

# The Power of Music

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*Dr. H. Lloyd Leno (now deceased) was the director of the Music Department at Antillian Adventist University, Puerto Rico at the time this series was originally published in Our Firm Foundation, June, July, and August, 1987.*

*Due to the continuing conflict over music in the church and repeated requests for copies of these articles, we are pleased to publish this series once again.*

# Part I

Against the backdrop of the spread of rock'n'roll music and campus unrest nationwide during the late 1960s, the Seventh-day Adventist Church was experiencing a troublesome change in attitude toward worship in general and religious music in particular.

Among those who advocated the use of the vernacular popular music were sincere Christians who were looking for new ways to witness for Christ. Also, among the advocates of the use of popular dance styles for worship, were those who, in my opinion, were motivated to a large extent by the prevailing philosophy of “change for change’s sake.”

This philosophy assumes that since previous methods did not solve or cure the world’s problems or evangelize the world, they must be replaced with new, even though radical, methods. “The end justifies the means” seemed to be almost a credo. Most church musicians and church leaders alike found themselves groping for answers.

However, some musicians and a few church leaders were not surprised at the development of the problem, because in the absence of strong leadership and/or a unified philosophy of music, the church was in fact vulnerable on this issue.

In the summer of 1972, the General Conference convened a special task force committee to study the problem that had developed in music. A number of papers were commissioned and capable persons put forth a tremendous effort to search for and apply guiding principles.

Sensing the need for some scientific information that could complement that from the Bible and the writings of E.G. White, I suggested to the chairman of the committee that a paper dealing with the psychological aspect of music be prepared for study by the committee. The reply was a request

that I undertake this assignment. The result was a paper which was subsequently revised for the *Review and Herald* and in which form it is here reproduced.

Since writing these articles, I have continued my study in this area with the hope of developing a larger and more complete perspective. The information discovered, and the resulting insights gained, will be the subject of an article which will follow this series.

During recent years a great deal of concern among Seventh-day Adventists has developed over the subject of the ethics of music. There has always been an awareness that some types of entertainment and amusements were harmful to the Christian, and it was more-or-less understood that the kind of music closely associated with these amusements was also unsafe for Christian use.

However, until about the 1960s, discussions on the subject, written or verbal, by ministry or laity, seem to have been infrequent, causing little recognition or comment outside of the local situation.

Today, we see a different picture. There is widespread interest, concern, and discussion, and some definite polarization among the church members. Some believe that music is amoral, that its meaning and influence are what the individual wishes it to be. Others have strong convictions as to the influence of music. A few have studied and written on the subject. Surprisingly enough, there are those who fail to see any issue at all.

Rather than relying on majority opinion, personal tastes, or even the opinion of professionals in the field of music, it seems logical that we should develop a philosophy of music based on what effect music has upon people. I believe this can be determined from three sources:

First, the Bible, which gives us the basic principles of

Christian living.

Second, the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy, which enlarge upon the biblical teachings.

And third, God's other book, nature and science, which can furnish us with added insights into the nature of man's response to various stimuli in his environment.

Addressing a meeting of the *American Psychiatric Association*, Howard Hanson, a nationally prominent composer, declared:

Music is a curiously subtle art with innumerable, varying emotional connotations. It is made up of many ingredients and, according to the proportions of these components, it can be soothing or invigorating, ennobling or vulgarizing, philosophical or orgiastic. It has powers for evil, as well as for good. If we are to use it as a social or therapeutic force, the first essential is that we find out something about it.<sup>1</sup>

It is obvious that we Seventh-day Adventists use music a great deal. But our tastes and consequently our practices are subject to the influence of radio, television, and the recording industry as are those of others. Can we afford to be less concerned about the power and influence of music?

If there are eternal consequences involved, we indeed "must guard well the avenues of the soul." *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 518. To do this we must be informed. To remain uninformed is to surrender our power of choice to others, for no one can live in a musical vacuum.

First, let us review briefly certain scientific investigations into the psychological and physiological responses to music. Next, we will consider how these findings compare with the writings of Ellen G. White. Then we will examine the moral and spiritual implications, and how these relate to contemporary moral issues.

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<sup>1</sup> Howard Hanson, *A Musician's Point of View Toward Emotional Expression*, *American Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol. 99, 317.

In this first part we shall explore the ways in which sound, musical sounds in particular, affects the human organism. Without an attempt to exhaust the subject, we will look at some of the information provided by psychologists, physiologists, and other scientists who have conducted research in this field. Some of these findings will suggest moral and spiritual implications; others may not. In any case, we shall postpone until later the discussion of these implications.

## **The Perception of Music**

A major interest that led to the study of the effects of music on man was that of music therapy. Activity in this field increased when during the Second World War it was recognized that many “shell shocked” servicemen were in desperate need of psychiatric treatment.

In 1944, upon authorization of the Surgeon General, the *Music Research Foundation* was established at *Walter Reed General Hospital*, in Washington, D.C., for the purpose of discovering and developing new methods of controlling human emotions and behavior.

Probably the most important development in the scientific investigation of music was the discovery that music is perceived through that portion of the brain receiving the stimuli of emotions, sensations, and feelings, without being first subjected to the brain centers involving reason and intelligence. This discovery, confirmed by a number of scientists, gave great impetus to the field of music therapy, as one can readily understand from this statement:

Music, which does not depend upon the master brain to gain entrance into the organism, can still arouse by way of the thalamus—the relay station of all emotions—sensations and feelings. Once a stimulus has been able to reach the thalamus, the master brain is *automatically invaded*, and if the stimulus is continued for some time, a closer contact between the master brain and the world of reality can be thus

established.<sup>2</sup> (All emphasis supplied unless otherwise noted.)

Thus, music became the tool by which communication could be re-established with certain mentally ill patients who, because of their condition, could not be reached through verbal communication, which requires the use of the cerebral cortex.

## **Music, Moods, and Body Chemistry**

Even without giving the subject a great deal of thought, most people would agree that music affects their moods. This idea is not only accepted by the general public and used by industries, it is also supported by scientific investigation.

One of the earliest studies was conducted in 1920-1923 by the *Carnegie Institute of Technology*. The study involving a nationwide investigation demonstrated that music affects the moods of people of varied backgrounds in a remarkably similar way.<sup>3</sup>

Later, the psychiatrist Edward Podolsky reported:

Researchers on the auditory nerves indicate that there is scarcely a function of the body which may not be affected by the pulsations and harmonic combinations of musical tones.<sup>4</sup>

He stated further that moods are directly related to physiology, that they depend a great deal on the activity of the brain and blood and body chemistry.<sup>5</sup>

More recent studies have confirmed and enlarged upon these earlier conclusions. Two German scientists, Von G. and H. Harrer, conducted experiments to determine the effects of

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2 Ira A. Altshuler, "A Psychiatrist's Experiences With Music as a Therapeutic Agent," *Music and Medicine*, ed. by Dorothy Schullian and Max Schoen (New York: Henry Schuman Inc., 1948), 270-271.

