

Chapter

2

KEY WORDS

culture
ethnomusicology
ritual
topical
vocal

Learning Objectives

After successfully completing this unit, the student will understand that:

1. The power of music lies in its connections to all aspects of culture.
2. Music is an important means of social expression that gives rise to emotions, memories, and to pleasure.
3. Ethnomusicologists are scholars who study music in relation to culture.
4. Music can be performed by individuals or through collective interaction.
5. Music and dance can be catalysts to form community.
6. Music is often an important component of religious ritual.
7. Music is often used to convey political messages.

Television Program

The Transformative Power
of Music

Audio Selections

4. "The Tramp" by Joe Hill.
5. "We Shall Overcome" sung by the SNCC Freedom Singers

The Transformative Power of Music

*“Where words fail,
music speaks.”*

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

This chapter explores the extraordinary power of music as a component of culture. Music from many traditions will be studied in relation to religion, ritual, work, play, and politics. Music is not only an important means of social expression that gives rise to emotions, memories, and pleasure, but it also facilitates transformation on many levels.

Music moves people. It may move them physically, inspiring them to dance or sing; it may also move them inwardly, inducing a heightened state of consciousness. As an invisible force, music can circumvent the rational mind and penetrate the heart, kindling the emotions. It can inspire troops in battle, and rally social forces. It can coordinate and hearten workers. It can be a catalyst for healing. It can bring people together in profound ways, focusing their attention and feelings in a communal experience, reinforcing their connections to each other, perhaps even serving as a bridge to unseen worlds. It can lead one inward, to a meditative experience. It can animate and entertain in times of pleasure, soothe frayed nerves, or lull an infant to sleep.

In all cases, the power of music lies in its connections to other aspects of culture. The idea that music constitutes a "universal language" is an attractive one, but although music's nonverbal communication may reach across linguistic borders, its full power is reserved for those who share its primary cultural context. When we respond to other people's music, our response exists within the framework of our own culture, not theirs.

What is culture? *Culture* may be described as a group's shared ways of experiencing, participating in, and making sense out of their world. In addition to the arts, culture includes languages, religions, belief systems, social organizations, necessary skills, and everyday habits. While ultimately culture is constructed and continually reconfigured by individuals, it is an idea which refers to a group, a community, or a "people." Such collective ways of doing and being are interlinked in complex systems within individual consciousnesses—systems which are far from being fully mapped by researchers. But still, cultures are evident and mighty forces which make it possible for people to live together. They also differentiate groups, in much more useful ways than mere racial features can. According to ethnomusicologist Jeff Titon, "Culture, rather than biological inheritance, accounts for why these people over here think and act differently from those over there."¹

Ethnomusicologists are scholars who study music in relation to culture. They have construed their occupation in various ways over the years. Alan Merriam defined *ethnomusicology* as "the study of music in culture" in 1960, adjusting this formulation in 1973 to "the study of music as culture."² Jeff Titon proposed a different perspective, characterizing ethnomusicology's objective as "knowing people making music."³ All three definitions have something to offer: the first points to the idea that music is one of the many interlinked elements of culture, the second indicates that music also embodies culture, and the third reminds us that for all its analytical usefulness the concept of culture is still an abstraction. Ul-

timately we are concerned with what actual people do. However one may conceptualize ethnomusicology, one thing is clear: it is a field of inquiry which approaches music not as a thing in itself, but in its connections to humans and the cultures they construct and experience. It affirms the precept that musical power is intimately involved with human relationships. Individually and collectively, people move music.

Musical Power

A musical performance, including the playback of a recording, is situated in time and space. A casual awareness of inconspicuous background music is a valid musical experience, but it is seldom a powerful one, though it may be shown to increase sales by subliminally relaxing shoppers. Usually musical power involves some kind of relationship to ritual.

Rituals. *Rituals*, defined broadly, are recurring functional activities that focus minds and energies through their formal repetitiveness, reinforcing feelings and actions which are valued by the individual and community. In common usage, ritual often refers to life-cycle events and religious ceremonies; but the same concept can apply to a wide range of human activities. We can think of ritual as a kind of continuum, running from mundane practices at one end to quite extraordinary ones at the other.

We all have daily rituals, and some of them may include music: washing dishes, preparing meals, working out, or traveling to work or school are examples of structured everyday activities, which for some people involve music—sung, whistled, or hummed, or reproduced electronically. Although we may not think of music in such contexts as “powerful,” the fact that so many people own radios and stereos—including cassette and digital playback devices—indicates that music in daily rituals is important to them. Moving along the continuum, we start to find rituals that have more specific musical repertoires, and more powerful experiences. Social dances and weekly religious ceremonies are instances of more specialized and affecting rituals involving music.

Continuing in this direction, we may consider rituals that mark specific yearly occasions. Many cultures have special musical repertoires for such seasonal festivities—Christmas, for example, possesses a large body of specialized music, a repertory which runs a gamut from lighthearted children’s songs to monumental religious works. Rituals that occur less often, and may provide an even deeper experience, honor landmarks in a life cycle. Weddings, for example, are singularly important life cycle events in many cultures, and they usually involve specific musical rep-



▲ Traditional Greek Wedding

ertories, which may even apply to individual subsections of the overall ritual. The musical “bride’s lament” is an integral part of many Eastern European wedding celebrations.

Finally, in some cultures rituals may even mark events which are less frequent than a single person’s life cycle. In Bali, for example, the great temple ceremony of Eka Desa Rudra is celebrated once every 100 years. No one experiences this ceremony twice. It is considered a ritual of supreme power, and music plays a significant role in the proceedings.

Aesthetics. Music also involves aesthetic power. Different emotions can be aroused by music which is stormy and thundering or soothing and peaceful. Bodies can be stirred by infectious rhythms and sensuous sonorities. In many cultures, the ultimate aesthetic experience is one of sublime beauty, which can be uniquely expressed through the limitless abstractions of musical sound. Music can bring beauty to an experience of the divine, or to our everyday world.

In many cultures, an explicit connection is made between aesthetic beauty and ritual effectiveness. Further, the experience of aesthetic beauty in a ritual context may be seen as a way of bringing a proper balance to the world or universe. “Not only are the Balinese gods and deities notorious connoisseurs of the arts, appreciating both embellishment and minute aesthetic detail,” writes Edward Herbst, “but also, physical interaction or activity within any environment or space seeks a flow and balanced ordering, an equilibrium that is appreciated as an aesthetic property, sensually, formally, and psychologically.”⁴

Some other cultures articulate this aesthetic connection between ritual and the world explicitly. For example, “the Navaho culture includes the concept of *bózhóó* (beauty, blessedness, harmony) which must be maintained, and which, if lost, can be restored by means of ritual”⁵ (see also the BaMbuti example following). And as we will see, many other cultures express this idea implicitly, in the ways aesthetic elements—often music in particular—are central to the effectiveness of ritual.

But music, culture, and ritual are all abstract concepts. In the end, music’s capacity to move is generated by people, as Titon’s formulation confirms. Very generally, we may consider two ways that people create musical power: through the personal dynamism of an individual, and through the collective energy of a group. A few examples of each will provide a basis for a deeper examination of the potential power of music.

Personal Power

Ireland. In Ireland and the Irish Diaspora, a particular kind of informal gathering is called a *céilí*. The Irish musician Robin Morton characterized a typical *céilí* as “a gathering of neighbors in one of their houses, usually in the evening. Often the purpose is simply to exchange local gossip. However, it might easily, and often does, develop into a session of singing, dancing, and story-telling.”⁶ Such events may occur in pubs as well—what the American folklorist Henry Glassie has called “a *céilí* in public.”⁷ Wherever a *céilí* may take place, it is a situation of fellowship, trust, and intimacy, reaffirming bonds between daily associates, allowing connections of the heart as well as those of the mundane world.

In its confirmation and nourishment of human closeness, the *céilí* provides a congenial situation for a particular sort of musical power. Moments of deep musical communication may be furnished by musicians who possess a special quality of performance. The Irish singer Joe Heaney recalled that “the old people” of his youth referred to this quality as the *neá*:

The old people—oh, honest to God, I mean—in the small places, the country, Gaelic-speaking areas, almost everybody had the *neá*. You know the first time someone starts singing a song, you know has he got it, or does he not. . . . It means an awful lot. He has the right stuff: he has the *neá*. It’s more than singing, it’s more than being able to do a thing, or something. He’s doing it the *right* way. You can’t go above or below the *neá*; it’s just—it’s out on its own.⁸

Scotland. A similar concept, *conyach*, is found among some Scottish ballad singers, as recalled by Belle Stewart:

Several people could sing the same song, but—we had a something that we called a *conyach*. And a *conyach* in a ballad is a feeling. You could sit listening to several people, maybe singing the same ballad, and it didn’t do a thing to you, and suddenly someone with a *conyach* would get up and sing the same ballad, and—God, you were just *living* it, I mean the—it was something entirely different altogether.⁹

Detroit. In the performance of jazz, audiences and fellow musicians are often drawn to individual performers whose personal energies are particularly compelling. Miles Davis was such a musician: his idiosyncratic style and presence were legendary. In an interview with Paul Berliner, trumpeter Lonnie Hillyer recalled a time when he was a “kid back in Detroit” that Davis played for a dance:

Two Ways People Create Musical Power

- Personal dynamism of an individual
- Collective Energy of a group

At one point, people were dancing, and he started to play a ballad. The people just stopped dancing and crowded all around him, listening to this cat play this ballad. You know? Miles STOPPED people from dancing, and I'll never forget that as long as I live. That's mood. And of course, Miles can also make people dance when he wants to.¹⁰

