

P S Y C H O L O G Y O F M U S I C

by

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PSYCHOLOGY OF MUSIC.

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PSYCHOLOGY OF MUSIC.

There are many beautiful arts today and many which are perhaps more highly developed than music, but to my mind music as an art is the most beautiful and touches the hearts of more people than any other one art.

In this work I wish to use the term music in its broadest sense and for a working definition, I will say that any sound or modulation of sounds which is pleasing to the ear, is music. From this use of the term we can say that music in some form has existed since the creation of man. The first music then was the music of nature and from this music, musical instruments were invented.

The poets have written of the "sighing of the wind", "lowing of cattle", "chirping of crickets", of the deep voices of the ocean, etc., and some think this merely a fancy of poets, and yet, how many there are of us who enjoy going into the woods and sitting down under the trees listen to the wind as it whistles and sighs through the leaves, or on a still summer evening do we not enjoy going into the country and listening to the crickets, katydids, and frogs?

Some may say this is not music but I think it truly is. I have never been fortunate enough to be near the ocean, but have talked with many who have and they always express a longing to be near it again, but it is almost invariably for the roar or music of the ocean rather than the beauty of the great expanse itself. I have heard a few persons say that the roar of the ocean is more to

them even than the beautiful scenery of the mountains and they say, while they miss the mountains, they do not fill the place in their hearts that the ocean does.

I can give one illustration from my own life. One summer we were camped in the mountains by one of those clear running streams, with mountains on all sides of us; the scenery was beautiful but we could constantly hear this little stream as it flowed passed and especially at night when every thing else was so quiet the stream still sung its little song. When we came home we missed the mountains of course but I think each of us longed more for the little creek, and many times during the day and in the evening I would find myself listening and listening for that little song which I used to hear it sing and sometimes I even imagined that I really heard it.

The music of nature perhaps is the only music that was in existence at the beginning of time but in the old Greek myths we read of how the gods invented the various instruments and I believe that the stringed instruments were the first to be used and the gods obtained this idea from hearing the wind blow through some goddess maiden's hair.

The decorations on the casks of mummies in Egypt about the time 4000 B.C. are carvings of musical instruments, usually in the form of harps and lyres. From that time down to the time of Charlemagne, the instruments were principally stringed instruments and horns or trumpets. The horns and trumpets were of a quite simple type but some of the stringed instruments were about the same as we have today.

The lute and the violin were introduced into Europe in 400, the violin was used in the north and the lute in the south. In 822 an organ made by an Arabian maker was sent to Charlemagne. This instrument was placed in a church at Aix La Chapelle.

There were good organ builders at Venice as early as 800 and before 900 there was an organ in the Cathedral.

We can see that music as an art dates far back but it has made slow progress, perhaps this is on account of the lack of appreciation of music as an art, and since it comes wholly from the inner self, only geniuses can compose.

I do not mean by this that music is above the common people or that it is a myth or fairy tale for it is as real as any art but it is not founded upon set facts and rules such as mathematics is, and for this reason mathematics and music as arts are said to be antagonistic, but it seems to me there is no comparison, for notice how much wider an influence music has than mathematics. Music is not as many seem to think merely for amusement and enjoyment but in order to be a musician or even thoroughly appreciate the music of others one must sacrifice many things.

We can not study music alone for it is so related to other arts and sciences that a sufficient knowledge of them is also necessary. I have heard singers say that they never attempted to sing a song until they thoroughly understood the words and sentiment of the song and could realize it in the expression of the song.

Think of the many hours spent daily in hard practice and

although this may be a pleasure is a physical as well as mental exertion for to practice well one must keep the mind on the theme of the piece he is playing.

Music seems to have a soothing influence upon the mind for it is said that nothing will so soothe and quiet the restless mind of the insane as music. The moral influence of music is also great. How often we read of some person being with-held from doing an evil deed by hearing a simple strain of music and how often some familiar song has caused a wayward child to return home.

I remember reading of a criminal who had committed crime after crime but at one time was with-held from committing murder by hearing a young girl's sweet voice as she sang some old familiar tune.

We surely can not deny that music lifts us to a higher plane of thought, for we have noticed how an appropriate song will prepare our minds for a sermon or lecture that follows. The question naturally comes to us then why are some of the best composers and musicians people of immoral and unrefined character.