3 Max Schoen, *The Psychology of Music*, (New York: Ronald, 1940), 89.

4 Edward Podolsky, *Music for Your Health* (New York: Bernard Ackerman, Inc., 1945), 26-27.

5 *Ibid.*, 131.

music upon the body. In their studies they noticed significant changes in pulse and breath rates, as well as in the psychogalvanic skin reflex when the subjects listened to music.

In one experiment the listener's attention was purposely drawn away from the music so that he was not even aware that a certain piece had been played. It was discovered that even without his attention a strong, emotional response to the music was registered on the instruments.

However, when asked to listen to the music critically, the psychogalvanic skin response was much less, while there was a measurable increase in brain activity. As a result of their experiments, these researchers concluded that of all the senses, hearing has the greatest effect on the autonomic nervous system.<sup>6</sup>

Those with some knowledge of physiology will recognize that this system regulates not only the functions of the visceral organs, such as the heart and respiratory organs, but also the endocrine glands. Now, the portion of the brain involved in the control of these functions is the hypothalamus, and since we are concerned with moods and emotions, we should be interested in the function of this part of the brain. The physiologist Mary Griffiths states that among other functions

...the hypothalamus exerts control over the rate of secretion of the thyroid gland, the adrenal cortex, and the gonads. It can thus influence metabolic rate...as well as the secretion of sex hormones.

She further states that the hypothalamus is definitely concerned with

...triggering the autonomic responses connected with the expression of fear, rage, and other emotions.<sup>7</sup>

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6 G. Harrer and H. Harrer, "Musik, Emotion and Vegetativum," *Wiener Medizinische Wochenschrift*, NR. 45-46, 1968.

7 Mary Griffiths, *Introduction to Human Physiology* (New York:

This seems to support an earlier conclusion by a Harvard physiologist that music

...releases adrenaline and perhaps other hormones.<sup>8</sup>

Another discovery made some time ago was that music influences the electrical conductivity of the body.<sup>9</sup>

Medical science has discovered that there is a direct relationship of the electrical potential and electrolyte balance and moods of an individual.<sup>10 11</sup>

Still, many would contend that the response to music is too individual to predict, and that the mood stimulated by music is largely a matter of the association the individual gives it. Certainly there are some individual differences and some other variables, but the fact still remains that there is a close enough relationship of the mood-provoking power of music and the human response so that a number of business enterprises, such as *Muzak*, to say nothing of the motion picture industry, are highly successful at choosing music to create or modify mood. Furthermore, we are all aware that our moods stimulate a desire to hear or express music compatible with these moods.

Rhythm is such an important part of man's existence that we must recognize that man is a rhythmical being. There is an obvious rhythm to the heartbeat, respiration, gait, and speech. The internal organs also operate in rhythmic cycles. Even the brain functions in rhythm. The brain waves, it was discovered by the German scientist Hans Berger, are constant in fre-

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Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1974), 474-475.

8 Altshuler, op. cit., 270.

9 Doris Soibelman, *Therapeutic and Industrial Uses of Music* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), 4.

10 Arthur Guyton, *Function of the Human Body*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders, 1969), 332-340.

11 Madelyn Nordmark and Ann Rohweder, *Scientific Foundations of Nursing*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1967), 99-102.

quency and are influenced by physical and mental states.<sup>12</sup>

It should be easily understood, then, why the human organism (as well as that of some animals) responds readily to rhythmic music.

An experiment performed by the eminent physiologist McKendrick, in Glasgow, reveals just how sensitive the human body is to rhythm. Wires from a record player were attached to a vessel containing a solution of salt into which deaf mutes placed their fingers. With the exception of one girl, who lost her hearing at the age of 11, all of the subjects had been deaf from infancy. All the subjects reported that they felt “the crescendo and diminuendo of rhythm.” Instinctively they nodded their heads in time with the rhythm experienced through their fingers. The one subject said that what she felt in her fingers reminded her of music she had heard as a child before becoming deaf.<sup>13</sup>

The most natural human response to music is physical movement. Capitalizing on this, fast rhythmic music was used therapeutically in war hospitals to help wounded soldiers regain the use of limbs that had been in casts.<sup>14</sup>

Music has also been used to revive those who are well but fatigued:

It has been found that...music that is strongly rhythmical may set up a sensory-motor reaction....Thus, when soldiers are tired during long marches and scouts come to the end of a difficult hike, a spirited song or the strains of a snappy band will release new energies and keep them going with re-

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12 Lawrence Walters, “How Music Produces Its Effects on the Brain and Mind,” *Music Therapy*, ed. Edward Podolsky (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954), 38.

13 Agnes Savill, “Physical Effects of Music,” *Music and Letters*, Vol. 39, 1958, 25.

14 Doron K. Antrim, “Music Therapy,” *Musical Quarterly*, October 1944, 414.

newed spirit.<sup>15</sup>

In ancient as well as modern civilization, music has helped to synchronize the movements of workers. In fact, many folk songs originated in this way. Of course, the music also helped to relieve the monotony of their toil.

Experiments in offices and industries have led to the conclusion that unless the rhythm of the music is adapted to the work there is no effect on the precision or accuracy of the work. In fact, when the rhythm is contrary to the speed of typewriting, there was a decrease in accuracy.<sup>16</sup>

### **Effects of Rhythm and Tempo**

In Russia, the *Institute of Medical and Biological Problems* of the *USSR Ministry of Public Health* reports that their scientists have conducted a number of experiments to determine the effects of music. It was discovered that rhythm and tempo had a definite effect on the body:

Specially selected music increases the working capacity of the muscles. At the same time, the tempo of the movements of the worker changes with the change of the musical tempo. It is as if the music determines a good rapid rhythm of movement. Another series of experiments on students proved that not only the working capacity changes under the influence of music but also the pulse and blood pressure.<sup>17</sup>

Unfortunately, rhythm has not always been used for constructive purposes. Music and dance were often used in many cultures as a means to excite people to certain types of action, from the frenzied orgies in the rites of Dionysus to the religious and war dances of various tribes of Indians in the Americas. E. Thayer Gaston, nationally known music thera-

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15 Willem Van de Wall, *Music in Hospitals* (New York: Russell Sage Foundations, 1946), 15.

