

It is too bad that the word "muse" has come to have such lightweight connotations. Nowadays the "muse" is thought of as the offhand, faraway smile of a supine loiterer lightly skimming the surface of his subconscious, a blade of grass between his lips. The purpose of this article is to promote and underline the idea that the "muse" in music, far from being the mere tickling of the subconscious fancy, is the very voice of God whispering bright secrets in our ears. Music is power from on high; as such, music can advance the spiritual progress of all those involved in it, and create change in the physical world.

Like any great and powerful truth, music is generally vulgarized by the mundane consciousness into a sonic bubble-bath; sound waves that help us block out city sounds, massage our jangled nerves, entertain our houseplants, and make our cows give more milk. This physical aspect of music is also a potent tool of Satan as he uses it to elicit low-vibration responses from our defenceless, ignorant youngsters.

The misuse of something good, however, does not make it bad. Music is essentially good (even though many of its linguistic derivatives are very bad indeed) for a very particular reason: music, more than any other art, is heavensent. Music is divine reality manifested in our physical world for the purpose of raising consciousness to a higher-than-mundane level. The goodness of music is good in ways we cannot understand or predict. If music is symbolic, or representational in any way, it is symbolic of itself, God's truth seeking to change us from children of the earth to children of God.

The truths expressed in painting, poetry, and dance, almost universally refer to physical realities. Pictures (even imaginary pictures, if they are seen with physical eyes), and words (even abstract words like soul and God, if they are understood with the lower, literal mind), must have material referents or they would not exist. The referential sources of the literal and graphic arts necessarily objectify our experience of those arts at a basic level. Since the referential source of music is not of this world, there is nothing to objectify; thus, music, at the outset is subjective, a quantum leap closer to the language of the soul than anything it is possible for the referential arts to express. This is not to say that divine inspiration does not enter into the work of great painters, or that divine instruction transmitted through the scriptures does not influence us toward right action; but true divine understanding is not literal, it cannot be understood in words, and cannot be expressed in words. Understanding of divine knowledge comes through direct experience. Any other type of understanding is by analogy only, and is therefore a pale reflection of the reality. Hence, the main subject of this article is the experience of music; not what it says to us, but what it does to us.

A basic assumption of this article is that the human personality exists on many planes at once. Our lower, mundane consciousness, which we may refer to as "normal" (for most people, anyway), is only a fractional representation of the total consciousness that is available to human beings. With only a slight change in attitude, and a serious effort of will, higher consciousness states may be entered, and the spiritual benefits thereof may be richly reaped. Therefore, as the arguments of this article unfold, the reader must accept, at least in theory, the idea that the human consciousness is aware already of celestial realities which only lack integration into the lower consciousness to become a part of his daily life. The acceptance of the idea may lead easily to the personal experience of the realities, which, the author hastens to point out, is the only valid basis for knowledge of any kind, spiritual or otherwise.

Music may be spoken of as a heavenly language; it speaks to the soul about things to which there are no physical referents. Music guides the consciousness to appreciate a higher reality manifesting in our physical world - the higher reality is the music itself. In fact, the expression "heavenly language" subtly misrepresents the situation - which is that in the higher realms there is less and less distinction between the word (or thought) and the reality. The voice of God does not speak to us in words because words cannot transcend their own earthbound definitions. The voice of God is undefined and limitless, hence, the miracle of music is, in part, that it can speak to our puny, limited consciousnesses at all.

This is not to say that music cannot be made to imitate nature or tell stories. Musicologists are quick to point to the human heartbeat as the source of all rhythm, and the yowl of a Neanderthal as the first melody. This reduction of musical meaning to the absurd, ignores the fact that music is not sound - it is meaning communicated through form; music is built up of small sound-shapes whose archetypal/structural origins do not exist on earth anywhere but in music, but whose syntactical derivatives can be detected in all language including all the other arts.

Which is music's most important attribute, the sound or the shape? Ask deaf Beethoven this question. To say that the atomic source of music is sound, is like saying the atomic source of poetry is the letter. This is simply not true; you can reduce poetry down to the architectural level of the word, but no further; poetry is not made of meaningless letters, it is made of meaningful words; likewise, music is not made of meaningless sounds, but meaningful melodic forms (small musical note patterns). Words refer to physical things (or at least literal things), but the melodic forms of music are spiritual analogies and are referential only in the sense that they point the way to higher realms where such analogies are understood by the mind to represent higher realities. The fact that composers have developed a vocabulary of onomatopoeic expressions to tell stories, tells us nothing about the essence of music.

