

On Spirituality In Music Education: The Necessity Of Music In Shaping Of Godly Character?

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Abstract

This article aims to briefly answer questions about the necessity of including music in the overall process of holistic higher education. The article offers a discussion over clashing principles between consumerism and creativity. Additionally it compares the coinciding principles of the creation of music and the building process of godly character as a fundament and primary goal of holistic education. Music education is viewed as a tool for creating citizens with godly character, constructive members of the society who are able to serve to God and to the community according to the Word of God and the Holy Bible, while living academically productive and artistically fulfilled lives as performers and educators.

Music and the Shaping of Godly character

Holistic higher education requires complex tools for achieving the goal of creating a person with a godly character, which has been the goal of many Christian universities throughout time. This goal is consistent with the three mottoes of the Universitas Pelita Harapan (UPH) in Karawaci, Indonesia, which read: "True Knowledge, Faith in God, Godly character".¹⁵ On the university web-site is stated the Vision and Mission of the UPH accordingly.

Vision and Mission

UPH has defined its organizational vision and mission to emphasize a balanced and integrated education, encompassing the arts, science and technology and strong spiritual values.

Vision

To be a prime national educational resource for applying total transformational principles that empower future leaders to transform people in a balanced and

¹⁵ Vision and Mission <http://www.uph.edu/about-uph/uph-identity/vision-and-mission.html> Accessed: October 9, 2012

integrated manner; to enhance knowledge and technology; to develop good character and attitude and to glorify God.

Mission

To prepare the students in their respective fields to become academically proficient professionals who respond ethically and strategically to the challenges of the future, who are able to solve problems creatively, who can seize opportunities proactively for the benefit of their organizations and communities, and who can realize their life goals. To support academic and professional staff in their collegiate endeavors enhancing their quality of life and service to others.

The misperception of the complexity of teaching and performing music creates constant waves in scholarship, philosophical and spiritual circles, especially those affected by the rising tide of consumerism. Teaching music starting from the early age, is perceived to be just as "having a good time", or tool for "organizing" the unruly kids, so that teachers (and parents) can have quiet time with reduced responsibilities. This type of education is defective in its' own fundament.

This is another reason of why it is important to include music in the basic education process and to teach it not as merely tool for consumers having "fun", but as a genuine art aimed to develop creativity. That is a task that is so complex and difficult that is at the opposite side of the value scale of "fun". It is wrong to think that teaching, and making and listening music does not include fun, but the complexity in this case, makes the fun to be just a small part of the process that increases proportionally with the invested quality of work and growing performance skills of the true artist. Aiming to teach music as an Art, in early education and even more so in higher education, is a task that is difficult in the same way as one to educates and creates a balanced person that is a positive, contributing member of the society, someone that truly possesses godly character. By explaining the first, we will come than to the latter. Why we use the word "art"? What is art in its' meaning; what is its' significance, especially from the point of an integrated holistic education? Maybe a little explanation can come from the deeper meaning of the word as used in the

following citation. In the article "God, Man and the World: Reflections on Ecology" by Bertrand Rickenbacher¹⁶ where, referring to the Psalms 19:1, it is stated:

The created world nevertheless reflects God's character. Every work of art reflects the profound nature of the artist without being an emanation from him. Just so, created reality manifests the glory of the creator. [Italics and bold font added by Tomislav Dimov] 'The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth his handywork" (Ps. 19:1)

The Godly character in itself encompasses all of the qualities stated in the UPH Vision and Mission stated above. Below, are its reminders:

...balanced and integrated education, encompassing the arts, science and technology and strong spiritual values... prime national educational resource for applying total transformational principles that empower future leaders to transform people in a balanced and integrated manner; to enhance knowledge and technology; to develop good character and attitude and to glorify God... to become academically proficient professionals who respond ethically and strategically to the challenges of the future... able to solve problems creatively, ... seize opportunities proactively for the benefit of their organizations and communities, ... realize their life goals... support academic and professional staff in their collegiate endeavors enhancing their quality of life and service to others. [Underline by T. D.]