16 Soibelman, op. cit., 47.

17 Leonid Malnikov, "USSR: Music and Medicine," *Music Journal*, XXCII, November 1970, 15.

pist, states that all these repetitive, monotonous dances resulted in cataleptic seizures.<sup>18</sup>

Writing for the book *Music and Medicine*, Charles Hughes points out that even in the more sophisticated societies rhythm tends to dominate the attention of the individual whether he is a participant in the dance, the creator of a dance, or merely a spectator:

Such situations occur when actual rhythmic bodily movement is imagined or is actually present. Where the subject is himself the dancer, we have already shown that absorption in the dance may reach the point of self-hypnosis. Even in social dancing it is probable that the phrase, "The intoxication of the dance," so often employed in one form or another, is more than a conventional expression.<sup>19</sup>

### **Rhythm is Physically Stimulating**

There should be no doubt then, that rhythm is the most physically stimulating of the musical elements. If rhythm has such an energizing effect on the muscles of the body, it is only natural that the emotions (and inevitably the mind) should be affected. Charles Hughes discusses this relationship between mood, emotion, and the rhythmic factor. He states:

Music when it truly stirs and moves the hearer has two important effects: it so centers the attention of the auditor on the music that for the moment he forgets himself, and it creates within the listener an emotional response appropriate to the mood of the music. This response is accompanied by the same physiological changes that accompany emotional states as they occur in life situations.

Such a response is a response to the total and complex effect of music. Yet an examination of the pieces employed to test the emotional effect of music would indicate that rhythm

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18 E. Thayer Gaston, *Music in Therapy* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968), 329.

19 Charles W. Hughes, "Rhythm and Health," *Music and Medicine*, 186-187.

is a primary factor in determining the kind of effect produced. It is not only the presence or absence of a pronounced rhythmic pattern which is involved here, but also the general rate of movement, be it fast, moderate, or slow.<sup>20</sup>

Three other researchers, Gundach, Henlein, and Hevner, working independently of one another, found that tempo and rhythm were definitely the most important element in creating emotional response. "Dotted figures of uneven rhythms" were especially significant. Furthermore,

...the difference in expressiveness for certain melodies is generally attributed to their rhythm, tempo, et cetera, instead of the pitch pattern of successive tones.<sup>21</sup>

Participating in activities in which rhythm and body movement are prime factors, obviously changes the atmosphere and our attitudes to one another. It encourages and promotes a certain kind of cooperation or unity. Thayer Gaston says:

Rhythmic activities make working together easier because no words are needed, rhythm is the common bond. Somehow, it encourages a freedom with others.

During a dance, a man and a woman who have just met put their arms around each other in an intimacy that would never be tolerated by the two or the public, but is acceptable in the dance as long as the music continues.<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps an appropriate summary would be the statement by the author of *Music in Hospitals*:

Much of what we call "irresistible" in music is so because we react on this sensory-motor level of functioning.<sup>23</sup>

## **Music and Sensory Perceptions**

It may be surprising to many to learn that music affects

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20 Hughes, *Ibid.*, 168-169.

21 Leonard Gilman and Frances Paperte, *Music and Your Emotions* (New York: Liveright, 1952), 32.

22 Gaston, *op. cit.*, 18.

23 Van de Wall, *op. cit.*, 15.

our other sense impressions. Studies show that this is definitely the case. The senses of smell and taste, as well as touch, are affected by sound. In short, we become more sensitive to taste, odor, and touch while listening to music.

The effect on the eyesight is probably the most spectacular, including the perception of color. It was discovered that patches of color, which at a given distance could scarcely be recognized, were clearly identified, and barely legible print was read when a musical tone was present.<sup>24</sup>

This is but a brief survey of some of the scientific studies of music and its effect on the mind and body. Even this limited report, however, brings to the surface some significant information.

1. Music is perceived and enjoyed without necessarily being interpreted by the higher centers of the brain involving reason and judgment.
2. Response to music is measurable even though the listener is not giving conscious attention to it.
3. There is evidence that music can bring about mood changes by affecting the body chemistry and electrolyte balance.
4. By lowering the level of sensory perception, music heightens the responses to color, touch, and other sensory perceptions.
5. It has been shown that music affects changes in muscular energy and promotes or inhibits body movement.
6. Highly repetitive rhythmic music has a hypnotic effect.
7. The sense of hearing has a greater effect upon the autonomic nervous system than any of the other senses.

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<sup>24</sup> Charles M. Diversens and Harry Fine, *A Psychology of Music: The Influences of Music on Behavior* (Cincinnati: College of Music, 1939), 229.

## Part II

**A**s noted in our previous article, music enters the mind on the subconscious level because it is received first by the thalamus, which records it as either a pleasant or an unpleasant sensation. The cortex is not involved; the powers of reason and judgment are not employed.

Now notice these statements by Ellen White:

**Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 506:**

Satan has no objection to music if he can make that a channel through which to gain access to the minds of the youth.

**Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 497:**

Satan knows what organs to excite to animate, engross, and charm the mind.

The implication of these for the Christian should be frightening, especially when considered along with these statements:

**Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, p. 325:**

The natural mind leans toward pleasure and self-gratification.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 459:**

Satan is using every means to make crime and debasing vice popular....The mind is educated to familiarity with sin.

**Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, p. 27:**

When it suits his purpose, he [Satan] can impart to men sentiments that are enchanting.

Now, if music can affect us subconsciously, we need to know just what effect it has. Scientific investigations prove music can bring about mood changes by affecting the body chemistry and electrolyte balance. However, can the thoughts be affected by music without words?—Mrs. White wrote:

**Testimonies for the Church, vol 1, p. 510:**

No one who has an indwelling Saviour will dishonor Him

before others by producing strains from a musical instrument which call the mind from God and heaven to light and trifling things.

Note that in this instance it was instrumental music that she warned would “call the mind” from God to “light and trifling things.” Again, with the same concern, she spoke of music that,

**Testimonies for the Church, vol 1, p. 497:**

...instead of inciting to holiness and spirituality, has been the means of diverting their minds from the truth.

Immediately, she qualifies the type of music:

Frivolous songs and...popular sheet music,  
and in the next sentence she again spoke of the use of  
...instruments of music.

Other expressions such as

**Testimonies for the Church, vol 1, p. 506:**

...pleasing infatuation...

**Testimonies for the Church, vol 4, p. 653:**

...deprave the imagination.

and

**Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, p. 339:**

...abundance of enthusiasm, and a kind of inspiration.

These statements show a causal relationship between the musical atmosphere and the mood of the people involved. By contrast, she described the activities of those enrolled in the schools of the prophets:

**Fundamentals of Christian Education, p. 97:**

No frivolous waltz was heard.

Whatever the music was, we know it was a kind opposed to frivolity.

Our brief survey of scientific studies showed that response to music can be physical, that muscular energy can be affected, movement can be inhibited or stimulated, and that

repetitive rhythmic music has a hypnotic effect. Mrs. White warned:

**Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 496:**

They have a keen ear for music, and Satan knows what organs to excite to animate, engross, and charm the mind so that Christ is not desired.

Other statements which relate music to physical activity are these:

**Education, p. 168:**

[Music has power]...to promote harmony of action.

**Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 506:**

...a frivolous ditty, fit for the dance hall.

Speaking of the effect of a certain kind of music she wrote:

**Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, p. 339:**

It prepares the participants for unholy thought and action.