Pact with the Devil. Musicians possessing extraordinary personal power and technical prowess may be considered to be in league with supernatural powers. The phenomenal early blues musician Robert Johnson cultivated the notion that he had received his impressive musical abilities through a pact with the Devil, and many people who heard him believed it. The nineteenth-century virtuoso violinist Niccolò Paganini was rumored to have made a similar bargain, as was the pianist Franz Liszt. While the following contemporary account of one of Liszt's performances in Vienna in 1838 dismisses this idea, it attests to his uniquely powerful presence:

We have now heard him, the strange wonder, whom the superstition of past ages, possessed by the delusion that such things could never be done without the help of the Evil One, would undoubtedly have condemned without mercy to the stake. . . . Just look at the pale, slender youth in his clothes that signal the nonconformist; the long, sleek, drooping hair, the thin arms, the small, delicately formed hands; the almost gloomy and yet childlike pleasant face—those features so strongly stamped and full of meaning . . . through a technique cultivated to the point of perfection, through a touch which he is capable of shading through all conceivable degrees, from the softest breath to the most overwhelming thunderstorm, he brings forth the most stupendous effects; yes, even effects of detail which one would not think of expecting of the instrument . . . his lavishly expended energies seemed steadily to augment, and the flood of tones poured forth in one stream, yet never at the cost of intelligibility, to the last chord, with which were mingled cheers of acclamation that threatened never to end, and for which the expression “enthusiastic” is only an empty unmeaning sound . . . such a tribute of recognition must have affected the virtuoso deeply, accustomed as he was to homage [in France and England], for hot tears rolled down his cheeks.¹¹

Group Energies

While many performance situations involve some kind of leader, sometimes the primary source of musical power is group interaction. When

people come together for a particular occasion, their individual energies can coalesce into a cumulative force. Political conviction, religious fervor, or just the pleasure of singing and dancing are all possible catalysts for powerful group energies.

Céilís, ballad sessions, and concerts are—in varying degrees—formalized rituals: they involve people congregating at a specific time and place for a specific event. Sometimes informal situations can be transformed into experiences of musical power by the compatible energies of those present.

Cuba. Yvonne Daniel described the aftermath of a formal rumba performance in Cuba, which was followed by a house party:

By late evening (around ten or later), a small group was singing in harmony, using tabletops and the walls of the house as drums and a couple of spoons as claves. The song lyrics were descriptive of the wonderful time the day had been and the nostalgia for remembered festive times of the past. Gradually the tempo shifted and dancing with real drums in addition to the cajón organization began. There was no set circle around a drum battery, and people danced as couples, freely, sometimes observing the rules of rumba, sometimes ignoring them to dance improvisationally.¹²

Bosnia. Spontaneous performances of group vocal forms like *ganga* among Bosnian Highlanders can also involve interactive power. For men, the singing is a good-natured male hierarchical contest, as Mirjana Laušević explains:

When the group of men starts to sing, there will be a leader who will start the song. . . . And then the group will come in. Often what men do is a lot of men will join in. But the singer who has started the song, he needs to out-sing the rest of them. He needs to show his own strength, his physical strength that is demonstrated through the strength in the voice, through the volume of the voice, through the length of the breath. And it's often a game, how many people you can actually out-sing. And then there will be another singer who will say, "Oh, I can do this better, you know." So he will out-sing more singers at the same time.¹³

For Bosnian women, impromptu group singing may generate a different kind of collective power:

Women particularly will point out the fact that music enables a relief of burden, a relief of all the pains and sufferings that they experience in daily life. And it creates a space in which one can indulge in this pain . . . or joy at the same time, that you're not really able to dwell on in your daily duties or in your daily life.¹⁴

Such informal musical rituals have a special quality: the unceremonious atmosphere can impart feelings of freedom and immediacy, which are not necessarily found in more structured situations. But formal musical gatherings can provide for other kinds of powerful experiences.

South Africa. John Blacking explained the performance of *tshikona*—a music and dance form that requires a minimum of twenty-four participants, each playing a different part—among the Venda of South Africa:

The music of *tshikona* expresses the value of the largest social group to which a Venda can really feel he belongs. Its performance involves the largest number of people, and its music incorporates the largest number of tones in any single piece of Venda music involving more than one or two players. . . . *Tshikona* is valuable and beautiful to the Venda, not only because of the quantity of people and tones involved, but because of the quality of relationships that must be established between people and tones whenever it is performed. . . . The effectiveness of *tshikona* is not a case of MORE = BETTER: it is an example of the production of the maximum of available human energy in a situation that generates the highest degree of individuality in the largest possible community of individuals. *Tshikona* provides an experience of the best of all possible worlds, and the Venda are fully aware of its value. *Tshikona*, they say, is *lwa-ha-masia-khali-i-tshi-vhila*, “the time when people rush to the scene of the dance and leave their pots to boil over.” *Tshikona* “makes sick people feel better, and old men throw away their sticks and dance.” *Tshikona* “brings peace to the countryside.”¹⁵

The basic elements of this depiction of social value and musical power could be applied to situations in other cultures. For example, a performance of a nineteenth-century European opera with a symphony orchestra, chorus, and soloists could also be seen as involving “the largest number of people” and “the largest number of tones” in its genre. It may be considered by its audience to be an unrivaled experience of musical power.

Further, both opera and *tshikona* derive a portion of their power from their enactment of each society’s ideal social situation. In the comparatively egalitarian culture of the Venda, each person plays their own equally important role, just as the *tshikona* musicians each have different crucially-interconnected instrumental parts. An opera in Western culture also involves individuals playing and singing their own parts, but in addition it requires strings and voices performing in sections enacting the value of teamwork, a conductor exemplifying an ideal of a skillful and admirable manager, and a composer as enlightened lawmaker and leader.

Throughout the world, a fundamental element of the power of music-making involves the ways that musical structure and performance reflect important cultural ideals of social organization and interaction while they simultaneously furnish a vital engagement with human emotions.

BaMbuti. In addition to affirming human values, group music-making may be experienced as a vital link to the unseen, supernatural, or divine. An elder of the BaMbuti pygmies explained their *molimo* ritual—in which men of the tribe sing around a fire late into the night for several nights in a row—to Colin Turnbull:

The forest is a father and mother to us, and like a father or mother it gives us everything we need—food, clothing, shelter, warmth . . . and affection. . . . Normally everything goes well in our world. But at night when we are sleeping, sometimes things go wrong, because we are not awake to stop them from going wrong. . . . So when something big goes wrong, like illness or bad hunting or death, it must be because the forest is sleeping and not looking after its children. So what do we do? We wake it up. We wake it up by singing to it, and we do this because we want it to awaken happy. Then everything will be well and good again. So when our world is going well then also we sing to the forest because we want it to share our happiness.¹⁶

Whether it is generated by individual or group energies, musical power derives from the dynamic enactment of valuable human relationships within community. While there is much basis for cross-cultural comparisons, ultimately the association of music with social values, rituals, and traditions is imbedded in specific cultures. From the following examples we gain further understanding of how the power of music is invoked in various cultural contexts.

MUSIC AND THE CREATION OF COMMUNITY

The power of music itself can become the catalyst for forming community. Performances are events marked off from everyday life that combine ordinary and extraordinary social experience and expression. All live performance draws the participants—performers and audience—into a shared experience that creates a temporary community. While music provides neither the material nor the energy for creating community, it provides an environment in which those elements can work. The social bonding that results often extends beyond the performance itself. There are many such examples in the realm of popular music where fans create

Rusted Root ►



◀ Jim DiSpirito



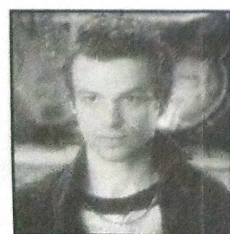
John Buynak ►



◀ Jim Donovan



Liz Berlin ►



◀ Michael Glabicki

networks, friendships, and even fashions based around a band, individual performer, or musical style.

Rusted Root. Jim DiSpirito, a member of the rock band Rusted Root, describes the kind of community formed around his band.

I think that the event for the audience is as important as the music that is being performed on stage. . . . The event is much broader than the musicians standing on stage because people come to a Rusted Root show to meet each other again. They've seen each other at a variety of shows down the road and there's a particular kinship with the people in the audience from trading tapes through just hanging out. There is that sense of community in our live performances because so many people come to multiple shows.¹⁷

While the overall event is an important context for socializing and forming friendships, it is still the music itself that initially brings people together and keeps them coming back for more. DiSpirito describes the phenomenon as an interaction between performers and audience members who almost always dance to their music:

Looking from the stage to the audience you can see how the sound pulls people together into a collective because they're all moving to the same pulse. You know, the music is providing something for them to move to and they're in agreement with us on stage. And somehow, we're all in this together because we're providing something musically and they are responding physically and the connection is incredibly apparent.¹⁸

Fellow band member Michael Glabicki also describes Rusted Root performances as a ritual that creates a dynamic communication between performers and audience:

The way I visualize the performance and how it relates to the community and the ritual that we share together is that we've developed a song. As a group we learn to let go our understandings of ourselves . . . and that becomes a microcosm. . . . You then perform the song and try and let go of your walls and your preconceived idea of what the song was yesterday. . . . And then their (the audience's) walls start to go down; it becomes this big like "WOOH" surge of energy up through the ground. . . . You see it in people with black leather jackets on. You see it with people that come in their suits. You see it with thirteen year olds. You see it with seventy-two year olds. They all look at each other and everything is dissolved. (They have) this understanding of who we are, what music is . . . and (we're) just kind of one . . . vibration.¹⁹

These intense transformative experiences go counter to the "normal" routines of daily life. This atmosphere of release created through the hypnotic absorption of dancing to music occurs at live performances, as well as at clubs or parties using recorded music. The magical combination of highly rhythmic music, movement, and social interaction intensifies the moment as it heightens emotions:

One good measure of good music . . . is precisely, its "presence," its ability to stop time, to make us feel we are living within a moment, with no memory or anxiety about what has come before or what will come after. This is where the physical impact of music comes in—the use of beat, pulse, and rhythm to compel our immediate bodily involvement in an organization of time that the music itself controls. Hence the pleasure of dance and disco; clubs and parties provide a setting, a society which seems to be defined only by the time-scale of the music (beats per minute), which escapes the real time passing outside.²⁰

According to DiSpirito, the power of group interaction at Rusted Root concerts is more than pleasurable; he calls it cathartic and healing for the individual, as well as collectively transformative. The combination of the familiar with the unstructured and spontaneous occurrences that happen at live performances bring people together:

I think that music provides some sort of self reflective aspect for everybody. When you get lost in a dance and you're lost in a rhythm, and you're moving, I think that it's a very healing space to be in. . . . Rusted Root's performances are very cathartic for people. I think people come to release. They've been at work all day . . . and they really come to a Rusted Root show to enjoy, to let their hair down and dance, and get around a lot of other people doing exactly the

same thing. And I think there's a comfortability level in that type of environment. And I think that's very powerful . . . the environment that's created between the band and the audience provides some sort of emotional venue in which many magical moments happen.²¹

It is these magical moments sparked by musical creation and communication that keep people coming back for more, thereby creating a sense of community.

Other communities organized primarily around the expressive arts of music, dance, or theater revolve around skill and participatory experience—everybody performs together. The members of a local orchestra or community chorus are drawn together by the activity of playing or singing, as well as by their expertise and love for what they are doing. Both are primarily non-commercial associational collectives, based on interest, affinity, and experience, rather than on more traditional notions of the bounded community—neighborhood, ethnicity, or religious affiliation. According to Mark Slobin, professor of music at Wesleyan University, the transformative power of the collective musical experience creates strong fellowship:

Music seems to have an odd quality that even passionate activities like gardening or dog raising lack: the simultaneous projecting and dissolving of self in performance. Individual, family, gender, age . . . and other factors hover around the musical space, but can only very partially penetrate the moment of enactment of musical fellowship.²²

It is this moment of “musical fellowship” that kindles community and often creates deep and lasting bonds.

Social Dance and Community

Social dance is another realm in which community flourishes—often created by experiences on the dance floor. Like the rock concert, the intensity of the event creates a temporary collective of participants bound by shared knowledge and experience.

Greek Macedonia. As Jane Cowan suggests in her study of dance and gender relations in the Greek Macedonian town of Sohos, the dance experience can be seen as a metaphor for community:

The dance metaphor can evoke the wholly positive aspects of belonging to a collectivity. To be a participant in the dance is to be in (and with) the group; it is also to be in the thick of the meanings

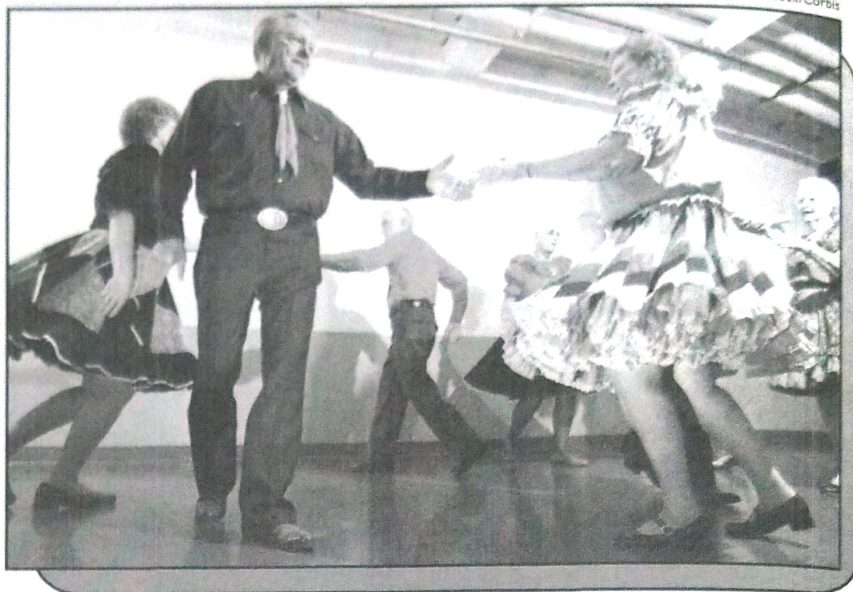
created. . . . The dance, graphically suggesting a collectivity bound by shared knowledge, skill, and physical connection, is considered an apt metaphor for the community itself.²³

New England. New England contra dance events create such a collectivity. Participation in the dance, including playing music, calling, and dancing, forms the social context through which community is created. Not only does every dance event gather a unique and complete community of its own, but through the experience of performing, participants are drawn into wider networks of communication, activity, and association that often grow and develop outside and beyond the dance. The formation of friends, bands, recordings, dance series and festivals, and the composition of new repertoire, are part of a larger context which, to a great extent, is derived from what happens experientially on the dance floor at contemporary dance events.

Contra dance originated in England before the sixteenth century and was called country dance—a generic term for group figure dances in line, square, and round formations. These dances became the most popular urban social dance genre of the eighteenth century. Exported to America, as well as throughout Europe, country dances played an important role in the expressive life of the colonists. By the mid-eighteenth century, the progressive line dances became known as contra dances. In the mid-nineteenth century, contras became less socially fashionable in urban centers as couple dances, such as the waltz and polka, became popular. It was not until the 1960s that contras emerged as a “new” genre in New England as part of the so called “folk revival.”

United States. In the 1990s, contra dance is strongly established within a subculture of participatory dance and traditional music forms throughout the United States. Dances take place on a regular basis at churches, town halls, libraries, or other halls that have good wooden floors for dancing. All dances have a live band that consists of at least two or three players, with fiddle and piano as the core instruments. The music repertoire comes from a mix of Irish, Scottish, French Canadian, Cape Breton, Shetland, American, and newly composed fiddle tunes. Dances are open to the public at a nominal cost and anyone can join in without attending a class.

The dances are taught by a caller who has the dancers quickly learn and memorize the choreography as they perform a “walk through” without music. Dancers move symmetrically in two lines through choreographed figures (such as “balance and swing” or “circle left”) set to tunes, each thirty-two measures in length. One time through the music equals one



▲ Couples square dancing

time through the whole dance progression, which takes approximately thirty to forty seconds to perform. Each individual dance goes on for ten to fifteen minutes, depending on the size of the crowd, so the dance progression may be repeated twenty or more times. When the dance starts with music, the caller cues the dancers until most of them have learned the dance (usually three or four times through the progression). At this point, the caller stops calling and often begins playing with the band until the last time through the dance.

Dances usually include a lot of exhilarating whirling and swinging with intense social interaction and physical exertion. Dancers not only change partners for each dance, but because most of the dances are progressive line dances in sets, dancers interact both with their partner and with all the members of the set while progressing up and down the contra line. The structured and unstructured nature of the dance event creates a setting in which many kinds of transformations occur. One dancer writes about his feelings of transformation during his first contra dance experience:

Barely into the dance and in the middle of a swing I realized that I was smiling like a lunatic, that my body felt light as a glider, and that every person in the room—man, woman and child—seemed radiantly beautiful.²⁴

The high degree of repetition within the performance of both the music and the dance, the predominance of fast swings within the dances, and

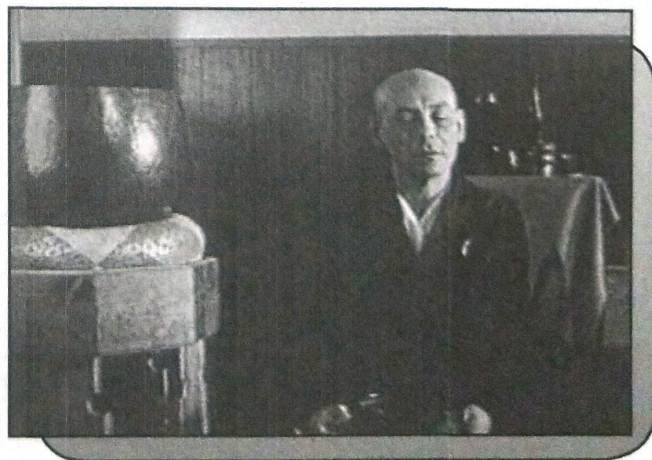
the intensity of physical contact lead many dancers to get “hooked” on dancing. They also talk about the sense of freedom, enjoyment, involvement, challenge, relief from stress, exercise, and aesthetic pleasure they gain from dancing. David Kaynor, a musician and caller from Montague, Massachusetts, describes the buildup of emotional intensity during the course of a dance that creates moments of transcendence for both dancers and musicians:

You connect to some timeless stream of human experience that is sometimes promoted by doing something over and over again, almost like a mantra, you go to a different level of experience. . . . Sometimes after playing a tune twelve times, on the thirteenth time everybody will have this incredible thrill . . . all of a sudden something really powerful happens . . . it brings everybody together. It's unpredictable and fleeting. It's like an affirmation of immortal life.²⁵

The fellowship that results from these heightened experiences on the dance floor keep participants coming back for more. Many people begin as casual dancers and gradually become more involved, either in learning how to call, to play an instrument, to organize dance events, or just to dance more often. It's possible to contra dance every night of the week in some cities, such as Seattle and Boston. The image of the contra dance set composed of two lines of dancers moving in symmetrical unison is an appropriate symbol of this community created and maintained around the collective performance of music and dance.