In the context of this article and as an upfront clarification, teaching and performing music are not and cannot be viewed as substitutes to the Word of God and Christian service. The music is one of the most powerful tools that lead us and prepare us for the divine task of preaching the God's Word in the Holy Service. There are several fundamental reasons why holistic education institutions need to have the art of music as a solid and integral part of the curricula. These are reflected in some of the basic functions that the music provides. To mention the most important, here they follow:

1. Proof

The Five Proofs of God's Existence¹⁷, which in various wordings and forms, but generally the same since the times of Thomas Aquinas, are¹⁸ presented and

¹⁶ Bertrand Rickenbacher. God, Man and the World: Reflections on Ecology in *Christianity & Society*, Number 5.

argued about¹⁹ as: cause, design, morality, resurrection and experience. The existence of arts and especially music (which in itself encompasses all of the five proofs) is possibly one of the greatest manifestations of God on this Earth. Therefore the existence of the Arts and the Music, especially if we look inside the structure of the Art of Music, we are able to realize that it constitutes a proof in itself. It is evidence that the existence of perfect harmony based on the simple major triad consisting of a root, third and a fifth is possible.

The fundament of music, the major triad²⁰, can be perfectly found in the nature (as for instance in the overtones of the voice²¹) but combining them in music is just attributed to humans. God has created humans in his image and the existence of music is not without a cause. It is very interesting and surprising how nowadays, flooded by consumerism, many scholars refer to the music and arts just as a market driven activity that started as a mere tool of leisure (again just a view from consumer's standpoint – there are many historical proofs and documented facts that point to the initial development of what we know as Western Classical Music within the realm of the church²²), while it is equally surprising how the downright decadent Soviet (Communist) philosophical doctrine placed music art in to the line of self-determination and self-expression tools (trying to spiritualize the dead body of the atheistic philosophy), which put it in much more creative, and Godly realm. Concerning this official version of acceptance only of the spiritual level of making music, with open denial of the application of religious feelings writes Iris M. Yob in her article "Why is Music a Language of Spirituality?"

In conversation with a vocal ensemble director from the former USSR, I was struck with his description of the effects of performing religious music which his group did from time to time. This man, a card-carrying member of the Communist Party with no religious affiliation, was definite about describing the experience as a

¹⁷ Dr. Andrew Corbett. "The Five Proofs of God's Existence" in <http://www.andrewcorbett.net/articles/5-proofs.html> Accessed: December 5, 2011.

¹⁸ Frank B. Dilley. "Fool-proof Proofs of God" in *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1977), pp. 18-35, Springer. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40021764> Accessed: October, 27, 2012

¹⁹ Kelly James Clark. "Proofs of God's Existence" in *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 69, No. 1 (Jan., 1989), pp. 59-84. The University of Chicago Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1204688> Accessed: October, 27, 2012

²⁰ It is a ground for a discussion why is that the major triad is a system of exactly three tones creating a perfect and stable harmony?

²¹ Leonard Bernstein. Unanswered Question: Six lectures at Harvard. DVD, Disc 1, Edition Kultur, 1976.

²² Development of Medieval Chant, Polyphony and Instrumental Music through the works of Giovanni Gabrieli and Arcangelo Corelli.

spiritual one. A couple of things are interesting about his description. First, he makes a quite clear distinction between the religious and the spiritual; in his mind these two are different kinds of experience; through the medium of religious music he and his ensemble members enjoyed a spiritual and not a religious experience. This distinction is significant. The second interesting element in his description is the connection he implicitly makes between music and spirituality.

This assumption is one I will explore in this paper by asking, Why is music a language of spirituality? In the final analysis the answer to this question may very well rest on what we mean when we talk about spirituality.

The question becomes incredibly complex when one begins to inquire into the word "spirituality," for it appears there are many kinds of spirituality.²³

Of course, that the Soviet system, in its official version, was never able to accept the actual religious involvement of the performer, so it created this artificially "softened" - "spirituality" version. Then it is not surprising why so many people during the Soviet regime found their spiritual safe haven in classical music because that active participation in the performing process covertly fulfilled their hard suppressed religious needs, while the consumer driven American audiences subsided in numbers.