## **Music and Environment**

If scientific investigations regarding music are valid and the inspired counsel is correctly interpreted, we should be able to find some evidence in life situations that music does, in fact, have an influence and that this has been true throughout history.

Furthermore, we want to discover what type of music was, and is, detrimental to character. A great deal can be learned from observing music in its original setting, and its basic function.

Some would object to a consideration of association as evidence of musical meaning and influence; but there is a reason for the close affinity of certain kinds of music with certain activity. It cannot be mere coincidence. It has to do with the intrinsic qualities of the musical material. As Finkelstein says:

The human imagery of music, the key to its content, is confirmed by people through their very use of it.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Sidney Finkelstein, *How Music Expresses Ideas* (International Publish-

Recently the *Blue Cross Insurance Company* issued a study of the youth scene in America entitled *Adolescence for Adults*. Believing that “public health education starts with understanding,” Blue Cross commissioned a group of sociologists, psychologists, and writers from various educational institutions to make an in-depth study of the youth culture, its philosophy, mores, and morals.

The analysis of the musical scene entitled “Songs of the Hang-Loose Ethic” begins with this provocative statement:

Popular music has troubled Americans ever since the turn of the century when ragtime and jazz began to evolve and be played in the off-limits of southern and eastern cities.

From its inception, it was colored with some of the ill repute of the peoples from which it sprang...and ever since...many people have worried over the vulgarizing and immoralizing influences of the wild new music.<sup>2</sup>

History bears out the accuracy of this statement with one exception, the dating of ragtime. According to the black-music historian Eileen Southern, piano ragtime developed during the years 1865 to 1875. Minstrel shows (vaudeville theater) also emerged at this time.<sup>3</sup>

Through the syncopated banjo figures used in these performances, the music of the minstrel shows contributed directly to the development of ragtime. (The term *rag* was used synonymously with the word syncopation).

According to Southern,

The fusion of the blues and ragtime with the brass band and syncopated dance music resulted in the music called

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ers, 1970), 18.

2 J. L. Simmons and Barry Winograd, “Songs of the Hang-Loose Ethic,” *Adolescence for Adults* (Blue Cross Association, 1970), 35-39.

3 Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1971), 330.

jazz.<sup>4</sup>

Descriptive names for functional music are common, and the etymology of the name jazz is doubtless significant. Many ingredients of jazz, as well as jazz itself, were so closely associated with the immoral entertainment world of which it was a part and so appropriate for the brothels, it was only natural that a term with this connotation should be chosen.

Webster's New World Dictionary states:

Jazz, Creole patois (dialect) *jass*, a sexual term applied to the Congo dances (New Orleans): present use from Chicago, c.1914 but from earlier similar use in the vice district of New Orleans.

The historian Borroff quotes a famous black entertainer who confirms that *jass* was a "four-letter word" common in the New Orleans brothels.<sup>5</sup>

Later, it became a common slang expression for sexual intercourse in many parts of the United States.<sup>6</sup>

Some have attempted to equate the entire popular jazz musical scene with folk music. Some folk-type elements such as the field hollers, work songs, and spirituals were among the elements that contributed to jazz, but the result was not more folk music. Jazz has no parallel anywhere in the world. It is a distinctive musical manifestation whose style and development bear no resemblance to any body of folk literature anywhere. The success of the many State Department tours of jazz groups to all parts of the world is convincing evidence of the universal appeal of jazz.

Continuing as an integral part of the lower class entertainment world, jazz soon became accepted in all economic levels

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4 Ibid., 374.

5 Edith Borroff, *Music in Europe and the United States* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1971), 583.

6 Leo C. Shwartz, *Juvenile Delinquency: A Challenge*, Music Teachers Quarterly, December, 1943.

of society. Through the years it evolved and changed with the social climate and created a lucrative industry. Even though new styles emerged, the old ones continued to be used. Today jazz exists in many forms; in addition to its fusion with rock, older forms have been revived.

It seems more than a mere coincidence that during these years (1865 –1869) Ellen G. White should receive visions with instruction and warnings for Seventh-day Adventists about the music used in the theater and the dance hall. Not only did she mention music used for these types of amusements (see *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 506; *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 652-653; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 707), but also warned that at social gatherings of professed Christians (pleasure parties) certain music had a powerful influence on attitudes and behavior.

She described one scene thus:

**Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, p. 339:**

One was seated at the instrument of music [a piano?], and such songs were poured forth as made the watching angels weep. There was mirth...abundance of enthusiasm, and a kind of inspiration; but the joy was such as Satan only is able to create. This is an enthusiasm and infatuation of which all who love God will be ashamed. It prepares the participants for unholy thought and action.

Additional insight into the background of the counsels of Mrs. White can be obtained by noting the specific activities in the entertainment world during this period. We know that much of the instruction contained in *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, and *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* was directed to the young people of the church, the sanitarium, and the college in Battle Creek.

Some useful information was obtained through examination of local newspapers of that era.

## Public Entertainment 1880–1896

As we would expect, the two daily newspapers in Battle Creek, the *Daily Journal* and the *Nightly Moon*, carried advertisements, as well as comments, on a variety of entertainment items. They ranged from recitals, and band and choir concerts, to theater productions of various kinds.

A place known as *Hamblen's Opera House* scheduled everything from lectures to grand opera. Evidently, the most popular types of entertainment were productions (called shows) that included a combination of music, drama (serious or humorous), dancing, and novelties. Many of these were “big name” companies from New York and Philadelphia.

The advertisements were notably explicit—some samples:

The Twelve Temptations: The most remarkable, Mighty Massive Marvelous and Magnificent Show Ever Conceived or Designed to Travel;<sup>7</sup>

The Bowery Girl: A Happy Blending of Sensation, Comedy and Pathos Interspersed with Bright and Catchy Songs, Dances, and Up-to-Date Specialties;<sup>8</sup>

The Devil's Auction<sup>9</sup> [accompanying this latter ad is a picture of three scantily clad dancing girls].

Another significant type of song-dance-act show was the Southern or Minstrel Show. From the frequency and number of different companies appearing there, it is apparent this type must have had wide appeal. Some examples of this type were:

Callender's Genuine Colored Minstrels: Mississippi Levee Dancers, Genuine Jubilee Shouters, No Time-worn Songs, No Old Torturing Jokes, No Worn-Out Sketches, Everything New;<sup>10</sup>

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7 *Battle Creek Daily Journal*, December 24, 1896.

8 *Ibid.*, April 3, 1891.

9 *Ibid.*, September 17, 1891.

10 *Battle Creek Nightly Moon*, October 16, 1882.