THE POWER OF MUSIC IN WORSHIP

Embodied in rituals and belief systems, religions help people to make sense out of their universe. Religions regulate life and behavior, as well as answer questions about our relationship to the cosmos, the supernatural and the divine. Whether people worship one god, many gods, nature, spirits, or simply the highest in mankind, religions bring people together in formal ways to enact and reenact ceremonies that commemorate, celebrate, heal, and unite. Because religion is such a fundamental component of culture—linked to identity, ethnicity, customs, and politics—religions also separate people. Many wars throughout history have stemmed from passionate and violent disagreements over religious beliefs.



▲ Buddhist Priest

Music is often an important component of religious ritual. As stated earlier, rituals often imply collective and formal ceremonial acts that mark important events and transitions, as well as provide a framework for religious practice. Rituals can be once in a lifetime occurrences, such as baptism, confirmation, graduation, or wedding, or they can be the small components that make up one religious service.

Most life cycle events and religious services are made up of numerous small rituals that occur at designated points in the overall proceedings.

Navajo Nightway Ceremony. The Navajo Nightway Ceremony, for example, is composed of a nine-night healing ritual that includes special songs, purification ceremonies, sand-paintings, and prayers that all occur at specified times. On the last night, masked dancers impersonating the gods sing and dance in order to bring supernatural power and blessing for curing the sick person.²⁶

Although important for the individual, rituals also hold communities together over time. Because they are customarily repeated, rituals function as traditions that create important links to the past. In religious terms, rituals repeat and revitalize the beliefs, experiences, and ideas of those who have gone before. According to Jewish scholar Samuel Heilman, the repetition of established liturgy in the form of texts, prayers, and songs creates a common receptacle for the spiritual feelings of each worshipper over time.²⁷

Australian Aborigines. In some belief systems, such as in Australian aboriginal culture, rituals in the form of songs and dances invoke the spirits of the ancestors. By reimagining the past through the presence of ancestral spirits, order and balance in the world is maintained in the present.

Because music has the expressive power to take us out of our everyday selves, it often is an important part of extraordinary events. Music facilitates transformation on many levels—whether we are making music or just listening to it. It is, therefore, an important force in religious practice, inspiring spiritual and religious feeling for both the individual and the collective. The role of music in worship can act to heighten emotional experience, to trigger memories, to take people out of their everyday state of mind, to invoke trance, to heal, and to bring them closer to their understanding of the divine.

St. Albans Congregational Church. Reverend Henry T. Simmons, Senior Minister of The St. Albans Congregational Church in St. Albans, New York says that music functions as both a collective and individual force in African-American gospel services:

So music serves not only as a rallying point, but it also serves as a therapeutic means. It touches individuals who've been hurt and disappointed by discrimination and life. It gives people an opportunity to cry, to express not only their joy, but also their sorrow—which is very important to maintain one's sense of balance and stability in life.²⁸

Call to Worship. Music also functions as a punctuating device in religious ceremonies. Church bells are rung to call Christians to Sunday worship, the blowing of a conch shell invokes a Hindu god or goddess at a puja ceremony, and the blowing of the shofar (ram's horn) marks the beginning of the Jewish New Year (Rosh Hashanah) and the end (Yom Kippur—Day of Atonement). In Haitian voodoo, a neo-African religion that incorporates elements of Catholicism with African religion, the *ason* (sacred bell-rattle) is shaken to begin rituals, to cue musicians, and to mark important points in the ceremony.

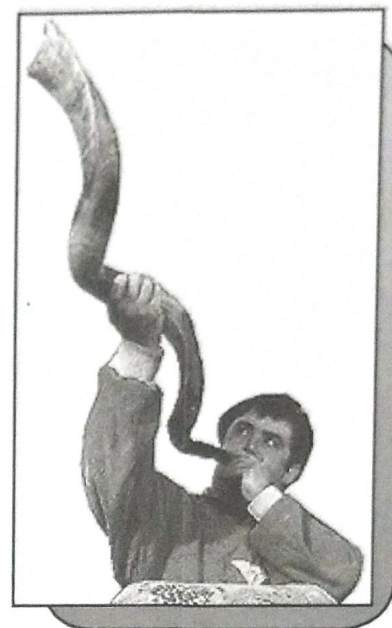
Language of Worship. The primacy of the sung text to invoke and express religious sentiment is common in many cultures. Religious language itself can be specialized. In some religions, including the Roman Catholic branch of Christianity, Judaism, and Hinduism, a formal liturgical language can be used to the exclusion of all others. In others, such as all the denominations of the Protestant church, the language of worship is the local or vernacular language.

A different case exists in many Native American tribes, where the texts of spiritual songs consist of vocables—sounds that are sung but have no literal meaning. These vocables are not meaningless, however, but create another kind of specialized language that is identifiable both to participants and to the gods who are invoked. The use of music with the vocables gives them meaning and power. In many religions, including the examples above, music in the form of chant or song is used to elevate speech, turning the ordinary into the sacred.

Music in the Christian Church

While music is understood to be an intrinsic part of spiritual practice in many religions, it is regulated, discouraged, or even banned in others. The development of Christianity in the West—from the formation of the Roman Catholic church to the splintering of the Protestant denominations in the sixteenth century, reflects a history of conflicting attitudes toward the role of music in worship.

St. Augustine. In his fifth century work entitled *Confessions*, St. Augustine described the source of his own conflict—music could both



▲ A shofar (ram's horn) is blown to mark Rosh Hashanah.

promote the highest of religious sentiment and cause a purely sensual enjoyment that seemed to be the opposite of religious feeling:

So I waver between the danger that lies in gratifying the senses and the benefits which, as I know, can accrue from singing. Without committing myself to an irrevocable opinion, I am inclined to approve of the custom of singing in church, in order that by indulging the ears weaker spirits may be inspired with feelings of devotion. Yet when I find the singing itself more moving than the truth which it conveys, I confess that it is a grievous sin, and at those times I would prefer not to hear the singer.

St. Augustine's fears about the sinful sensuality of music were reflected in numerous church pronouncements that warned against displays of virtuosity, the use of instruments, and the singing of complicated music in the church setting.

Hildegard of Bingen. Another perspective is expressed several hundred years later by the twelfth century abbess, composer, and writer Hildegard of Bingen, who had no such ambivalence about music. Obviously influenced by earlier music theorists, including Boethius and Cassiodorus, music was at the core of her religious life and belief system:

So remember, just as the body of Jesus Christ was born by the Holy Spirit from the spotless Virgin Mary, so too the singing in the Church of God's praise, which is an echo of the harmony of heaven, has its roots in that same Holy Spirit. But the body is the garment of the soul and it is the soul which gives life to the voice. That's why the body must raise its voice in harmony with the soul for the praise of God. This is also the command, symbolically of the spirit of the prophets: God should be praised with crashing cymbals, with cymbals of clear praise and with all musical instruments that clever and industrious people have produced. For all the arts serving human desires and needs are derived from the breath of God sent into the human body.²⁹

Hildegard wrote the above as part of a letter to the prelates at Mainz in 1178 after her monastery was placed under indictment which included a ban on singing. Not only did she strongly rebel against this allegation by describing music as the highest way to praise God, but cleverly suggested that a lack of music in the church might be the Devil's work:

This is why you and all spiritual leaders should proceed with the greatest caution. Before you close the mouth of the Church—in other words, the choir which sings God's praise—through your judgments . . . you must prove and examine the grounds for these

measures with the greatest care. . . . And when you make judgments of this sort, you must constantly be careful that Satan, who deprived humankind of heavenly harmony and the pleasure of Paradise, will not encircle you.³⁰

Martin Luther. In the early sixteenth century, a powerful religious movement that splintered the Catholic church began in Germany and Bohemia and rapidly spread across Northern Europe. Martin Luther was at the forefront of this campaign to reform many of the practices of Catholicism, including music. The movement separated the Christian church into two main divisions—Catholic and Protestant—and later into numerous Protestant denominations. Luther and other reformers believed in a more egalitarian form of worship that included holding services in local languages (rather than Latin) and congregational singing. In reaction to the new doctrines of the Protestant churches, the Catholic church launched a counter-reformation designed to reassert church authority.

Council of Trent. The Council of Trent (1545–1563), a general council headed by the Pope, met to assess and reform church practices, including the use of music in the Mass. The main complaints centered on the use of complicated polyphonic music (music with two or more simultaneously occurring parts) that obscured the clarity and power of religious texts, the sensuality of music, the use of instruments, the use of secular music, and the attitudes of the performers. Their final tract on music touches upon these issues, but did not include an outright ban on polyphonic music:

All things should indeed be so ordered that the Masses, whether they be celebrated with or without singing, may reach tranquilly into the ears and hearts of those who hear them, when everything is executed clearly and at the right speed. In the case of those Masses which are celebrated with singing and with organ, let nothing profane be intermingled, but only hymns and divine praises. . . . They shall also banish from church all music that contains, whether in the singing or in the organ playing, things that are lascivious or impure.³¹

This attempt to distinguish between music and dance that is “lascivious or impure” and music that evokes the proper religious sentiments continued to be a conflict in Christian worship—from the persecution of the Shakers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for dancing in their church services to the banning of drums in Christian services by European missionaries in Africa and the Caribbean. In the American religious revival movement of the nineteenth century, there emerged two

▼ Martin Luther

Courtesy of Library of Congress



radically different approaches to Protestant worship: the traditional quiet worship of the church and the ecstatic singing, dancing, and emotionalism of the camp meeting. These two styles, and variants in-between, can be found today in Protestant churches across the country. While some people still believe that exuberant music making and dancing have no place in church, others believe that these same elements are essential for proper worship.