I know of one man personally who has been in constant touch with music since childhood and who plays several instruments well and with expression who is not what I would call a moral man. The only suggestions I can offer to answer this question is that the man lacks will power to obey the suggestion of music or else his sense of moral right and wrong is lacking altogether and his character is too immoral to be made moral by any human influence. God, no doubt, had a great

and wise purpose when he gave us music and that it is given to us with a purpose is manifested by the love for music that lies in the heart of all right feeling people and the reason its moral influence does not touch all with whom it comes in contact is probably explained by the same reason that explains the fact that religion does not.

Man is a social being and some writer has said that "unselfish society is the harmony of humanity" and so it may be said that kind words and pleasant interchange of courtesies are the music of social life, which is designed to enhance human love. It has been said that music binds together rational natures and hence is a peace maker.

I have observed homes for the past few months and recalled homes I have known in the past and I find that a musical home is almost invariably a happy home and that ill-natured, cross-grained, pessimistic people scarcely even love music. Ill nature and music can not exist together. Now, by ill nature, I do not mean a sad nature for that is altogether a different thing.

For a sad nature I know of no art that would be more appropriate or comforting than music; but wherever there is ill-nature music can not possibly exist. Parents who fail to cultivate the musical gifts of their children deprive them of the moral and intellectual legacy which is due them - and just as music is an influence in the family so it is in the world at large, and some writers say that if the Reformation in Germany had occurred in a less musical country it is doubtful whether it would have succeeded so well. We have said

that music raises the moral standard of the individual, I think it is equally true that music raises the moral and social standard of a community or country.

This may be illustrated not only in Germany but in France and Italy as well. Here again may be noticed the close relation of the arts, for in a country where one art is highly developed there is always one or more other arts also highly developed. Music is very closely related to religion.

The first forms of worship of which we have any record, was accompanied by music in some form. Burnt offerings were nearly always accompanied by song or the blowing of horns or beating of drums. The Bible is full of such sentences as "I will sing praises unto Thee" or "I will praise the Lord with harps and stringed instruments".

In the older times only saints and priests or the persons of high standing in the church were allowed to take part in the musical worship. Congregational singing is practically new. Today nearly one-half the worship is devoted to music, and who could imagine now a service of worship without music?

A song may be a sermon in itself to some person and many a time when some one was just at the point of decision has music helped him to take the step.

Music may also be offered as a prayer. A prayer of thankfulness; exhortation or simply an expression of what lies nearest one's heart.

In all ages and among all nations great political and relig-

ious upheavals have found an expression in song. I have spoken of the Reformation in a previous discussion but I want to mention it again to show the influence Luther had during the Reformation through his hymn books and songs.

The music of that time was significant of the condition in Germany at that time, it has about it a solemn grandeur like the men and the times from whence it sprung.

The Reformation was an outburst of song as well as of thought and it was principally of religious type.

During the Thirty Years' War the progress of music ceased but after the war ceased there arose two men, Bach and Handel who laid the foundation for all future German musical art. They were sturdy Protestants and thus it may be said that German art rests upon the spirit of Protestantism.

From this we can see that religion has a great influence upon music and that they are closely related. It is really amusing to read of some of the controversies in church music that existed in New England and at first the people were opposed to organs, to violins to choirs, because, as they said "they were the devil's instruments".

But when we read the words of some of their songs and see in what a primitive stage their music existed we are not so surprised at their ideas.

I will give a couple of illustrations from some of the hymns to show how simple their songs were. One reads

"Why dost withdraw thy hand aback

And hide it in thy lappe

Oh pluck it out and be not slack

To give thy foes a rappe."

In another we read

"Nor how he commit their fruit unto the caterpillar
And all the labor of their hands He gave to the grass
hopper."

These verses are from the song book that the pilgrims brought to this country and used in their religious worship.

When we see how shallow and inappropriate these words are for worship we can better realize how their ideas of music could have been so primitive.

But music and religion are becoming more closely connected. This does not mean that all music must be united to a sacred text or that it is used in connection with worship but that all pure art music is sacred or religious in its character and mission.

I believe it has been proven in many communities that next to religion music is one of the greatest civilizing powers.