The South Before the War: 60 Sable Soulful Singers, Sunburnt Southern Silhouettes, Campmeeting Shouters and Shooters, Gunnysacked Cotton Picking Choristers, Male and Female Afric-Hued Artists, Rollicking, Ravishing, Rip Roaring, Round of Rare and Rousing Revelry.<sup>11</sup>

It is important to note here that minstrel shows made two important contributions to the development of popular music:

First, the syncopated banjo figures carried directly into ragtime, which we have seen was an important element of jazz. The ragtime pianists were for years the entertainment in brothels and saloons in New Orleans, as well as farther north.

Second, minstrel shows made extensive use of the song-dance combination. It is common knowledge that with their accompanying gestures their songs were often suggestive and lewd. With this historical background of entertainment practices in Battle Creek, consider the relevance of these statements:

**Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, p. 325 -341:**

The desire for excitement and pleasing entertainment is a temptation and a snare to God's people....He [Satan] keeps up a continual excitement to induce the unwary to join in worldly pleasures. There are shows...and an endless variety of entertainments that are calculated to lead to a love of the world....The natural mind leans toward pleasure and self-gratification. It is Satan's policy to fill the mind with a desire for worldly amusement....(325)

Among the most dangerous resorts for pleasure is the theater....It is the very hotbed of immorality....Low songs, lewd gestures, expressions, and attitudes, deprave the imagination and debase the morals....(334)

Between the associations of the followers of Christ for Christian recreation, and worldly gatherings for pleasure and amusement, will exist a marked contrast....(336)

There has been a class of social gatherings...that have been a disgrace to our institutions and to the church. They en-

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11 *Daily Journal*, December 2, 1896.

courage...hilarity, and trifling. Professed Christians who are superficial in character...are used by the tempter as his decoys....Their influence attracts others....They do not discern that these entertainments are really Satan's banquet. (339 – 341)

Thus, we have seen that, once again, specific divine counsel was given to the church at a time when it was most needed, and it was not only prophetic in terms of exposing the immediate problem but also in anticipating the discoveries of science.

How these counsels relate to modern life and the extent to which they agree with contemporary sociologists and psychologists, as well as entertainers, is the subject of the next article.

## Part III

We have seen how the writings of Ellen White related to the entertainment practices of her day. Now the question “How does this apply to our day?” must be answered. As a part of this question we also need to discover whether the music of that era is still objectionable, or if it has become acceptable with age.

Every human being is capable of adapting to certain stimuli. We can develop a tolerance and become calloused to certain irritations and immune to some diseases. In music, what once seemed rather wild might seem tame compared with some music today. However, the question is not (or should not be) “Can we tolerate it now?” but rather, “Is it good now?” It is generally understood that in the entertainment world it is necessary to keep introducing new sensations in order to continue attracting the public. In the pop music industry this policy has resulted in a constant progression from one style and device to another, because success depends upon the ability to satisfy public demand or, through promotion, create a market for a given product.

The development of jazz evidences this progression. The first jazz, known as Dixieland, moved from the “New Orleans” style to the faster “Chicago” style. Other styles followed: boogie-woogie, and swing (various styles and tempos), were followed by bebop, cool jazz, rhythm and blues, and funky. By the 1950s jazz had become intellectualized so that it was losing its primitive appeal among the young. The emphasis on dancing was diminishing, and the whole pop music scene was a sweet, sentimental, make-believe world. The subject of most of the songs was moonlight, star dust, roses, and lonely hearts, and the performers were mostly over age 30. The entire industry was controlled by middle-aged businessmen.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Nik Cohn, *Rock From the Beginning* (New York: Simon and Schuster,

The teenagers were experiencing a social and economic climate that prepared them for revolt. They had money and no worries, but as a group they had no identity.

Delinquency became fashionable. Business became aware of the tremendous market for products to which a teen label could be attached. The record industry struck gold when they discovered the first record hit that had a unifying effect on the teen population.

Basically, rock was a mixture of Negro rhythm and blues and country-western.

What was new about it was its aggression, its sexuality, its sheer noise; and most of this came from its beat....Electric guitars...had been around for years...but they had never before been used as bedrock, as the basis of a whole music. Crude, powerful, infinitely loud, they came on like space-age musical monsters and, immediately, wiped out all politeness that had gone before.<sup>2</sup>

Except for a few bawdy songs sung in the back rooms, most songs of the early 50s were only mildly suggestive and avoided open references to carnal desire; but with the new emphasis on the heavy beat, both words and music filled a need for those who wished to express their feelings and attitudes more frankly and physically. Again, a new form of music needed an appropriate title. It was supplied by a flamboyant disk jockey, Allan Freed, who christened the new music “rock and roll”—an expression for sexual intercourse he had picked up from the ghetto.<sup>3</sup>

## **Meaning of Rock and Roll**

The Blue Cross report referred to in part two of this series analyzes the meaning of rock and roll:

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1970), 1–2.

2 Ibid.

3 Bob Larson, *Rock and Roll, the Devil's Diversion* (McCook, Nebraska: Bob Larson, 1970), 48.

Taken as a whole, the new music embodies two messages: Come, swing with me. The crooning invitation to romance, which was the mainstay of popular music during the 30s and 40s and the essence of rock and roll in the 50s, has become a more direct invitation to dance the dance of life. This invitation—expressed in so many songs by the shout “c'mon”—is sometimes aimed specifically at a possible sex partner and is a thinly disguised proposition....Many parents and others are concerned that the music may be too suggestive, downright sexually arousing for young people listening and dancing to the sounds and lyrics. Many who are real believers in the new music would rather not defend themselves against such positions, for it is their feeling the notes and words are accurate presentations of attitudes and emotions. As for those who claim that music replaces intimate sexual relations by providing mass scenes of rhythmic orgasms, they respond, “Look again...and while you're at it, look at your own generation's music and the inhibitions it covered up.”<sup>4</sup>

Many people, including psychiatrists and sociologists, recognize the sensual implication or influence of the rhythm of rock music, even though they are unconcerned about the moral values involved:

Most sociologists, who take this sort of thing seriously, agree that the sensuality of rock'n'roll is “safe sex”...“These dances,” says Harvard psychiatrist Philip Solomon, “are outlets for restlessness, for unexpressed and sublimated sex desires. This is quite healthy.”<sup>5</sup>

Many people, including psychiatrists and sociologists, recognize the sensual implication or influence of the rhythm of rock music, even though they are unconcerned about the moral values involved.

Dr. Matterson, head of the *Adolescent Out-Patient Clinic at Payne-Whitney Psychiatric Clinic*, says:

The music is not only a physical outlet, but also, in a way,

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4 J. L. Simmons and Barry Winograd, “Songs of the Hang-Loose Ethic,” *Adolescence for Adults*, (Blue Cross Association, 1970), 35–39.