Neither does the fact that narrative associations often occur (and should occur) to a serious music listener. Such associations are part of the art of music-making. It is important that the lower mind, as well as the body, be given an occupation while experiencing music. The body enjoys sound massage, the lower (literal) mind makes up an harmonious story-line it can relate to, but the higher mind transmutes the abstract (unearthly) patterns into a divine reality which functions like a divine message. By speaking to the whole person, the message of music is integrated into the physical reality of the person; the spirit is made manifest through the physical. If the message remained purely discarnate, it would not speak to us because there would be nothing for us to hang onto. Thus, just as the referential art forms come from, and address issues concerning man's intercourse with the world, musical forms come from, and transmit messages concerning man's intercourse with God; the aesthetic experience is thereby magnified to a paranormal level of integration with the total God-man, as higher and lower consciousnesses co-mingle in celebration of the fullness of life.

With the use of the word "transmute", I suggest that we are talking about music-making as a mysterious alchemical process; i.e., the magic of transforming spiritual realities into appreciable physical realities. This is another part of the miracle. Through music, God leads man's consciousness upward, speaking from his higher consciousness to his lower consciousness. This enhanced contact with the divine changes us, since it is impossible to be touched by God's truth and remain the same. The divine energy flows downward from God; then, as the lower consciousness is raised, the energy flows upward again, back to God, lifting us up with it. When the experience is over, we inevitably sink back down, at least part way, but the essential changes made in our consciousness level are permanent. With each rebirth in spirit, we become more like children - children of God.

Any discussion of spiritual realities that does not invite the student to experience them directly, is just so much hot air; hence a discussion of the techniques involved in the alchemical process which transforms sound materials into transcendent experience is of extreme relevance. As I have said, to understand music you are performing or listening to, it is necessary to key into operational aspects of consciousness which are not a normal part of your everyday life. You must direct your will to reach up into higher strata of consciousness where your higher selves are in deeper communion with God. Our mental appreciation of the change we witness in ourselves, results in a mental structure called a thought, or an idea. The idea may be expressed in words, because this is how our minds habitually interpret experience. The thought becomes a symbol for the divine truth that has manifested in our consciousness. Only in the sense that our reaction to music creates thoughts, can music be considered a language, for the thoughts are not the music, nor even the most important effect of the music's action on us. The music is the experience of divine, alchemical change.

Although our literal minds automatically underline memories of sound events with a verbal subtext, a more fruitful mode of interpreting the experience of music is feeling. In this materialist age, where the literal understanding of a thing is considered by many to be the ultimate reality, many people consciously choose to halt their music appreciation efforts at the threshold of the verbal structuring; i.e., they choose to understand only those things about music which can be objectively expressed in words. Our science of utility has taught us that understanding takes place in the brain, and the brain, after all, uses words as its primary processing medium. We forget that understanding happens in many different ways, on many different levels at once. When we listen to music, the most natural response in the world is the emotional response, yet the self-conscious mental habits of scholarship can make the right-minded intellectual decide to invalidate this response, and turn to verbal resources as the only proper medium for developing his appreciation; thus, he not only cuts himself off from his primary mode of intuitive understanding, he thinks of it as a virtue while he is doing it.

In a way, the amateur music-maker-listener has this advantage over the music-professional-connoisseur: because the amateur knows less about music, his response to music can be largely spontaneous, or emotional, since he lacks the verbal vocabulary to objectify it even if he wanted to. The professional musician has been trained to associate musical experience with literal referents, and thus tends to automatically translate his emotional responses into the literal terms that this training has taught his lower mind; habitual adherence to this mind state can cut off the music professional from a key element in the total aesthetic experience, from the spark of life that attracted him to music in the first place. It is the emotional response that is the living link between the human and the non-literal mind of God. When the connoisseur fixes the musical meaning fast in his lower consciousness with verbal structures, he denies his understanding opportunities for fluid growth and change; on the other hand, when the normal operations of the literal mind are suppressed, the subject's feelings are given the freedom to lead consciousness toward undefined realities-the personality expands upward toward God, and enjoys God's love through direct experience unmitigated by mundane objectivity.

The ultimate appreciation of a piece of music (another part of the miracle), is that the wonder of it has wrought a change within us; that we, like Dante as he approaches the immutable, changeless face of God, witness constant growth and development with every change in our own ability to perceive. A self-limiting attitude toward consciousness in general, or music-consciousness in particular, will result in limited benefits; but an acceptance of music as a doorway to the infinite can only result in vast enhancement of spiritual awareness. If the mind is open to the possibility of perceiving spiritual realities through the musical experience, the mind can lead the music into the heart. It is in the heart that the alchemical transmutation takes place. Our hearts are lifted up, and through the lifting up of our hearts we know and are known.

The subtle relationship of the mind to the heart (or thought to feeling) is of critical importance to the music-maker. It is important to reiterate the idea of the mind leading the way to the heart, because the workings of the mind are so involved in the workings of the will. The mind is really nothing but a fancy file cabinet for memories, and systems of memory-manipulation; it is really the will that is responsible for perpetuating self-limiting attitudes. Likewise, the will (motivated, or, you might say enticed, by the possibilities the mind offers) can burst the Satan-forged chains of worldly thinking and revolutionize our perception of ourselves as spiritual beings. By an act of will we may reach up and claim divine knowledge as our birthright as children of God. As children of God we may, like the apostles of old, enlist the aid of other divine agencies to work the Will of God in the world.

