

# Music

**God surrounds Himself with music.**

**Music adds to our pleasure and our revelation of God.**

**Music can impart the revelation of God.**

Music can be incredibly powerful. It has the ability to stir strong emotions and to communicate in a greater dimension than mere words. It can tell stories or paint pictures. It can shout and it can whisper. It has a vast variety of forms, ranging from a full orchestra to a solo instrument, or a chorus or choir to a lone voice. It can be a highly polished, rehearsed performance, or a spontaneous song. The style can be as varied as the instruments, including the voice, used to make it.

**Music is at the heart of God's presence.**

Heaven and music seem inseparable; there is an eternal dimension to music. God appointed an archangel to supervise continual musical worship in heaven.

Music is the means by which praise and worship is given to God using voices and/or instruments; it should serve, worship and glorify God.

In creating musical ability and musical appreciation, God has given us a wonderful tool for praising God and bringing glory to Him, and we can take pleasure in something God has given for us to enjoy. Music anointed by the Spirit of God leads us into His presence and He uses it to speak to us. Every emotion in the heart of God can be expressed through musical form. The prophets called for the musicians to assist them in discerning what God had to say. **(2 Kings 3:14-19)**

**Revelation 5:11** 'In a loud voice they (thousands of angels) sang, 'Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and honour and glory and praise'. Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: 'To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honour and glory and power, for ever and ever!'

**God makes music: music is part of creation.**

**Zephaniah 3:17** 'He will take great delight in you, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.'

**Job 38:7** 'The morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy.'

**Music is a gift to us. God also gifts men to make instruments other than man's voice.**

**Genesis 4:21** 'His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all who play the harp and flute.'

### **Music transcends cultural and language barriers.**

This is true of popular/classical music in the world. In heaven every tribe and tongue unites in the same song of worship to the Lamb upon the throne.

**Revelation 5:13** 'Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth ..... singing 'To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honour and glory and power for ever and ever!'

### **Students may study the technique of music.**

"Its structure is thoroughly mathematical. Whoever participates in music is really counting without being aware of counting .... Every note of the musical scale has an exact frequency ..... sounds that are pleasing to the ear will display a picture (or graph) that reflects an order and regularity."

Mathematics: 'Is God Silent?' – James Nickel

### **Students learn to practice and perfect their skills.**

Such practice teaches perseverance and the joy of accomplishment. Working together as a team, appreciating each other's gifts and abilities, helps us recognize the synergy that God creates as we work in harmony and unison.

**Students can learn to appreciate music** other than worship i.e. works of gifted composers and musicians.

**Students need to be aware that music can be divorced from what is good and wholesome** and can be used by Satan, the enemy of our souls.

Music and musicians can become a snare of idolatry to us.

**Proverbs 4:23** 'Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.'

**Musicians need to have a servant heart.**

**A revival in music often accompanies revival of heart towards God.**

e.g. **2 Chronicles 15:8-15, 20:3-30, 23:16-21, 29:3-36, 34:8-13**

**Nehemiah 12:35-47**

Ruth C. Haycock: 'Bible Truth for School Subjects.'

## **RESOURCES**

Refer to 'Towards a Christian Curriculum' by Barbara Lord  
Mathematics: 'Is God Silent?' James Nickel. Ross House Books, PO Box 67, Vallecito, California 95251. USA

## The following articles are adapted from a CST Conference Music Seminar given by Miss Carol Jerman of Liverpool's Christian Fellowship School

### The Essence of Music - A Bible Study

Another important function of music is that it is an expression of joy. The soul fills with joy and overflows and out comes singing. 'Singing for joy' is a phrase that occurs many times in the Bible. It is clear that singing was generally associated with happiness (e.g. **Proverbs 25:20** 'Like one who takes away a garment on a cold day, or like vinegar poured on soda, is one who sings songs to a heavy heart'). Music was connected to celebration: **Genesis 31**

tells how Jacob slipped away from his Uncle Laban. In v 27 Laban complains that he was denied the opportunity to have sent him on his way properly with 'with joy and with singing to the music of tambourines and harps.'