We may not think that music and love are at all related but if we stop to think, is not music the very expression of love? How many, many pieces have been composed with no other theme than that of love. It has often been said that words can not express the feelings of a person in love and so what can come nearer it than music.

Music is with us so much that we hardly realize the influence it has upon us, but if we could image a world entirely void of music then I think we could come nearer appreciating what it is to us.

Music never wears out or becomes common for the older we become and the more music we hear the better we enjoy it and I have known of a few cases in which a dying person requested that a song be sung while he was passing into the other world.

King Henry IV, when dying, said "Let there be no noise made by gentle friends, unless some dull and favorable hand will whisper music to my weary spirit."

See what an influence music has on the soldier, watch him when he hears the bugle call. The sound seems to enter his innermost nature. It means to him what it means to no one else, it suggests danger, security, preparations for battle, etc.

Watch the veterans when any of their old war songs are being sung and notice, how their very being is thrilled. They live those war days over again and see the battle fields as they once saw them in reality. To some these recollections may be of joy over victories won and of the great nation united and they will chime in the singing and sing joyously from the heart; while to others, these songs may bring back only sad memories, as the loss of home, friends and all that was once dear to them. These do not usually join with the others but you will see tears rolling down their cheeks and some times they will even tremble so deeply are they moved.

You may say that it is the words of the song that so moves them, but is it? If so, why does not a patriotic address move them as deeply? I do not mean to say that words do not play a part but I do believe that music suggests greater emotion than words.

We can also read in history of the many instances in which music cheered the weary soldiers on their marches and gave them courage in battle.

Music is a language not expressed in words and yet how expressive to the human soul. When we have lost a dear one how much consoling is music than the words of the dearest friends.

Music certainly does bring us nearer to our God and for this reason I believe it comforts us more than any thing else.

There are different styles of music that of course effect us differently, and there is some that makes us feel gay. and joyful. What would a fourth of July celebration or a Xmas festival be without music. Notice, when a band begins to play how every one, young and old will start in that direction. It seems to be a second nature - an impulse that they cannot resist.

I have heard foreigners speak of their old homes and they almost invariably say that nothing can suggest to their mind so vividly their childhood days as a song.

Imagination as applied to music we may say deals mostly with composers of music since it is a creative power, but it is treated in a two fold sense, once as a productive and again as a reproductive faculty. The productive faculty is the higher of the two and it is the great power which distinguishes men of genius.

The reproductive faculty is more closely allied to memory and is not purely creative.

Some think that many composers exaggerate their power of

of imagination but when we think of the wonderfully beautiful pieces they have composed with nothing for a basis but what comes from within their own souls, their imaginative power must certainly be strong.

Handel said that when he wrote the Hallelujah Chorus he thought he saw the heavens open and the angels singing around the throne. To me this seems perfectly possible for I have heard music that made me imagine things almost as beautiful and how much more reasonable for him, when it came from his own soul.

The reproductive faculty takes in the musicians that play from memory and in some cases I think I should call these geniuses also.

I have a cousin who, if she hears a piece of music that especially impresses her cannot sleep until she has reproduced it herself on the piano. It does not matter what sort of instrument she heard it played on or whether it is an orchestra she can play it on a piano as soon as she reaches one; and there are many persons who can in a short time commit to memory very difficult pieces.

Music helps to develop the aesthetic side of one's character and without it it is not fully developed.

"The unconscious enjoyment of the legitimate in art is the first condition of the influence of the beautiful upon the soul."

If we fill our minds with things pure and beautiful there will be no room for the impure and coarse things of life.

Music as an art has not yet been fully developed but it has won a higher place than it ever before reached and I believe it will

continue to develop and reach a higher standard.

Beethoven says that music is the medium between the spiritual and the realistic life, and the more this fact is realized the more music will be appreciated.

Music and love combined has been the theme of poets through all the ages. In the "Merchant of Venice" Lorenzo says

"How sweet the moon light sits upon this bank
Here we sit and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears; soft stillness and the night,
Become the touches of sweet harmony.

Shakespeare's writings are full of references to music.

The art music has now won such a recognition, that it can never be again put down as it has been before, and I believe it will gradually reach the commoner people, until along with religion and education it will raise the standard of civilization all over the world.