5 Time, “Rock 'n' Roll: The Sound of the Sixties,” May 21, 1965.

a kind of sexual expression. The beat has genuine sexual implications, and affords one means to work out their feelings.<sup>6</sup>

Time comments:

The highly sensual implications of big-beat dancing have some psychiatrists worried. Says one: "It's sick sex turned into a spectator sport."<sup>7</sup>

How does this music affect young people? One young man explained how rock music influenced him in his early and mid-teens:

It's completely riotous and uninhibited and you can't help but let yourself go. Just a "rock out" so to speak...Sometimes I would dance in front of a mirror and work out all kinds of contortions and movements. I found myself getting deep into the music.<sup>8</sup>

Frank Garlock, chairman of the music theory department of Bob Jones University and director of brass ensembles, has lectured extensively in schools and clubs. He relates:

A young man who was noted for his many "conquests" of teenage girls told me that he found the best way "to get the chicks turned on is to make love to the rhythm of rock'n'roll. Any girl will go all the way under the right circumstances."<sup>9</sup>

A teenage girl speaking of the Stones says:

Their appeal...is sex—but don't print that; my mother would hit me.<sup>10</sup>

How do entertainers themselves regard their role? Morrison (The Doors):

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6 Phyllis Lee Levine, "The Sound of Music?" *New York Times Magazine*, March 14, 1965, 72.

7 Time, "Rock 'n' Roll."

8 David Wilkerson, *Purple Violet Squish* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Books, 1969), 129.

9 Frank Garlock, *The Big Beat, A Rock Blast* (Greenville, South Carolina: Bob Jones University Press, 1971), 19.

10 Time, "Rock 'n' Roll."

Think of us as erotic politicians.<sup>11</sup>

Marty Balin (Jefferson Airplane):

We're not entertaining, we are making love.<sup>12</sup>

Jagger (Rolling Stones):

You can feel the adrenaline going through your body. It's sort of sexual.<sup>13</sup>

Arthur Brown:

All soul music is sex.<sup>14</sup>

Zappa (Mothers of Invention):

To deny rock was to deny sexuality.<sup>15</sup>

Bob Larson's career as a rock musician gave him an unusual first-hand experience in observing the effects of rock music. His experiences led him to investigate possible physiological explanations for the behavior patterns he observed in young people. In his book, *The Day Music Died*, Mr. Larson says,

It is not difficult to see why these [rock'n'roll] dances involve such erotic movements.

His personal observation combined with medical counsel led him to conclude that the hysterical, indecent behavior that some girls exhibit is a result of their

undergoing a sexually climatic condition.<sup>16</sup>

Because the mind can subconsciously be affected by music, we can easily recognize its potential for controlling the mind.

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11 Newsweek, "This Way to the Egress," November 6, 1967.

12 Time, "Rock'n'Roll: Open Up, Tune In, Turn On," June 23, 1967, 53.

13 Newsweek, "Mick Jagger and the Future of Rock," January 4, 1971.

14 Bob Larson, *Rock and Roll*, 44.

15 Frank Zappa, "The Oracle Has It All Psyched Out," *Life*, 1968, 104.

16 Bob Larson, *The Day Music Died*, (Carol Stream, Illinois: Creation House, 1972), 121.

Gitler observed what psychologists have shown through investigation, that rhythm is a prime factor:

Rock has a pervasive beat, and the audience responds to it on a primal level.<sup>17</sup>

John Philips of *The Mamas and the Papas* found through observation and experimentation that riot and hysteria can be created

...by carefully controlling the sequence of rhythms....We know how to do it....Anyone knows how to do it.<sup>18</sup>

Frank Zappa, one of the best-educated rock musicians, stated:

The ways in which sound affects the human organisms are myriad and subtle. The loud sounds and bright lights of today are tremendous indoctrination tools....If the right kind of beat makes you tap your foot, what kind of beat makes you curl your fist and strike?<sup>19</sup>

Time observed:

In a sense, all rock is revolutionary. By its very beat and sound, it has always implicitly rejected restraints and celebrated freedom and sexuality.<sup>20</sup>

## Rock Music and Mind Control

In his latest book, Bob Larson documents numerous examples of the use of rock music which, through its qualities of sound as well as its lyrics, is used to further the spirit of anarchy and revolution in America.<sup>21</sup>

One group, *Country Joe and the Fish*, are known to have assisted the Black Panthers and the SDS [*Students for a Demo-*

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17 Ira Gitler, "A Jazz Man Looks at Rock," Bell, 1970, 29.

18 William Kroman, "Just Call Us the Super Group," *Saturday Evening Post*, March 25, 1967.

19 Frank Zappa, 104.

20 Time, "Rock," January 3, 1967.

21 Bob Larson.

*cratic Society*]. A performance of the Detroit quintet called MC5 was described by their original manager, John Sinclair:

The MC5 are a free, high-energy source that will drive us wild into the streets of America.<sup>22</sup>

The UP, who assist the White Panthers, were described by one rock magazine:

In the age of revolution, the UP are one of the finest examples of the battle's potency form: rock and roll music.<sup>23</sup>

Jerry Ruin sums up the relation between his political ambitions and the Yippie lifestyle.

Our lifestyle—acid, long hair, freaky clothes, pot, rock music, sex—is the revolution. Our very existence mocks America.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to more direct assaults on the mind which have been discussed, there is one which, because of its extremely subtle disguise, may prove to be even more devastating than all the rest. We have seen that human response to music is basic, and its message, particularly in the popular music field, is understood universally. What happens to a person who has responded to jazz (including the milder forms of swing), soul, or rock in their natural setting, when he hears the same basic beat and style in a religious setting, complete with religious words? (For sake of discussion, let us assume that the words are scriptural.) How does the mind react to this mixture of good and evil?

In true-false examinations we are instructed to mark “false” any statement that is partially false. Can we afford to treat temptation with less caution? Ellen White tells us that this was the very technique used to cause the fall of man.

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22 Time, “Rock.”

23 Bob Larson.

24 David Wilkerson, 30.

**Education, p. 25 (see also p. 231):**

By the mingling of evil with good, his mind had become confused.

Accepting the good-evil mixture or constantly operating close to the borderline is a compromise, and nowhere is this fact more evident than in the field of religious music. The mass media has so thoroughly conditioned the masses with a diet of dance rhythm oriented music, that anything else seems bland and dull.

The result has been something akin to an obsession among many Seventh-day Adventist gospel music composers and performers to clothe all gospel music with some kind of dance beat. Although some groups are more cautious or “conservative,” the standard fare of many groups includes thinly disguised hybrid forms of dance styles such as waltz, swing (fox trot), country-western, soft rock, and folk rock. Some attempt to disguise or rationalize their style under the guise of being a “folk group.” It is quite obvious that these groups are using models whose goals are not compatible with Christian principles.