**Genesis 4:21** tells us of Jubal, 'He was the father of all who play the harp and flute.' His name means 'joyful sound.' James exhorts us to sing Psalms if we are merry. Singing to the Lord is a vehicle for joy. God Himself rejoices over His people with singing **Zephaniah 3:17** 'and even the mountains, forests and fields are commanded to sing for joy.' e.g. **Isaiah 44:23**

Joy is not the only passion that floods the human heart. We have to face all sorts of conflicts, dilemmas, sorrows. Although its primary function was as an utterance of joy, music in a fallen world gives expression to the whole range of human emotion. Even the most cursory glance through the Psalms uncovers a tremendous span of depths and heights.

In the Bible music is linked to real situations. Songs are responses. Passions are linked to reasons. Songs often deal with the problematic issues of life. In **Psalms 73**, for example, Asaph tells of a personal crisis in faith ('Why do the wicked prosper?') and records the process he experienced in resolving the matter. Music is an expression of people relating to a real world. All the soul's faculties are involved in interaction with that world and there are songs of many types, for many situations. These include songs of celebration and victory (e.g. **Judges 5**) laments (e.g. **2 Samuel 1: 19-26**) love songs (**Song of Solomon**) songs that re-tell history (Psalm 105) songs of instruction and warning (**Deuteronomy 32**) songs to express national resolve (**2 Chronicles 20:19-22**) personal songs of adversity (**Psalms 102**).

Music is an essential part of human life, a fundamental human activity, **Revelation 18** tells us of the final destruction of Babylon. In verse 22 we are given a short list of basic human activities that will never occur in that city again. The first item on that list is music: 'And the voice of harpers and musicians and of pipers and trumpeters shall be heard no more at all in thee.' The Bible gives us a picture of music as part of the fabric of society. It is recorded as being a pleasant social activity (e.g. **Lamentations 5:14** 'The elders have ceased from the gate, the young men from their music.') Songs, accompanied by instruments were made, enjoyed, passed on. They often commented on people or events, either wisely or unwisely, (Jeremiah found it painful to be the subject of gossipy, mocking songs, **Lamentations 3:14**) Music-making was a normal pastime, something for everyone to do, not just the specially trained. In response to situation, ordinary people would sometimes spontaneously improve songs (e.g. 'Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousand.') It was usual for people to be involved in social music-making. There were also the particularly gifted, like David, Solomon and Moses, who were inspired writers of songs. There were also professional musicians.

There are a number of passing references to singing men and singing women. Usually their status was that of servants and their function was to provide music for pleasure and to contribute appropriately to a range of celebrations. There were families of Levites whose calling was 'the service of song' in the Temple. They were highly skilled. David prescribed the kind of music and the type of instruments that were to be used (see **Nehemiah 12: 27-47**) There was singing, either unaccompanied or with plucked string accompaniment, interspersed with instrumental sections for cymbals, trumpets and horns.

This 'service of song' went on day and night. The main listener was God Himself.

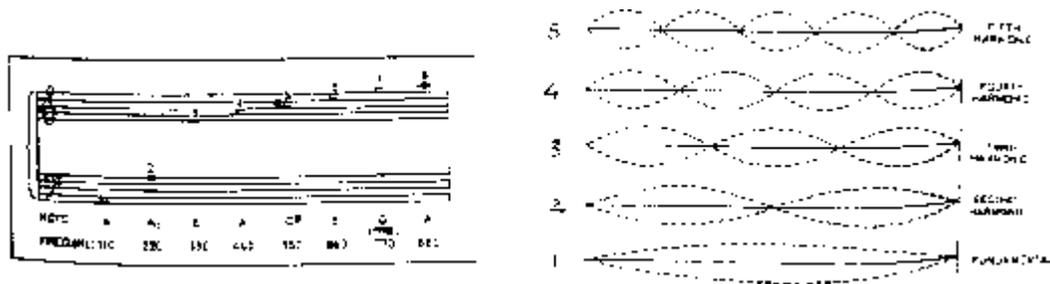
The music of the Temple and also the songs that recorded notable events had an important role in passing on a cultural identity. Both individuals and communities had their songs. The outward song was linked with inward identity, with responses and experiences that constituted the fabric of lives. Song is a significant expression of what people are. Perhaps the most striking examples of this are found in Revelation. Here in chapter 14, the 144,000 sing a song that only they can sing. It is linked to their lifetime experience of following the Lamb and being undefiled. In the next chapter, a great, victorious multitude sings the Song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb. Their lives have been identified with the content of these songs.