From the previously stated, we can see that music is viewed to consist of several elements: the entertainment element, spirituality, self – expression and self – determination. However, it is of an essence to understand that the cause of having music is exposed in the element that has been greatly disregarded, but it has existed as the official cause of creating and performing music for many centuries and/or millennia, and that is the service of God's worship.²⁴

If it is created, music must be *designed* (composed) before it can be performed. That is why the composer must have enormous knowledge and skill acquired through self-discipline and skill which translate in past experience that sublimates in to a new creation. The self-discipline that is required in creating and performing music can be related only to the deepest *morality* of its nature which translates it into the ultimate

²³ Iris M. Yob. "Why is Music a Language of Spirituality?" in *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, Vol. 18, No. 2 Indiana University Press (Fall 2010), pp. 145-151 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/PME.2010.18.2.145> Accessed: September 17, 2012

²⁴ Alan C. Turley. "Max Weber and the Sociology of Music" in *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (Dec., 2001), pp. 633-653, Springer. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/684827> Accessed: September, 16, 2012

morality of Creation versus Consumption, as two opposing principles, each of them standing on the principles of building (creating), versus destructing (consuming), respectively. Music is resurrected every time it is performed again and again and it definitely cannot be done without the experience that is accumulated from lengthy studying, analyzing, understanding and the practicing of the musicians. The sum of these personal qualities is essential in the building of the godly character which is the primary goal of holistic education.

2. Mission

Music is probably the most subtle and far reaching and it is closest to the actual preaching routine of God's Word from all of the arts.

In the Introduction of the article Contemporary Missiology by Johannes Verkuyl, it is stated how the highest task of "realization of a total salvation" encompassing a "whole range of human needs and destroys ever pocket of evil and grief affecting mankind" is in the function of achieving full and absolute harmony (as it is genuinely pursued in classical music, or what we know as a music that is composed on basics of classical ideals) by "restoration not only of man's relationship to God but also of those between sexes, generations, races and even between man and nature."²⁵ Musicians are expected to work within musical collectives and ensembles while achieving harmonious relations in the results of their work – the Music including rhythm, pitch, character and style of performance.

The belief in Jesus is the center point of the missionary work that we all have to attend. The professional musician is constantly on stage and is fulfilling the missionary work by preaching and praying while using the music as a divine language²⁶ that speaks to all nations. The musicians are always led by the notion that performing artists must be always prepared to touch every heart of the listeners in the hall, because if there is only even a single soul in the hall that is going to get the message and open the heart for music, is equally going to open the heart for God. In this manner, the mission is fulfilled. There are no spectacular steps that are expected in this difficult work, thus as in music, or as for instance, in space exploration as

²⁵ Johannes Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction*, published by B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., year unknown (not stated in the citation).

²⁶ Leonard Bernstein. *Unanswered Question: Six lectures at Harvard*. DVD, Disc 5, Edition Kultur, 1976.

introduced by the President John Fitzgerald Kennedy, "we are aiming to achieve these goals not because they are easy, but because they are hard."²⁷ Telling the story of Jesus through creative means of the divine language should be the aim, goal and achievement in the missionary work and the main tool in the "leading the people to the Messiah" and the restoration of God's Kingdom.²⁸

3. Pursuit of and Reference to Perfection: Creating Self-Discipline through Practice, Sacrifice and Service

The appearance of the God-Son, Mighty God's incarnation, in a human form is quite different from what might have been expected. This appearance placed Jesus among the common people. However His absolute purity and absence of sin, His serving only to God, the Father, and wisdom against falling in to human hands just to be used for their own manipulative purposes, as well as His Reincarnation and Ascent to the heavens opened the door for our full salvation of all of us as human kind, regardless of political and national origin, and redemption of our sins which he took upon him. Jesus and the prospect of His Kingdom created a "reference and a point of orientation of our mission task" [T. D.]. In the same way the artists in music must create in their soul a divine reference in order to be able to create divine music in life. Just the mere pursuit of good intonation (not to mention all other types of techniques and performance tools) is a voluntary application of self-discipline through daily practice routine. It is necessary for one's building in-to a musician, while perfection and ideals of willingly and fully devoted cooperation with the other musicians serving to the higher cause, to the community and for worship, thus fellow missionaries, is the foundation, and it is the goal of creating music.