**No Compromise**

When Rick Shorter, former director of the Broadway show “Hair,” became a Seventh-day Adventist Christian, he faced this problem of compromise, squarely and honestly. A professional vocalist and guitarist, Rick stated:

At first I thought I could rehash some old rock and soul songs and make them into gospel music. But now I realize there can be no compromise with the world—its music, its entertainment, or its philosophies.<sup>25</sup>

As he reflected on his former life, which included acquaintances such as Janis Joplin, Jimmy Hendrix, and Jim Morrison, he uttered this warning:

There’s absolutely nothing to that kind of life. I just wish I

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25 Jiggs Gallager, *Insight*, Special Edition.

could get that message across to the kids whose heads are into Rock. They see the surface glitter, not the emptiness inside.<sup>26</sup>

The mixture of dance rhythms and gospel music of today is not new; in fact it appeared in 1900, during one of the Seventh-day Adventist camp meetings. In September of that year Elder and Mrs. S. N. Haskell were sent by the General Conference to assist at the camp meeting held at Muncie, Indiana. Apparently a fanatical movement was attempting to dominate the meetings. Although the Haskells had witnessed similar manifestations before, that which they witnessed at Muncie was even more serious. Mrs. Haskell wrote to Sara McEnterfer and described not only the meeting in general, but also gave a helpful description of the music used:

We have a big drum, two tambourines, a big bass fiddle, two small fiddles, a flute and two cornets, and an organ, and a few voices. They have *Garden of Spices* as the songbook and play dance tunes to sacred words.<sup>27</sup>

Before this, Mrs. White had received a vision in which this entire event was shown her. In her reply to the Haskells she wrote:

**Selected Messages, book 2, p. 36:**

The things you have described as taking place in Indiana, the Lord has shown me would take place just before the close of probation. Every uncouth thing will be demonstrated. There will be shouting, with drums, music, and dancing. The senses of rational beings will become so confused that they cannot be trusted to make right decisions. And this is called the moving of the Holy Spirit.

To emphasize that she was predicting future developments she also states that which was in the past will be in the future.

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26 Ibid.

27 Ella M. Robinson, *S. N. Haskell, Man of Action* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald, 1967), 168.

## Older Styles Revived

What has happened to the popular music of the first half of the century? Did it disappear or lose all of its connotations, or did it become “classical” or serious as some have claimed? For a few years after rock first came on the scene it did virtually eclipse everything else; but most forms of jazz did not lose their appeal entirely.

In addition to a blend of rock with jazz, today we see a strong comeback for ragtime and swing. To the perceptive Christian, it is not difficult to tell that these forms, while mild compared with rock, have not been transformed into the kind of material that would

### **Education, p. 167:**

...uplift the thoughts to high and noble themes, to inspire and elevate the soul.

This music is experiencing a revival for two principal reasons:

First, its appeal is the same as it was before; and it appeals to the same people. Those who were 15 to 20 years of age in the 1940s are now more than ready to hear “their music” again. Not only is it a relief from the music of their teenage children, but its swing has the same sedative, sweet-dream effect it had back then. It continues to represent the lifestyle “of the world” of that era.

Second, it has become quite fashionable for the youth to accept and encourage some of the older styles as part of their heritage of popular music.

Now, let us take a look at the pop-gospel field. The initial success of this lucrative industry was based largely on the use of the torch song and the swing style of this same era (the 1940s).

For many years, this style served the industry well, but after a while it began to move into the rock style, following just

a few years behind the secular pop movement.

Since a number of Seventh-day Adventist composers and performers had mimicked the industry by embracing the crooning, easy-listening, cocktail-lounge swing-style, it was only natural that some would unashamedly turn to rock and capitalize on the popularity of that sound. The country style, with its pronounced guitar rhythm which also led into rock, was also extensively used in religious music.

As we observe this inevitable progression from one style to another in both secular and religious music, surely the one-step-leads-to-another principle should become more and more obvious. Perhaps it can be compared with moving out into a stream with a strong current; no matter where we enter, we are pulled irresistibly in just one direction, downstream.

## Part IV

As we study the discussions of music in the writings of Ellen White, we must conclude that music was intended to be more than an incidental part of a person's life. The use of music by Christ Himself, as well as by the angels of heaven, as recorded in the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White, shows that even among sinless beings music, as a means of expression and communication, goes beyond the range of power of speech.

Furthermore, the instructions as to how human beings were to employ this gift indicate that they could not be complete, fulfilled beings without expressing themselves through music. Music is an expression of the struggle-fulfillment rhythm of life experience. In the life of every human being we can observe tension-relaxation, anticipation-satisfaction.

If kept in proper balance, these feelings and experiences provide continuity, change, security, challenge, repose, and excitement that are vital to sound mental health and the development of the full potential of any person.

It is significant that many philosophers recognize that in some way music is symbolic of human experience. Suzanne Langer states that in all cultures people have sought to symbolize their experiences through the arts.<sup>1</sup>

Doris Soibelman concluded that

...human behavior is related to the symbol inherent in musical sounds.<sup>2</sup>

Sidney Finkelstein calls this "the imagery of music." He explains that "key to the expressiveness of all music, including

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1 Susanne Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key* (New York: New American Library, 1945), 26-31.

2 Doris Soibelman, *Therapeutic and Industrial Uses of Music* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), 21.

instrumental, is that permanently imbedded, are inflections, patterns of body movement and human imagery manifest in almost every activity of life.” Through “patterns of sound and silence” we can say that music embodies ideas. These are commentaries on a society, showing what it means to live in it. It is a response of the inner person to the outer world.<sup>3</sup>

In his perfect state, man would have expressed only the most lofty thoughts and emotions, but since man became a fallen being his expressions could at times represent his sinful nature. It is the symbolic musical representation of the sinful nature of man that we must recognize as having immoral content or negative influence.

In our efforts to understand the influence of music, we cannot expect to find the obvious cause-effect relationship that we observe, for example, in the action of chemical poisons on the body (“listening to rock doesn’t make me want to smoke pot or remove my clothes”). Unable to observe this kind of result either in themselves or in others, many conclude that music has no influence at all. If, indeed, response to music were completely unpredictable, if it had no influence whatsoever, then some logical explanation must be offered for the widespread use of it in situations where it is obviously supposed to have some effect.

The author of *Music in Hospitals* puts it this way:

The dynamic influence of music is recognized in many familiar practices of our civilization. Why is there so much music used in churches, political meetings, motion pictures, and theaters? Because these varied uses of music increase people’s receptivity to other stimuli and thus may indirectly strengthen the effect of the message, whatever it may be.<sup>4</sup>

Is the meaning of music due to the natural characteristics

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3 Sidney Finkelstein, *How Music Expresses Ideas* (New York: International Publishers, 1970), 18.

4 Willem Van de Wall, *Music in Hospitals* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1946), 11.

of sound, or is it culturally or socially derived? We must conclude that it derives from both.