This biblical picture of the nature of music and music-making gives a framework for consideration of later musical developments. It gives some guidelines to help us understand current issues.

### Music - Creational and Historical Framework

Some sounds are harsh to our ears, raucous or clashing or out of tune or inappropriate. We perceive some sounds as being musical. This is not just a matter of personal taste or cultural difference but reflects a natural orderliness about the way certain sounds are built up. There is a created sonic order that makes music possible. The whole history of music is basically the story of the exploration of the possibilities of this sonic order.

Orderly, musical sound is built upon groups of sounds called harmonics that are in mathematical agreement. The easiest way to explain this is to consider a vibration string. When plucked, the whole length vibrates, producing a strong fundamental note, the pitch we actually hear. The vibrations going on are more complex, however. Each half of the string vibrates, producing, much more faintly, a note an octave higher than the fundamental. Each third of the string has its own vibrations, producing, still more faintly, a higher note. Each quarter vibrates, each fifth, and so on. A string player can isolate and pick out these harmonics by touching the string very lightly at half its length, or a third, or another fractional subdivision. Isolated in this way, the harmonics have a very clear bell like tone. The smaller



the fraction of the string, the higher is the pitch. We can describe pitch mathematically as the number of vibrations per second. This can be measured accurately and we find that the half string vibrates at twice the speed of the fundamental.

The thirds of the string vibrate three times as fast, and so on. Each time we hear what we think is a single note, we are actually hearing a whole series of notes.

The harmonic series continues, with ever-increasing faintness, growing closer in pitch. Different voices and different instruments have different numbers of the higher harmonics: this will account for much of their individual sound. The purer sounds (like the flute) have few harmonics, while richer sounds (like the cello) have many. If overtones that are not part of this clear harmonic series are produced, the sounds are harsh and unpleasant. In other words, the traditional concept of beauty of tone is not merely subjective. It is based upon a created mathematical pattern, and our sensibilities accord with this pattern.

The philosophers, astronomers, mathematicians and musicians of the ancient world recognized that there was created order, a mathematical beauty, in the world of sound. Music based on this essential order pleased the ear and stirred the heart.

As this sonic order was explored, combinations of notes from the harmonic series were put together, on the basis of mathematical ratio, to form what we now call scales. Five note scales (pentatonic) and seven note scales emerged. The seven note scales (modes) became especially important in Europe. They were the basis of most of our music until well into the Renaissance, when our major and minor key system emerged from them.

All these early scales are wonderful for forming melodies. Each mode was subtly different and gave different melodic possibilities. People's ears were highly attuned to the character of each mode. It was recognized that melodies in one mode would have a different effect on the emotions than melodies in a different mode. It was also commonly believed that music affected morals. Some modes were reckoned to have an ennobling effect. Others were believed to be demoralizing. Aristotle wrote, 'The young should practice just such music as we have prescribed... until they are able to feel delight in noble melodies and rhythms.' Hardly any of this early music has survived, because there was not a very clear way of writing it down. This is the nearest we can get to the earliest surviving tune:



Human experience from the earliest times bears out three important points. The first is that beauty should be considered an essential element of music. The second is that taste must be trained. The third is that music stirs the emotions and affects the listener.

The Chinese, the Babylonians, the Egyptians, and the Greeks all worked out mathematical music theories, based on the naturally occurring harmonics. Although they failed to honour the Creator (Pythagoras and his followers in essence worshipped the mathematical principles that they perceived) they nevertheless did begin the exploration of the created sonic order. The musical instruments, scales and melodies of those times were foundational.

If we are to understand our own time, we need a historical framework as well as a biblical context. An overview of the development of music in Western Europe will help us understand current Western culture.

This overview must include not only the development of musical language but also beliefs about music and the place of music and the musician in society and in the church.

