsorial singing. The ritual was practiced both at the school chapel and the parish church. In addition, as a young altar boy and later choir member of the parish church, I experienced years of high masses such as those in Christmas and Easter and some less festive occasions like requiem mass. The services before and on Good Friday during the Lent period are still lively in my mind. However, my impression of the requiem mass is most vivid.

The symbol of death in Western music is deeply rooted in the Catholic church culture: death and resurrection, sin and salvation, etc.. Music is strategically used in the above-mentioned rituals in order to enrich the aural effects. Participants of these rituals were provided with a soundscape that was full of aural and visual images of death. By saying prayer related to death and the Passion (The Process of Jesus' death) in such an environment, their fear for death, the punishment of all secular wrongdoings, had been reinforced. Such memory and experience helps to enhance my understanding of Western music culture both in the real and in the exotic sense. The paper concludes with a discussion on the use of the famous medieval sequence “*Dies irae*” in the movie “Shining” (with Jack Nicholson). It traces the historical and cultural reasons for the scary and ominous effect created, and finally focuses on how music had been used in the projection of death and fear.