It is no accident that among the popular cliches about angels, are included the ideas of harp-playing and choir-singing, for it is through His angels that God transmits His musical messages to man. Angels are not cute characters in a fairy story, they are real, powerful agents of God, who attend each one of us constantly, standing by ready to give aid and comfort when it is asked for. Thus, when we speak of raising consciousness, we are speaking, in a real sense, of raising our spiritual ears to the level of Gabriel's lips.

Angels are of particular importance to me, personally, because their message, through music, led directly to my conversion to Christianity. When I was still in college, I got a job as a church choir director. I am a good conductor, and I needed the money, so the job was a welcome addition to my life. I didn't mind church, as it was easy enough to ignore the religion part of it and just do my job as a professional musician. Nobody asked me what I believed, nobody really cared as long as the music kept happening. It was, in a certain sense, an accident that I got involved in religion; of course, in another sense it was no accident at all.

One Sunday, the choir was not well-prepared, and I was nervous about the quality of the performance we were about to give. I didn't believe in God, but I did believe in good performances, so I decided to indulge in a little psychological manipulation to get the choir's energy up to a higher level. I asked for a prayer of dedication from someone in the congregation. Of course, I didn't believe in prayer either, but I knew they did, so I figured a little cathartic adrenalin rush wouldn't hurt. The woman from the congregation invoked the presence of Jesus, and asked that the choir be permitted to sing with the voices of angels. I could feel that things were better as I stood up to lead the anthem, but imagine my surprise when they opened their mouths and sounded just like ANGELS! The more I relived this experience the more profound it became for me. This event was deeply shocking to me and gave me much food for thought; I mean, this was more than a parlor trick, this was REAL, this was TRUTH. The heaviest part of it was that it bridged the gap between the fantasy world (or thought world) of creativity, and the real world of people and things. Here was music that not only spoke to me as a musician, but as a person.

This experience was crucial to my conversion. Though many further developments had to take place between me and Jesus, before I could claim my divine birthright, the singing of the angels was the beginning of a completely new life for me. The addition of a spiritual dimension to my music-making revolutionized the music-making on every conceivable level. Having been awakened to the possibility of divine intervention in musical performance, I eagerly sought to cultivate a similar attitude in my musical followers ever afterward. The results have been astounding, increasing my own faith with every breakthrough, and changing the lives of my students.

To clarify one point on the subject of music as a divine language, let me say that whenever or however someone makes music, he is opening his heart to become a vessel for divine forms to reside in and to manifest through into the physical world. This is why, for instance, music is taught in school: all of mankind, even atheists and communists, recognize intuitively that music is good for you no matter why, or how uninspired the music or the performance is. It is possible to ignore the spiritual possibilities, to redefine the spiritual effects into neutral, mundane terms, or even to pervert the divine forms into pornographic (or should I say pornosonic?) misrepresentations; however, by focusing the action of the will on expanding the personality outward, beyond the limits normally imposed by the petty ego, the capacity of the heart is vastly increased, and the quality of the music-making skyrockets. When the aid of the attending angels is enlisted, the effects are even more outstanding. As we humbly ask to be made an instrument of God's peace, the grip of petty ego slips off our souls and we soar to heavenly heights. We become an open channel through which divine reality pours into the world for our mutual comfort and spiritual advancement.

I have stood before a choir on Sunday morning with a cold, no voice, or worse, no concentration, and reached up for angelic support, receiving unheard-of power and strength. I have stood before an orchestra of amateur musicians, invoked the Presence of Jesus, and felt energy that nearly lifted my body off the floor, and heard sounds that none of us thought we were capable of. I constantly demand that my musicians play and sing for two, that they transcend their own self-imposed limits, and that they reach out with their personalities to become part of a group consciousness. The defeat of the petty, nagging, negative ego is my prime goal in music teaching. The creation of a divine form for the contemplation of the people is my goal in performance whether I am in church or in concert, whether I am leading or following. The experience of divine reality is my passion.

The reality created by musical performance is power - power for good, which is incalculable. Good, born into the world on angel-wings of song, does not stop with the sounds, because the good is not the sounds. We cannot see with our physical eyes the good that music does, but as we become more and more spiritually a-tuned, the effects of divine reality brought into the world become obvious, and our sense of responsibility to

keep bringing this reality into the world becomes more and more compelling. As we are changed by making music, as we invite others to be changed through listening to our music, we are brought closer to God, to each other, and to our own higher selves. Thus, the miracle of music is that God loves us, and sings His love for those who wish to hear.

Laus Dei

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