Although these differing attitudes may never be reconciled, they are part of a long standing dialogue concerning the role of music in Christian worship—both Catholic and Protestant. What is suggested by the extent of the debate is the enormous power music is thought to wield over the individual and the community within the context of the church. Church elders have rarely denied the beauty or effectiveness of music as a means to heighten religious feeling, but they have attempted to regulate its style, orchestration, and performance to root out the “wrong” emotions. Nevertheless, religious music continuously changes to meet the needs of the congregants. In the late 1980’s, a new concept emerged in church-based music. Called the “Praise Band” movement, it started mostly in churches which did not have either a piano or an organ. Many of these congregations started in the homes of their members or in non-traditional spaces and the music was provided by the members who had instruments. Often odd combinations of instruments would show up, a guitar, a trombone, an autoharp, or even a saxophone. Because of the inherent problems for



▲ St. Albans Congregational Mass Choir

these various combinations of instruments to read the standard religious hymns, the band members started writing their own music of praise. The phenomenon spread until even large churches (with organs and pianos) had their own "Praise Band." Many of these bands also used the new recording technologies (see Chapter 12) to record CD's of their music, so that new members could learn the songs, and shut-ins could enjoy the music part of the services.

For Reverend Simmons of the St. Albans Congregational Church, the use of gospel music that engages the whole congregation in active participation is not only the best way to communicate God's love, but a way to communicate hope:

To me, music is a significant and powerful tool for expressing joy in the midst of sorrow, for expressing life in the midst of death, for expressing joy even in the midst of pain and suffering. . . . We can praise God in the midst of whatever our trials and tribulations are, and we can thank God in a sustained, very powerful, rich, full way. . . . And I see myself as a leader of a celebration, who is not afraid to allow individuals to travel into different compartments in life. And music, particularly music in the black or African-American worship tradition does that. It is, in a sense, the glue that holds the worship, the praise of God together.³²

MUSIC AND HEALING

In some societies, music is viewed as more than a means of emotional and spiritual expression, but as a form of medicine with healing powers. Healing rituals are an intrinsic part of the overall belief system in many world cultures and music is often a crucial component. As we saw earlier in the chapter, the Navajos have many ceremonies involving singing and dancing that are designed to restore balance and health to both individuals and the whole community. According to Ernest Brown, music in many African and neo-African healing ceremonies is also used to bridge the gap between the natural world and the supernatural world:

In a healing ceremony, you are asking for help from God in order to heal someone, or you are asking for rain—you are asking for supernatural assistance. Music is something that helps human beings to connect with the spiritual. In Africa they would say that music is something that helps the spirits to connect with human beings. When you want the spirits to come, you play music for them. If you don't play music for them and if you don't give them some offerings of food or drink that they like, they won't come.³³

In addition to invoking gods and spirits, music is also used to help participants achieve altered states of consciousness or a trance in order to have access to supernatural powers. Whether the trance involves possession—where adepts lose their own personalities in order to be taken over by a divinity—or trance without possession, music often plays an important role in bringing on and maintaining the trance. In many cultures in which trance states are a normal cultural phenomenon, ritual practitioners, such as priests, shamans, or medicine men or women, are the ones who have the ability to go into a trance. However, as we will see with the Kung people, healing rituals often involve the cooperative effort of the whole community.

The Kung Healing Ceremony

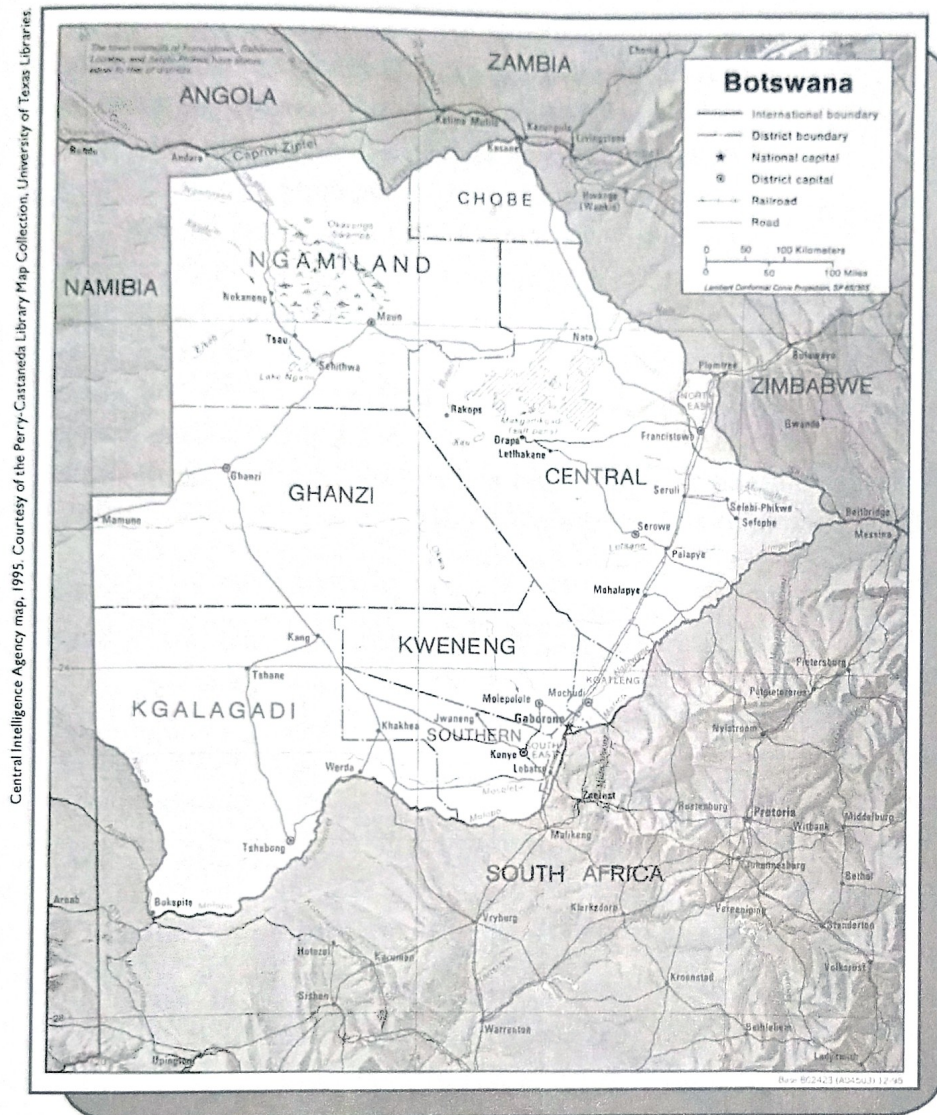
The Kung—also known as the Bushmen—are a nomadic people of hunters and gatherers who reside in Namibia and Botswana in southern Africa. They live in small groups in a mostly desert or semi-arid environment. Weekly healing rituals are an important part of their culture:

The Kung live in a very tough environment. It's very easy to cross the line and to get into real trouble through sickness . . . and so the alleviation of sickness and suffering is a regular need that has to be addressed. And the healing ceremonies that the Kung perform are one way of addressing those needs and of restoring balance, harmony, and health to the society and also to particular individuals.³⁴

The Bushmen attribute sickness to the will of the creator God who distributes the forces of good and evil through a secondary god and his messengers, the spirits of the dead.³⁵ The treatment of illness consists of literally driving out the sickness and bad spirits from a person's body by singing, dancing, and the medicine man's use of supernatural power while in a trance. Power is thought to reside in medicine songs themselves and in order to activate the power, the songs must be sung as part of the overall ritual. In this context, music can be viewed as a vital form of medicine, as well as a vehicle for transformation.

Within the ceremony itself, singing and clapping are done by women who typically sit around a fire. Each singer in the group sings melodic fragments in a hocketing technique that ultimately creates a whole melody. Brown further described this kind of singing style as reflecting the Kung's collective lifestyle:

You get a kind of composite melody that's not sung by any one person. So it's a very collaborative melody or collaborative form



of melodic line. It needs a community in order to have that music happen.³⁶

The songs are sung in vocables—non-lexical syllables that are not part of everyday speech, but have meaning for the participants.

The men—wearing rattles on their legs—dance around the women in single file, and sometimes sing. Since over one half the male population are considered medicine men, the males are then able to go into a trance one after another as they dance. Once in a trance, the men do not sing and their trance and dancing are maintained by the singing of the women, who do not themselves go into a trance. As Rouget has described, the treatment begins when one medicine man approaches a sick member of the community:



▲ Kung healing ceremony

In the medicine dance, treatment of the illness involves two stages. The first consists of capturing and driving out the illness: the medicine man, in a trance, massages the sick person's body, anoints it with his own perspiration, lays hands upon him, thus drawing the illness out into his own body; he then rids himself of it by ejecting it violently in the direction of the secondary god and his messengers, the spirits of the dead. The second stage consists in driving away the spirits themselves by hurling insults and sticks at them. . . . When entranced, the medicine man is

in fact seeing the secondary god and the spirits of the dead, and is therefore able to address them directly.³⁷

For the Kung, healing rituals are part of their close association with nature and with the supernatural world. These rituals help to restore health both to individuals and to the society; by curing one person, order and balance are also achieved for the collective. Even though the actual healing must take place through the intermediary of a medicine man in a trance, the ceremony is only able to be performed through active participation by everyone in the community. The power of song to call the spirits, as well as the collective power of the singing, motivates the dance which in turn gives rise to the trance state. According to Rouget, "the curative power of the singing 'boils' and thus attains its full efficacy." Once in a trance, the medicine man is able to directly confront the spirits and to drive out illness.³⁸

THE POLITICAL POWER OF MUSIC

From the beginnings of recorded history to the present day, music has provided a powerful medium for the presentation of political messages. The Psalms of David gave comfort and inspiration to the early Israelites "in the presence of . . . [their] . . . enemies" (Psalm Twenty-Three). The chanted epics of Homer celebrated the virtues and warned of the flaws of early Greek heroes and kings, bolstering Greek national identity in a world of unpredictable deities and rival armies. In the twentieth century, pioneering scholars in the field of oral tradition sought to understand the workings of the Homeric epics by studying the contemporary epic traditions of Yugoslavian singers, Serbian musicians whose songs celebrated the victories of past heroes in battles against neighboring ethnic groups.³⁹

Yugoslavia Civil War. Like a once-dormant volcano, this seemingly innocent Balkan musical tradition roared back to life in the early

1990s, not in the form of epic poetry, but in the contemporary guise of music videos portraying machine gun-toting soldiers running through the streets of Sarajevo. Music was such an important psychological factor in the Yugoslavian civil war that rival camps fought pitched gunfights to win control of the television station which broadcast such videos.⁴⁰ In battle, nations often derive courage and discipline from patriotic hymns and marches (or now, music videos); in victory, they sing of their heroes, and in defeat, they eulogize their martyrs.