No one can deny that the patterns of music for a given activity vary from one culture to another. Songs of worship and those of courtship are to a great extent socially evolved. However,

...the fact that sounds are produced by different tensions of the body, of chest, throat, lips and fingers, indicates that there must be a relation between these body tensions and the affecting tone quality of the tones they produce. Certainly, the music that one people uses for a war cry cannot become a lullaby for others.<sup>5</sup>

### **Basic Qualities Affect Similarly**

Cultural conditioning to the contrary notwithstanding, human beings still have much in common; and the basic qualities of music, pitch, rhythm, volume, tone color, and to some extent melody and harmony, affect the physical and mental processes of all peoples in a remarkably similar manner.

It should be noted that the more abstract the music, the more education is required to make that music meaningful to a person. For example, much of the meaning of absolute music (such as concertos and symphonies) would tend to elude the inexperienced listener until he acquires more information.

However, even though the musical meaning of so-called classical music may not be understood by the musically untrained, it has been demonstrated that mood response is quite universal and that theoretical knowledge is not a prerequisite to enjoyment.

Apparently, the more functional the music, the more universal and consistent the behavioral response will be. Because the human body is rhythmic by nature, the rhythmic element in music is the most influential.

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<sup>5</sup> Finkelstein, 17-18.

It has been demonstrated that constantly repetitive, rhythmic material is hypnotic. In extreme cases, trance or destructive activity results. A more subtle influence is produced by the lower volume soft rock and swing beat. These have a milder but no less real effect. The listener is mildly sedated, lulled into a dreamy state of mindless enjoyment where the conscience is relaxed or completely dormant.

Since music can affect a person's moods, it follows that it can affect our attitudes. When the mood of the music and the association are combined, thoughts are suggested. However, even when there is no specific association, the mood of the music can engender general feeling states. Positive or desirable moods would include solemnity, joy, and animation (controlled excitement). Undesirable counterparts to those could be sentimentalism, frivolity, and violence (uncontrolled excitement).

In these emotionally unhealthy states the person is subject to other specific stimuli (as Van de Wall stated), either verbal or nonverbal suggestions for undesirable thought and action. This could be compared to a state of mild intoxication; the intoxicant does not cause the user to do anything in the sense that he is driven to an act, but it lowers his resistance to temptation. Ellen White's statement, quoted in part 2 of this series, certainly describes this type of situation:

**Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, p. 339:**

It prepares the participants for unholy thought and action.

### **Reacting Intelligently**

In addition to the moral implications, there is another important consideration—the emotional maturity of the person. In order for a person to develop emotionally, it is essential to have opportunities to react intelligently to the influences about him. If a person's reaction to music is limited to "I like it" or "It makes me feel good" he cannot claim to have reacted or responded on a level any higher than many animals, or

mentally retarded or injured persons.

Thus, if a person's musical diet consists largely of material requiring nothing higher than a purely sensuous response, he is certain to remain in this emotional rut at least so far as his musical experience is concerned.

Music that has little more than sensuous appeal must rely heavily on sensational effects or "gimmicks" for interest. These are created by a sensational treatment of (or overemphasis on) one or more of these elements of music: rhythm, harmony, melody, or tone color. This sensation-oriented music affects a person differently from music that has lasting worth.

Sensation-oriented music has immediate appeal for the listener and requires nothing of him—not even his attention. Repeated experiences with this material do not add to a person's knowledge, expertise, or awareness of beauty. It retards emotional maturity because it merely provides one emotional "binge" after another, a series of sensations that are private and incommunicable.

In contrast to music of sensation, there is music that provides an experience, aesthetically. In this music there is an appeal to the intellect, as well as to the senses, and its repetition adds to a person's musical sensitivity and awareness. This type of experience can be shared and thus can be used to improve human relationships.

About 75 years ago Ellen White warned:

**Review and Herald, November 14, 1899:**

We have no time now to spend in seeking those things that only please the senses.

Science has revealed that unless we use the higher powers of the mind we will respond to music merely as a pleasant or an unpleasant sensation, and that even without paying attention to the music we will respond emotionally to it. Even

when we become aware of music we cannot turn our ears away from the source as we can turn our eyes away from a sight. This means that the “back door” of the mind is always open to the intrusion of music. For many, therefore, listening habits and tastes are determined before they realize it; this is particularly true of children.

When we consider these facts, serious ethical and moral questions should be rather obvious. Teachers of music, live performers, and those who prepare recorded music help to shape the tastes and attitudes of thousands of children, youth, and adults. What motivates those in these categories in their selection of music? Is it the desire to uplift or the desire for popularity? Is it commercialism with no consideration for Christian ideals?

Conditioning the mind of a person can retard a person’s spiritual growth or even cause him to reject salvation! This sobering thought should cause all who can and do influence others, to take their responsibility seriously, making certain that as mature Christians

**Hebrews 5 [NEB]**

<sup>14</sup> ...their perceptions are trained by long use to discriminate between good and evil.

The ability to evaluate, therefore, becomes even more critical in the field of music, than in certain areas where one has more opportunities for self-defense.

Commenting on Peter’s admonition,

**1 Peter 1**

<sup>13</sup> Gird up the loins of your mind,

Ellen White says,

**The Acts of the Apostles, p. 518:**

Those who would not fall a prey to Satan’s devices, must guard well the avenues of the soul.

Unless we heed this warning by choosing a course of ac-

tion to prevent falling prey to it, we are most certainly doomed to manipulation by the pop-music industry,

...a vast apparatus devoted to the manufacturing of public taste and through the conditioning of that taste through constant reiteration (the disc jockey and the juke box) which creates a mass demand for mediocrity and worse.<sup>6</sup>

### **Part of Satan's Arsenal**

Unless the Christian fortifies his mind with truth, feeding upon divinely inspired counsel, he will find it difficult to make decisions in this area. We must remember that even as a fallen being,

#### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 457:**

Satan well knows the material with which he has to deal in the human heart. He knows—for he has studied with fiendish intensity for thousands of years—the points most easily assailed in every character.

Music, having been a successful tool of Satan down through the ages, most certainly will be a part of Satan's deceptive arsenal until the end of time.

In one of her visions describing God's people just before final deliverance, Ellen White heard the sounds of music and revelry coming from those who had rejected salvation:

#### **Testimonies for the Church, vol. 2, p. 595:**

We heard the profane oath, the vulgar jest, and low, vile songs. We heard the war song and the dance song. We heard instrumental music and loud laughter, mingled with cursing and cries of anguish and bitter wailing.

I have endeavored to provide some useful information in the hope that it will aid some in making wise decisions about the music in their lives. But, as important as it is, information is not enough. Basically, the problem of choosing music is a spiritual one, and the question we need to ask is

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<sup>6</sup> William Robert Miller, *The World of Pop Music and Jazz* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), 66.

“How can we know God’s will so that we can tell what is ‘pure, true, and lovely’?” (see *Philippians* 4:8)

I believe the answer can be found here:

**Romans 12 [NEB]**

<sup>2</sup> Adapt yourselves no longer to the pattern of this present world, but let your minds be remade and your whole nature thus transformed. Then you will be able to discern the will of God, and to know what is good, acceptable, and perfect.