

The Whole Music Experience – Becoming Aware of the Effects of Words, Thoughts & Sounds

By Patricia L. Herlevi

Music remains one of the last frontiers to be tapped by a collective consciousness, or I should rephrase that and say that the power of music represents an untapped goldmine of possibilities. Though in ancient times, the power of words, intent and music had its place in

healing rites, spiritual temples and in the realm of

initiated shamans, griots, monks and Meistersingers. Religious chants and mantras were performed throughout the planet by indigenous and non-indigenous people. From the channeled Benedictine chants of Hildegard von Bingen to ancient African tribal drums, music brought consciousness to its participants.

Later music in the form of labor-related songs brought energy to workers who had tasks to complete. While many of these old work

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From Benedictine chants to ancient African tribal drums, music has brought consciousness to its participants. Today, with the invention of iPods and other personal stereo devices, music isolates us from one another.

songs are now seen as quaint outside of the academic circles which focus on preservation as field recordings, I have witnessed the residual effects of these old work songs when I see men working on a roof with their stereo blasting or an office worker with a tedious task listening to music to keep herself motivated.

Spiritually minded people listen to Native American flute, Buddhist chants and Sanskrit mantras to help them to connect to the divine source or to relax. More folks have been attending Kirtans and purchasing Kirtan music for use in their own homes. And new studies have come out that focus on the connection between animals and music such as the books,

“Why Birds Sing” (Penguin) and “Thousand Mile Song” (Basic Books) by David Rothenberg and “Through A Dog’s Ear” (Sounds True) by Joshua Leeds and Susan Wagner, DVM. Let us not forget the increase in sales of Mozart’s music after Don Campbell published his book, “The Mozart Effect” in the late 1990s or Masaru Emoto’s

water crystals that had been exposed to music, mostly classical.

However, much of our connection to music remains unconscious. Loud thrashing heavy metal music is employed for physical workouts and outdoor jobs such as roofing. Mantras and chants are sung by people who don’t quite understand the power of words and the effects of music on their entire being. And the music of Hildegard von Bingen has more often been performed to sell classical music CDs than for its original religious purpose. While music once connected us, today, with the invention of iPods and other personal stereo devices, music isolates us from one another.

According to Joshua Leeds, when we listen to music our entire body participates. He mentioned three tools used by psycho-acoustic experts (the effects of sound on the nervous system) in “Through A Dog’s Ear” (Sounds True) and also on the recordings he co-produced with Dr. Andrew Weil. In the liner notes for “Music for Self-Healing: Relax and De-Stress” (Sounds True), Leeds wrote, “Resonance is the impact of one vibration upon another, ie: something external setting something else into motions or changing the vibratory rate.”

The example I use in my music consciousness workshops is a person walking down a quiet street and then a car with a loud stereo playing hip-hop drives past and the person picks up his pace, and not only that, he walks to the rhythm of the music, sometimes with little conscious awareness.

This brings up another

one of Leeds’ tools, “Entrainment is a natural process whereby the heartbeat, breath and brainwaves speed up or slow down to match an external periodic rhythm.” Finally, “Auditory pattern identification and orchestral density techniques facilitate the middle-ear process of active listening or passive hearing.”

This last concept relates to our fight or flight response. We listen actively at first when we hear a sound because we need to determine if we are in danger. Once decided that we are not in danger, we shift to passive hearing, meaning that we shift our focus away from the music.

Other aspects of music to consider are the intention of the performers presenting the music, words and emotions. Since music has become wallpaper for a lot of us living in an urban environment, it is hard to determine the effects of it on our lives. And to become conscious of how different types of music affect our mind-body-spirit becomes more of a challenge.

I developed a music fast and music diary to help us become more conscious. The basic steps are as follows:

- **Spend a day or a week fasting from all music** (that you have control over). The fast is easily accomplished camping in the woods or staying at a retreat center.
 - **Start keeping track of all the music you listen to** in the same way that you would keep a food allergy diary. Except in this case, you include four columns with the following headings, “When the music was heard,” “where the music was heard,” “physical effects,” and “emotional effects.” Keep this diary for up to one month.
 - **Assess your findings.** Decide which music to keep and which to discard based on your personal experiences.
 - **Check out different types of music at your local library.** Learn about music from other cultures and explore music from various spiritual traditions within proper context.
- If you fast from music and keep the music diary, your music consciousness will expand greatly. This consciousness can further be expanded by reading books by Joshua Leeds, Marjorie de Muynck, Oliver

Sacks and others focused on the healing powers of music. Welcome to the final frontier and the healing power of music.

A journalist and musician, Patricia Herlevi teaches music consciousness workshops in Mount Vernon, Bellingham and other locations. She is available to teach small groups and non-profit organizations. You can learn more about her work by visiting www.wholemusicexp.blogspot.com or e-mailing patriciacrowherlevi@gmail.com Patricia will teach a Divine Music Bliss workshop on October 17, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., at the Ayurvedic Health Center, in Bellingham, Wash. Visit www.ayurvedichealthcenter.com or call (360) 734-2396 for more information.



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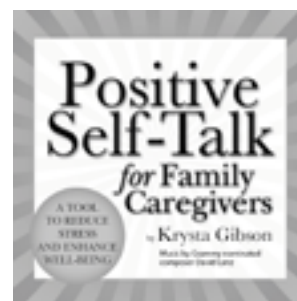
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