Music also frequently serves as a medium for criticism of government from within a society. The medieval songs of Robin Hood, who robbed the rich, gave to the poor, and fought the tyrant Prince John and his confederate the Sheriff of Nottingham, celebrated one of the earliest “outlaw heroes” in a song tradition that continues in the twentieth-century ballads of Pretty Boy Floyd and Jesse James. Contemporary outlaw songs are also found in traditions as diverse as salsa, reggae, and rap. Just as soldiers serving king or country derive courage from patriotic anthems, protesters struggling against governmental abuses find strength and inspiration in songs, whether on the picket line, in public demonstrations, or in armed uprisings.

Political Messages. Music, and particularly singing, is an especially effective medium for political messages for a number of reasons. Prior to the advent of the mass media in the form of newspapers, magazines, radio, and television, songs served the functions of all these media in many societies. Memorable tunes and rhymes are powerful mnemonic devices or memory aids—when we sing or whistle a few notes, entire verses can easily be called to mind. By adding new words to the melody of a familiar hymn or popular song, political songwriters often find a shortcut to the listener’s memory—the familiar tune automatically replays in our minds, reminding us of the new message being carried by a favorite melody.

In some ways, music is closer to the contemporary media of radio and television than to the older medium of print; music, like television, is audible and therefore inescapable. We can choose not to read a newspaper article, but we cannot avoid hearing a song within earshot.

As stated earlier, music also has the power to move people, both physically and emotionally. Marching music literally coordinates the movements and efforts of a group of people. The emotional power of music can bind people into a community, give them courage in the face of danger, and charge them with adrenaline before a confrontation. Music is transformative, and political songs are able to efficiently convey information, de-

liver opinions, affect our emotions, and motivate us to change our actions. Governments clearly believe music to be a dangerous political weapon since they often attempt to control music by means of patronage (rewarding artists who support the rulers) and censorship (punishing those who do not).

We begin to explore the political power of music by studying the most obvious genre of political song: the national anthem.

National Anthems and Patriotic Music

The words and tune of England's national anthem "God Save the King" are said to have been composed by the English composer Henry Carey (1690–1743), but rival claims for authorship of the tune have been lodged in both France and Germany. This is truly an "international anthem" in the United States, "My Country 'Tis of Thee," is one among at least twenty nations to have adopted the melody of "God Save the King" for national anthem or patriotic song. Germany, Denmark, Austria, Switzerland, and Sweden all have nationalistic songs which employ this melody.

World War I. Some of these adaptations have resulted in highly ironic situations; in World War I, British and American soldiers sang for courage in the identical melodies of "God Save the King" and "My Country 'Tis of Thee," while German soldiers sang the same tune in their patriotic anthem "Heil dir im Siegerkranz" ("Hail thee in victor's crown"). The fact that mortal enemies were all singing the same tune illustrates the chameleonlike nature of melodies, whose affective power owes allegiance to no single party. It is almost as if this tune were a weapon like a rifle or a cannon—all the armies possessed them, and victory went to the power which wielded them most effectively.

England. While "God Save the King" is a sober prayer on behalf of the monarch, "Rule Britannia" is a more martial anthem of imperial expansion. Composed by Thomas Augustine Arne in 1740 for a masque play about the recovery of Britain by King Alfred from the rule of Danish invaders, "Rule Britannia, Britannia rule the waves," became a popular anthem at the height of the British empire, when Britain did indeed rule much of the sea as well as considerable territory in Asia and Africa.

France. Although the French national anthem, the "Marseillaise" was adopted as a theme of the French Revolution, its composer, Claude Joseph Rouget de Lisle, was not a revolutionary but a loyal supporter of the Bourbon kings. Composed in 1792 to celebrate the French invasion of Prussia, the "Marseillaise" in 1795 was declared the French national anthem, and performed at every state execution. Its composition

Rouget de Lisle, refused to submit to the edicts of the National Assembly, and nearly suffered the ironic fate of losing his head on the guillotine to the accompaniment of his own composition. Relieved of his employment in the French army, he lived the remainder of his life in poverty, and was only posthumously honored for his musical contribution to the nation.⁴²

The “Marseillaise,” composed by a royalist, but immediately adopted by the enemies of the crown, subsequently became an international theme of revolution and republicanism, but like “God Save the King,” it was occasionally adopted into situations of great irony. In one early German adaptation, the song text exhorted the united armies of Germany to take up their swords and defend their fatherland against the invading army of the French revolutionaries, and in 1798, another German text was set to the “Marseillaise” tune in an anthem dedicated to the newly enthroned king of Prussia.

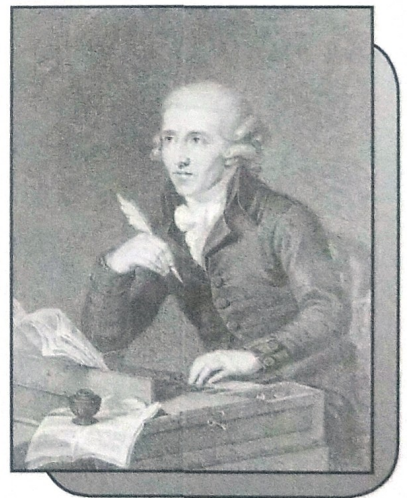
As a song of revolution, the “Marseillaise” was at times banned in both France and Germany. Before World War I, the German Social Democratic Party adopted it as a rallying song. Decried for its older revolutionary and newer socialist significance, the song was prohibited during the Third Reich. In Vichy France of World War II, the “Marseillaise” was only sung secretly, by members of the Underground resistance movement.

Austria. Austria’s national anthem, “Gott erhalte,” was composed in 1797 by Franz Joseph Haydn, who was inspired to create this musical “weapon” by the threat of Napoleon’s rapidly expanding armies.⁴³

Germany. Germany had a number of patriotic songs, including the above mentioned “Heil dir im Siegerkranz,” but Germany’s most powerful political music was created by Ludwig von Beethoven. Born in 1770, Beethoven enjoyed the benefits of royal patronage as the son of a court singer until he began to make his own career as a composer in Vienna in 1792. There he became the friend of revolutionaries, and chafed against the aristocratic pretenses of patrons who placed themselves above the status of a “mere musician.”

Like Haydn, Beethoven sometimes composed music with explicit political purposes. He originally dedicated his third symphony (1804) to the revolutionary hero Napoleon, but later changed the dedication to “Heroic Symphony Composed to Celebrate the Memory of a Great Man” when Napoleon abandoned republican ideals to assume the title of “emperor.” Portions of this great work are widely regarded as “program music,” that is, music which tells a story, paints a picture, or otherwise evokes feelings associated with extra-musical events. The slow movement in particular is described as a funeral march for the dead of the Napoleonic and all other wars.⁴⁴

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▲ Copper engraving of Austrian composer Franz Joseph Haydn.

Between 1804 and 1816, Beethoven wrote a number of pieces celebrating the German war movement against France. From 1816 until his death in 1827, Beethoven was a vocal critic of the oppressive German regime which ruled after the war. His final, Ninth Symphony (1824) ends with the famous "Ode to Joy," a choral celebration of joy and brotherhood which, perhaps, issued a symbolic challenge to the joyless and despotic government of Germany at the time.⁴⁵

As a consciously political composer, Beethoven moved through a series of postures, first as an ally of benevolent monarchy, then as an advocate of French revolutionary hero, then as a patriotic defender of his homeland against the French army, and finally as a domestic critic of totalitarian government. After his death, Beethoven's music provided various options for later German political movements that sought to gain validation and popularity by forcing his music and memory into their service. Parties from across the entire political spectrum have tried to invoke such an association.

The Third Reich in particular distorted Beethoven's persona into "world-conqueror" among composers, and then used public performance of his music to suggest a parallel between him and their own "world conqueror," Adolf Hitler. Beethoven's music was further manipulated and refashioned into a symbol of "home" to the German people, and Beethoven was touted as an Aryan hero. Populist messages of universal brotherhood in his music were down-played, and his patriotism emphasized, in order to create for the masses a Beethoven who answered the propaganda needs of Nazi Germany.

This emphasis on an Aryanized, re-invented Beethoven went hand-in-hand with a governmental policy which maintained virtually absolute control of public musical performances. Jewish musicians were expelled from performing organizations, and contemporary atonal music was denigrated as part of a Jewish revolutionary plot.

