

15th February 2021

Drums

**“But hark! My pulse, like a soft drum
Beats my approach, tells thee I come.”**

Henry King, An Exequy (1657)

When I was in my teens, I played the drums in a band. I was no Buddy Rich, the legendary Big Band drummer from the 1950s and 60s. I could admire *The Beatles'* Ringo Starr but could never hope to emulate his style. And as for Ginger Baker of *Cream*, arguably the greatest rock drummer of all time? I could only watch in open-mouthed admiration. But I did my best in what would now be called a church Praise Band, *The Crossbeats*. We played at our church Youth Club, at special events, and we even went on tour once ... We had a lead-vocalist, bass, rhythm and lead guitarists, and yours truly on drums. I never graduated to a full drum-kit, “keeping it simple” with a basic snare-drum and a hi-hat cymbal (the one that goes up and down with a pedal). But I loved it, and all these years later I’ll still tap out rhythms on my knees to all kinds of music, and I play a single African drum from time to time in the Praise Band in our church.

The bass guitarist of *The Crossbeats* always said that the bass line in the band was “the guts” of the music. I would add that the drums were the beating heart of it all. The drums provided the pulse, the timing, the rhythm, and gave the music its drive. How often have you heard a drummer, before the start of a song or a piece of music, cracking the drumsticks together and counting, “One, two, three, four”, to give the band their entry and to set the pace of all that’s to follow? Without the drummer and a regular beat, the music could go all over the place.

In Psalm 57 and at verse 7, the psalmist gives us this prayer:

My heart, O God, is steadfast; I will sing and make music.

Whatever music we make, however we live our lives, whatever code of belief we follow, whatever band we play in, we should make sure the heart of it is right. If our beat is “steadfast”, and even if, in Henry King’s words, it is provided by no more than a “soft drum”, then the music of our life will be steady, and the songs we sing will always be in time.

A prayer for today

Lord, keep me steadfast, beating time to your rhythms. Amen.

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

Also available at <https://swallowsnestnet.wordpress.com>