The early church used music in much the same way as the Jews did in their synagogues. Psalms and hymns, for choirs and whole congregations, were a part of worship. Fairly quickly, Christian music became more 'heavenly' than Jewish music. Ongoing developments, especially those initiated by the Popes Ambrose and Gregory, resulted in plainsong becoming the essential music of monastery and church. Certain modes were selected as appropriate and a beautifully calm, almost ethereal, type of melody was required. The rhythm of the music freely followed the natural rhythms of the Latin texts used. There was no steady beat, nor any accompanying instrument. From the beginning, Christians avoided instruments and some types of music because of their association with pagan ritual. Also, the church was affected by the dualism of Greek philosophy, which divided the spiritual from the natural, the eternal from the temporal. Music for worship must be in the spiritual realm. The result of these early cautions and misconceptions was the pure, uplifting flow of plainsong, beautiful and inspiring but rather other-worldly.

From Medieval times through to the Renaissance, Church music was the most important kind. The organ was used for some of this, and other instruments at times. Singing in harmony (normally two parts, a higher and lower version of the tune) developed and popular Medieval music was lively and rhythmic. A whole range of drums, stringed and wind instruments were available, but church music largely lost contact with popular styles. They were judged to be fit for the market place, but not the church. The miracle plays, with their direct and dramatic musical style, had to move out of the church building into the street. Within the church, music was to be used only as the handmaid to worship. Outside, in society at large, people's lives were full of music. Minstrels and roving bands of musicians entertained and people of every strata of society sang and danced for social pleasure. Lullabies, work songs, laments, love songs, songs passing on news or gossip, took place as they always had.

During the Renaissance, there was further development of the skill of harmoniously intertwining tunes. Some use of discord resolving onto concord created a sense of musical tension followed by resolution. Home music-making, in which families and friends would sing or play musical instruments in parts, was popular. There was increasing secularisation of all the arts and less division in style between church music and music for other purposes. Choirs sang beautiful, intricate, well practiced anthems and motets as part of the worship in church services.

The Reformation brought the advent of a great congregational choral style of music into the reformed churches. Hymns were biblically based. They provided declarations of faith, praise and truth for all who were gathered together to worship. These hymns often gave insight into biblical teachings and often expressed processes of faith. They had a straightforward style and were sung in four parts. They were accompanied, usually by an organ. There was also more elaborate music for choirs to sing, but in these pieces, too, musically decorative skills were subservient to devotion.

Church worship and the arts generally separated and music flourished as an art form in its own right. Convictions about the place of music in worship varied. Luther favoured the use of music that inspired the soul. Calvin encouraged Christians to be involved in all the arts in society, but favoured very plain, unaccompanied singing in church services, lest people be distracted from worshipping in spirit and truth by emotional stimulation.

From the fifteenth through to the eighteenth century, the concept of fine arts developed.

Up until the Renaissance, all those who were skilled in the arts were thought of and thought of themselves as craftsmen. They skillfully produced the artistic products that society required. (This does not imply that they lacked individuality in their expression). After this, the fine arts were elevated in people's thinking above the common crafts.

In music, in the seventeenth century, there was increasing exploration of harmony. The major/minor key system had emerged and the old modes had largely fallen into disuse. Composers thought in terms of chords primarily, rather than in intertwining melodies. Modulation to different keys during a piece of music provided the means for the growth of new structures. There was a love of dramatic contrasts (for example, the long crescendo was used). Opera began and the orchestra started to develop. Instrumental music began to supercede vocal music in quantity and importance. Music for church services became dramatic in style, and oratorios told Bible stories expressively. There was an increasing amount of non-church music, and for the first time this became musically more significant than church music. These styles and forms flourished during the first half of the eighteenth century (e.g. Handel, Bach) and continuing developments in musical forms and the orchestra led on to the classical structures of symphonies, concertos, sonatas and string quartets. These were like architectural structures in sound, balanced, varied and making much use of contrasting keys. Beauty of sound was still considered of the utmost importance; whatever was expressed, it should sound pleasing. The great composers, Haydn, Mozart and the young Beethoven were still considered craftsmen, skilled in an elevated art, but attitudes were changing.