Fortunately, Beethoven continued to be interpreted as something more than an Aryan "superman" outside of the Nazi sphere. Forty-odd years after the end of the Third Reich, when the Berlin Wall was dismantled and East and West Germany re-united in 1989, Beethoven was prominently re-installed on the world stage as an advocate of brotherhood, in a performance of the Ninth Symphony featuring musicians from every major power to have fought in World War II. Under the baton of maestro Leonard Bernstein, this international orchestra and chorus performed the "Ode to Joy" in a concert that was heard simultaneously around the world by means of a telecast from the *Schauspielhaus* of re-united Berlin.⁴⁶

Music of Protest and Resistance

The functions of protest songs are in many ways the same as those of patriotic anthems. They serve to inform, remind, and inspire, giving courage and cohesion to groups of people attempting to achieve particular political ends. The differences lie in the kinds of messages the songs convey and the kinds of movements that utilize them. National anthems usually are sung in order to affirm an existing political order; protest songs are sung in order to criticize, change, or replace such an order. In some cases, a single song, such as the “Marseillaise,” served both functions in the course of its career.

To do its job, the tune of a protest or *topical* song must be singable, attractive, memorable, and easy to learn. For this reason, topical songwriters often compose new verses to the melodies of popular hymns or secular music—if the audience and singers already know the tune, they can concentrate on the message that the lyricist is trying to convey. Sometimes the topical song not only borrows the melody but also parodies or builds on the lyrics of an existing song.

Since protest songs challenge the existing social order, they often deal with class struggle, and particularly with the demands of laborers, the unemployed, and the disenfranchised—people whose needs are not satisfied by the status quo. One of the earliest recorded protest songs dates from the march of a “peasant army” against London in 1381, including the lyrics, “When Adam delved and Eve span, Who then was the gentleman?”⁴⁷ This reference to the Garden of Eden uses a common theme of topical songs—advocating the return to an original, natural order, which the existing government or society has violated.

The lyrics of protest songs often have a short life. When they succeed in bringing about change, they are no longer necessary, and when they fail to produce change, they are discarded. They tend to deal with transitory issues, the struggle of workers in a particular union action, or the battle for civil rights in a particular time and place. For this reason, topical songs typically do not endure as do the anthems of standing governments.

Topical Songs in the United States. In the United States, topical songs played a central role in the nineteenth-century anti-rent wars and in the abolition of slavery. In the twentieth century, songs encouraging social reform and political change were important in the establishment of universal suffrage, the struggles of immigrant groups, the organization of laborers in virtually all industries, the civil rights movement, and the 1960’s anti-war movement.

Protest Songs Must Be:

- Singable
- Attractive
- Memorable
- Easy to Learn

To a large extent, America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was a singing nation, whose repertory consisted chiefly of Protestant hymns. The melodies of religious songs, therefore, became a common source of topical songwriters. Researcher John Greenway observed that "Making a union song in the rural South is a simple matter of taking a gospel hymn, changing 'I' to 'We' and 'God' to 'CIO' [Congress of Industrial Organizations]." ⁴⁸

Broadsides. Early topical songwriters in America continued the English tradition of printing their lyrics as *broadsides*—single sheets which might be hawked on the street for a penny or posted in public places. Such publications included the song text without musical notation; the tune was usually taken from a popular song, and broadsides occasionally included the instruction to sing the lyrics "to the tune of so-and-so."

As the name suggests, the broadside was often an attack, presenting criticism of a person, group, or government. If songs were the early newspapers, the broadside often played the role of an editorial or letter to the editor. Interestingly, the advent of print media and the publication of newspapers did not replace music as a medium for conveying news and opinion. The same technology that permitted the printing of newspapers also facilitated the circulation of songs, which stirred the emotions much more effectively than printed or even spoken prose or poetry.

Early American broadsides addressed issues related to the United States' transition from a European colony to an independent republic. Marching songs such as "Yankee Doodle" and anthems such as "The Star-Spangled Banner" supported the revolution against British rule. After independence, topical songs accompanied the effort to rid the New World of archaic laws, holdovers from the era of rule by Dutch and then English colonial aristocracies.

Satirical broadsides attacked the imprisonment of debtors, and ballads celebrated the exploits of armed farmers resisting the subjection of renters to virtual slavery under old Dutch feudal laws in the Hudson Valley and upstate New York. In the nineteenth century, immigrant groups encountering segregation in the workplace voiced their indignation in songs such as "No Irish Need Apply." ⁴⁹

The Labor Movement in the United States. America's first strike occurred in 1786 among journeyman printers in Philadelphia. From that time, unions have sought to improve the working conditions, wages, and social status of their members, often using music as a prominent strategy in motivating their members and promoting their demands. The Knights of Labor, founded in 1869, had limited success in promoting

ing its political agenda, but it was certainly an enthusiastic singing organization.

IWW. The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), founded in the United States in 1905, employed both songs and strikes with more telling effect than the earlier Knights of Labor. The IWW repertory drew heavily on Methodist and Baptist revival music, evangelical and Salvation Army songs, and songs of the hobo “jungles.” IWW members, or “Wobblies,” sang at every meeting. Important songwriters in the movement included Joe Hill, whose songs addressed the problems of homelessness, unemployment, and prostitution, as well as strike-related issues, and Mac McClintock, author of the Wobbly theme song, “Hallelujah, I’m a Bum.” Hill’s lyrics in “The Tramp” describe the plight of the unemployed hobo:

Tramp, tramp, tramp, keep on a tramping,
Nothing a doing here for you.
If I catch you ’round again,
You will wear the ball and chain.
Keep on tramping, that’s the best thing you can do.

Joe Hill became an important Wobbly martyr when he was executed in 1915 on a still-disputed charge of murder; IWW members insisted that the accusation was false, an instance of “white-collar murder” at the hands of enemies of the movement.

Mac McClintock published the IWW repertory in the first “little red songbook” to “fan the flames of discontent” in 1911.⁵⁰ In World War I, most leaders of the IWW were imprisoned, ending the effective life of the organization. Labor organizations continued to employ music; the CIO and the United Auto Workers sang, and the Almanac Singers (which at various times included performers Millard Lampell, Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, Lee Hays, Cisco Houston, Josh White, Burl Ives, Bess Lomax, Leadbelly, Richard Dyer-Bennett, Sonny Terry, Brownie McGhee, and Earl Robinson) performed at union rallies through the 1940s.

The Wobblies’ “little red songbook” was succeeded by many publications of topical songs. The Commonwealth Labor College in Arkansas published the *Commonwealth Song Book*, the Kentucky Workers Alliance published *Songs for Southern Workers*, and the Textile Workers of America published *Labor Songs*. The *People’s Song Book* (1948 and 1956), *Lift Every Voice* (1953), *Singout!* magazine (founded in 1950), *People’s Songs*, and *People’s Artists* propagated political music, either in print or by organizing performances called “hootenannies” or “hoots.” Pete Seeger was a princi-

▼ Joe Hill

© Bettmann/Corbis



A performance of “The Tramp” by Cisco Houston, an important folksinger who was involved with the labor movement.

pal figure in performing, recording, and publishing topical music, from the Almanac Singers' days up to the 1990s.⁵¹

The Civil Rights Movement in the United States.

though slavery was abolished in the United States in 1863, segregation was the rule in many southern states until the mid-1960s. In segregated areas, African-Americans attended separate schools, dined in separate restaurants, used separate public toilets, and sat in the back of the bus on public transportation. Pervasive social discrimination, unfair job and housing restrictions, the enforcement of unjust laws of disenfranchisement, and poverty were the common lot of African-Americans throughout the country.

The cause for justice for African-Americans began with the first resistance to slavery and continued strongly after the Civil War. Post-slavery movements included Marcus Garvey's back-to-Africa initiative in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Garvey's message of black pride and his philosophy of black self-help and independence electrified African-Americans in urban ghettos all over America.

After the Depression, labor organizations, such as the United Mine Workers led by John L. Lewis, launched a campaign to bring African-American workers into the unions with equal pay. This strategy was adopted by other unions all over the country, including the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), the Steel Workers Organizing Committee, and the United Auto Workers. By the early 1940s, blacks demanding equal job access and equal pay pressured President Roosevelt to establish the Committee on Fair Employment Practices. This executive order allowed almost one million African-Americans to enter the industrial labor force during the war years.

World War II marked a turning point for the civil rights movement in the United States. African-Americans had defended democracy in the war but were still subject to discrimination and segregation at home. Court cases, such as *Brown versus the Board of Education* in 1954, only began to address the wrongs of segregation.

The real pressure for social change and racial justice began as a people's movement at the grassroots level. Drawing inspiration from black leaders of the past, Christian doctrine, and the successful civil disobedience campaigns of Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa and India, African-Americans began a highly effective movement of non-violent resistance in the mid-1950s. In 1956, black citizens of Montgomery, Alabama, led by Martin Luther King, Jr., boycotted the segregated city bus system.

In 1960, African-American college students staged a sit-in at a segregated lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina. Their arrest drew the attention of the national media, and sparked a sympathetic movement among university students across the United States. Both in the south, where non-violent marchers faced beatings, hosing, burning, shooting, or jail with no defense other than their courage and songs based on the melodies of traditional hymns, spirituals, and gospel tunes, and in the north, where guitar-wielding students composed and sang songs of solidarity with the civil rights struggle, music played a central role. According to Ernest Brown, spirituals and gospel music kept the growing movement together:

Music was a key part of the civil rights movement. Why do I say that? Because if you are alone in a jail cell somewhere in the south in 1962, and you've been threatened with dogs and you've been beaten, the only way you can recover your humanity, the only way you can recover your strength is through singing. Civil rights workers sang those songs in jails, sang those songs on the picket line, and sang those songs in order to uplift their spirits and keep their minds focused on what they were trying to achieve.⁵²

Although the repertory of the southern civil rights marchers in organizations such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, led by Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), drew heavily on African-American religious music, some of the most important songs and musical strategies of the movement were directly influenced by the prior experiences of labor organizers in the south. The Highlander Folk School, founded in 1932 in Tennessee, had long served as a “central clearinghouse” for songs used on picket lines across the nation. Mrs. Zelphia Horton, musical director at the school from 1935 to 1956, adapted the Baptist hymn “I’ll Be Alright,” retitling it “We Shall Overcome,” for use in tobacco worker’s strikes in the 1940s. The song is also said to derive from the chorus of a religious composition entitled “I’ll Overcome” composed by C. A. Tindley (circa 1905). Horton taught her version of the song to Pete Seeger.