4. Living the Music – Living the Faith

This notion is not in any way pretending to pose as a Faith substitute. Quite to the contrary, living a musician's life (as well of other true artists pursuing and dwelling their art on the creative approach), truly and with full discipline and devotion, cannot be pursued without arriving in to the spiritual state of Faith. Thus the structure that

²⁷ President John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Speech on Space Exploration, CCA 1962

²⁸ Johannes Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction*, published by B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., year unknown (not stated in the citation).

responds to creatively driven artistic processes is the one that creates the temple inside. This is evident by comparing the qualities stated in the mission and vision of UPH and the process of musical performance.

...balanced and integrated education, encompassing the arts, science and technology and strong spiritual values... balanced and integrated manner; good character and attitude and to glorify God...to become academically proficient professionals ...able to solve problems creatively ... for the benefit of their organizations and communities ... enhancing their quality of life and service to others... [Underline by T. D.]

Music is teaching about achieving balance between the performers' mind, theoretical scientific knowledge, technical execution, learned physical skills, composer's information embedded in the score, artistic message and inspired creative performance while integrating faith in all of the process. Performing process is a community service that cannot be completed and executed solely on constant exploitation of one's enormous ego as it is in the consumerist/industrial approach. The void left in the soul is usually filled with addictions of any kind or abuse of material substances. The creative approach creates a community service with endless exchange and flow of Godly energy, it is replenishing, fulfilling and constructive in its fundament, thus directly affects the quality of life of the performers and the actively participating listeners.

5. *Divine Language of Poetry*

The analysis and discussion over the "Unanswered Question", a set of six lectures that Leonard Bernstein gave at the Harvard University in 1976 is integrating the Christian Worldview in the education process. One of the purposes of this set of lectures is to understand the language of music as a divine language of poetry; a language which in its transcendent and multileveled meanings and metaphors can be equally applied to the language used in the Bible; a language as is the one that in the same way we need to understand and decipher from a musical score. Leonard Bernstein defines it as such very clearly.²⁹ In a lecture, Dr. Gary Miller³⁰ referred to

²⁹ Leonard Bernstein. *Unanswered Question: Six lectures at Harvard*. DVD, Disc 5, Edition Kultur, 1976.

³⁰ Dr. Gary Miller, Set of Lectures as Module 2 of the Integration Seminar, cca. October 2011, Universitas Pelita Harapan, Jakarta, Indonesia.

the Bible as a text of divine poetry. The same multileveled poetical meaning applies to the quality of music that we ought to hear - the one that is not only touching us, but enriching and changing us for the better. The same goals should be pursued in the teaching of Violin as a Major and minor Instrument, as in the Orchestra Class and other subjects where high standards of self-discipline for achieving skill through catharsis of persistent work are requested. The integrated education process should also include and request honesty, reference to the perfect ideal as the purity of Jesus Christ, inventiveness and creativity with refined taste in presenting the divine language of poetry (using direct quotations of the Bible verses) which when stripped from words, becomes the music of the language intonations. Focus on the higher ideal of service helps to achieve higher quality of stage performance. These qualities are directly related to the integration of Christian Worldview in the Education Process. Results are expected to show in the form of overall maturing and spiritual and intellectual growth of the students.

6. Dissemination and Harvest

All of the above has one solitary task and that is through a holistic integrated Christian education to create dissemination of the godly character and ideas throughout the entire World which would enable me in our role as missionaries in service of establishing the Kingdom of God. Our fight is righteous and our cause is solid. We have God Himself as our ally, and our victory, our harvest is assured, no matter how far and how unreachable it seems. "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28)

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