The rationalism of the eighteenth century led to a reaction in the arts that resulted in the romanticism of the nineteenth century. Individualistic self-expression was valued. Emotion, fantasy, heroism and tragedy were elevated. The artist was considered to be a superior kind of human being, special. Music was given quasi-religious status. Beauty of sound was still treasured and melody still predominated. Structures became looser, balanced form was thought less important than expressiveness. Textures of sound became more mixed and complex; clarity was not as important as effect. There was increasing exploration of discords and use of notes not in the scale in order to convey emotion and obtain special effects. The orchestra grew. Music became increasingly difficult to perform and the balance between music-making and listening to music began to shift. There was an ever-widening gulf between popular styles and 'great music.'

In our own century there has been a reaction to Romanticism, but also a continued development of some of the trends of the last century. Experiments with the language of music continued, stretching the whole sense of tonality until, in the work of some composers, it was dispensed with altogether. Discords became common place. A sense of violence and confusion and of the individual being almost meaningless, of life lacking purpose have all been expressed. Music conveys the emotion of human experience, and this has been a most discordant century. Experimental composers have even introduced totally random elements into their compositions, making the statement 'there is no difference between music and noise'. Much music in the classical tradition has become inaccessible to the majority of people, because it is hard to listen to, having moved so far from its ordered, harmonic roots. Beauty and truth could no longer automatically be linked in people's thinking, as it had been a century before. Truth and reality often seemed harsh and indifferent to individual joys and sorrows.

Two very important developments this century have been the broadcasting and recording of music and the rise of popular music. For most people in our culture, music is primarily what they hear on radio, cassette, CD. Pop music predominates. It is far more accessible to most people than the music of the classical tradition. Music of all types is influenced also by a mixture of elements from other cultures. We have access to music of every type, from the whole history of written music and from every current culture at the touch of a button. Cross fertilization between popular and classical traditions is again taking place.

## **Aspects of Teaching Music**

### **Nurture**

#### **Develop a taste for beauty**

1. Listen to beautiful sounds (i.e. audio equipment must give good quality reproduction. Live concerts. Birdsong)
2. Sing sweetly. (i.e. do not shout)
3. Make melody predominate.
4. Expect increasing enjoyment of beauty.

#### **Encourage musical expression, especially song**

1. Allow singing as part of general working noise.
2. Encourage spontaneous personal/group making of songs etc. Musical responses to all kinds of experiences are to be expected.

#### **Give music as a vehicle for worship**

1. Use their own compositions, as well as other people's.
2. Use instruments to 'make a joyful noise'.
3. Use songs that give substance for faith to take hold of understanding.

#### **Make music fun**

Remember, music is for expressing what is in the heart. Part of being a child is playing, having fun.

1. Enjoy silly songs, funny songs.
2. Sing songs with games (e.g. skipping rhymes).
3. Most of their music should be happy and light-hearted.

#### **Music must reflect a range of human thoughts and feelings**

1. Sad songs, songs that tell stories, thoughtful songs, songs expressing wonder, work songs, etc. are all needed (part of life).
2. Do not expose the children to music that reflects thought/ feelings inappropriate to children.
3. Music for worship should not be the only kind experienced.

#### **Teach listening skills**

1. Avoid 'being carried away' by the music.
2. Recognise instruments, hear parts, pick out tunes, and understand structures.
3. i.e. encourage understanding and active listening.

#### **Celebrate community events with music, as part of the life of the school.**

#### **Communicate the importance of nurture, not exposure, to parents.**

## **Develop Discrimination**

### **Introduce a wider range of music**

1. Wider range of emotions/human issues as the children increase in maturity.
2. Wider range of cultures and subcultures.
3. Wider range of musical styles.
4. Teach historical development.

### **Teach the children to discern the impact of the music**

1. Emotional effect: how it is created.
2. Meaning of words (underlying world-view).
3. Combined message.

### **Handle the issue of pop music**

1. Tackle the issue of background music.
2. Be aware of current trends. Help the children judge performance.
3. Include popular styles in music lessons. Do not despise.
4. Encourage the children to think about styles and functions (e.g. are all styles of music suitable for worship?).
5. Draw out their own evaluation, guided by the Scripture, but lead the way.

### **Handle the issue of musical quality**

1. Recognise that not all Christian music is musically good.
2. Continue training of listening skills, to appreciate longer forms and structures.
3. Consider why some music does not lose its appeal.