In 1959, musical leadership of the Highlander Folk School shifted to Guy Carawan. In April of 1960, Carawan taught “We Shall Overcome” to eighty civil rights sit-in leaders attending a music workshop at Highlander. In the same month, he taught the song to 200 sit-in leaders at a conference organized by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Within months, “We Shall Overcome” had become the central anthem of



A live performance of “We Shall Overcome” by the SNCC Freedom Singers.

the civil rights movement, sung at every demonstration by singers who swayed from side to side, embracing one another with interlaced arms.

As important as "We Shall Overcome" became, it was only one of hundreds of songs embraced by the civil rights movement. Each area of the south had its own performers and songs, but the most influential performing group was the Freedom Singers, an ensemble which originally consisted of five SNCC field secretaries. The musical style of the Freedom Singers, unaccompanied part singing by a small group of voices, derived directly from the gospel quartet tradition, dating back to the nineteenth century and carried into the twentieth by groups such as the Dixie Hummingbirds. The Freedom Singers' repertory is alive today, maintained in performances of Sweet Honey and the Rock, an ensemble including Freedom Singers' founder Bernice Reagon.

The effectiveness of music to promote a message received its ultimate expression when President Lyndon Johnson himself voiced the refrain "We shall overcome," in a televised statement announcing his support of civil-rights legislation. The song was the vehicle by which the words achieved currency, but it was the message of the words that Johnson was citing. Lyndon Johnson enacted the most sweeping civil rights laws in the history of the United States, but his civil-rights "activism" was overshadowed in the minds of protesters by his subsequent support of the Vietnam War.

The Anti-War Movement in the United States. American university students, who had begun to sing and march in support of the civil rights movement in the early 1960s, marched through the decade singing in protest against the United States' military involvement in Vietnam. The most popular protest song of the era, Bob Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind," served double duty, with verses addressing both issues: "How many times must the cannonballs fly before they're forever banned?" "How many years can some people exist, before they're allowed to be free?"

"Blowin' in the Wind" was one of the earliest and most popular anti-war songs, but like "We Shall Overcome," it was only one of hundreds or perhaps thousands in its genre. Anti-war songs emerged from and addressed a different population than civil rights songs. The latter, based on southern African-American singing traditions, were usually sung in unison or in parts by large groups, often adopting the tunes of traditional hymns and gospel songs. Anti-war songs were more often solo efforts, sometimes including a chorus, but featuring a single voice accompanied by a guitar or a small band.

Photo by Joe Alper, courtesy Jackie Gibson Alper.



▲ SNCC Freedom Singers

Some of the most important voices in the anti-war movement were those of activists seasoned in the labor and civil rights movements, singers and composers like Pete Seeger, whose “Waist Deep in the Big Muddy” voiced his criticism of President Johnson’s Vietnam policy before a television audience of millions. But the population most directly affected by the Vietnam War were men, age eighteen through their twenties, and many composers and performers of anti-war songs emerged from this age group.

The first, non-electric efforts were cast in the musical style of the “folk revival” of the early 1960s, but as “folk-rock” and then “acid-rock” captured more of the recording market, anti-war songs moved into new musical territory. The serious, almost religious tone of early songs gave way to biting satire in the recordings of artists like Arlo Guthrie (“Alice’s Restaurant Massacree”) and Country Joe and the Fish (“It’s one-two-three, what’re we fighting for?”).

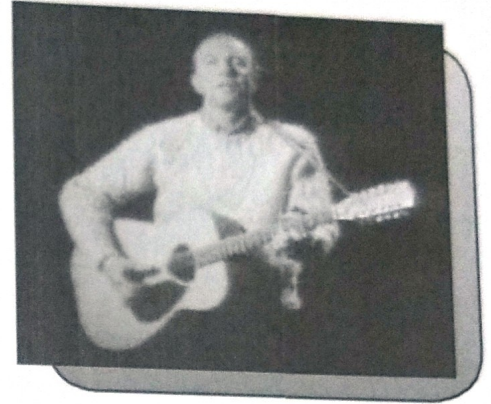
The anti-war movement, like the civil rights movement, had a rapid and powerful effect on government policy. The unpopularity of the war brought down one American President and motivated the next to seek a speedy exit from Vietnam, and the popular sentiment that affected these changes owed no little part to the power of music as a carrier of political messages.

We have briefly examined the role of political songs in Europe and the United States. National anthems and protest songs played similar roles in nation-building and the freedom struggles of colonized peoples in Asia, Africa, and South America. To conclude, we will consider an important genre of political song in Latin America: *Nueva Canción*.

Latin America—*Nueva Canción*. Chilean composer, performer, folklorist, and activist Violeta Parra (1918–67) may be considered the “spiritual founder” of *nueva canción*.⁵⁴ Like Pete Seeger in the United States, Parra collected hundreds of traditional ballads, composed songs addressing contemporary political issues in “folk” style, published traditional and contemporary songs, and both performed in and organized concerts of folk and political music. She founded “La Carpa de la Reina” (“The Tent of the Queen”), a center for traditional music. Her children, Isabel and Angel, carried on her work after her death, running an important *peña* or folk music coffeehouse.

The term “*nueva canción*” was coined to describe a repertory of political songs at a large music festival held in Santiago, Chile, in 1969. The

▼ Pete Seeger 1960s



▼ Pete Seeger 1998



new genre was closely associated with the *Unidad Popular* political party of socialist presidential candidate Salvador Allende. Allende's success in the 1970 election brought political reform and the nueva canción genre to their peak in the early 1970s.

Stylistically, nueva canción emphasized instruments and genres of indigenous Andean music, blended with Hispanic and African musical features. One such genre known as *cueca*, Chile's most popular folk dance, had already served for generations as a vehicle for singing of the struggle of the Chilean working class. Both lyrically and musically, nueva canción songs expressed Chilean nationalism, solidarity with the Andean Indian peoples, socialist ideals, and resistance to social and political domination either by a resident ruling class or by North American cultural imperialism. The United States was viewed with distrust.

The Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1962, American military action in the Dominican Republic in 1964, and the American world-wide dominance of the mass media made the United States a formidable adversary in the minds of nueva canción activists. Nueva canción was an international genre, which spread throughout Latin America, and American incursions in any nation of the hemisphere were perceived as attacks on the autonomy of all Latin American peoples.

The fate of Allende's government and the singers of nueva canción lent credence to such a view of American intentions in the region. In 1973, when nueva canción had reached its peak of popularity in Chile, a CIA-backed military junta overthrew President Allende. A new totalitarian regime banned political parties, labor unions, mass rallies, overt dissent, and the performance of nueva canción. Victor Jara, a prominent composer and performer in the genre, was tortured and killed; other exponents were jailed or exiled, and the playing of indigenous musical instruments was outlawed.

In this new, extremely repressive environment, musical protest reappeared in a new genre called "canto nuevo," in which political messages took a more subtle form. The cueca genre, once favored by dissidents, was co-opted by the new regime, which adopted this form to present songs painting unreal images of Chile as a bucolic paradise. Both the musicians and the style of nueva canción were forcibly exported, both to other Latin American countries and around the world. Nueva canción became an important means of political expression in the Nicaraguan revolution during the late 1970s, and international festivals of the genre were held in Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua, Ecuador, and Argentina, through the mid-1980s. The social and political message of nueva canción continues to attract a significant pan-Latin audience in the 1990s.

SUMMARY

The power of musical expression can give rise to transformation on many levels. Music can enhance religious experience, healing, celebration, social and political protest, and nationalism. It can arouse deep emotions, moving people to ecstasy or tears, and inspire work, play, and dance. Musical experience can be both deeply personal and communal. Because it is rooted in the culture in which it is made, music provides a strong connection between the individual and society. In the next chapter, we will explore the ways in which music, interacting with memory, evokes feelings which play a fundamental role in defining both personal and group identity.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

1. Music is an important means of social expression that gives rise to emotion, to memories, and to pleasure; it also facilitates transformation on many levels.
2. Whether it is generated by individual or group energies, musical power derives from the dynamic enactment of valuable human relationships within community.
3. Some communities are formed directly around the performance of music and dance.
4. Music is often an important component of religious ritual; music inspires spiritual and religious feeling for both the individual and the collective, triggers memories, invokes trance, aids in healing, and brings people closer to their understanding of the divine.
5. From the beginning of recorded history to the present day, music has provided a powerful medium for the presentation of political messages.

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How do the activities and beliefs surrounding the performance of music give us a window into the workings of an entire culture?
2. What are some ways that music helps to create and maintain community?
3. What are some examples of communities that are formed directly around the performance of music and dance?
4. Why is music often an important component of religious ritual?
5. Why and how does music provide a powerful medium for the presentation of political messages? Give examples.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. How would you define the field of ethnomusicology?
2. Why is music such an important component of culture?
3. Give examples of communities that are formed around music and dance.
4. Describe the roles that music plays in religious worship.
5. What are the conflicts regarding music that have existed within Christian worship over time?
6. What are the functions of protest songs within political movements?

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