

The Effects of Different Kinds of Music

Is Music Neutral?

Is There 'Good' Music and 'Bad' Music?

What constitutes music? Is there good music and bad music? Or is it merely a matter of individual taste? Isn't music just notes and chords, etc? How can notes be 'good' or 'bad'?

Many try to argue that music is neither good nor evil. It is true that the notes that make up musical pieces are neutral. However, the problem lies in how those notes are put together. The letters of the alphabet are neutral. One person can take the letters of the alphabet and arrange them into a prayer. Another person can arrange the same letters to blaspheme the name of God.

How can a musical note be inherently good or bad? Aren't notes just a matter of pitch variation, tonal vibration, compressions and decompressions of air? ...

Let's look at this more closely. Years ago, I heard a tape of a man who was defending the neutrality of music ... He walked over to the piano and played a 'C major' chord. Then, he asked the audience if it was a 'good' C major chord or an 'evil' C major chord. After some scattered laughter, he said, 'See, there's no such thing as good or evil music.'

He made a rather obvious mistake, however, in his reasoning: A 'C major' chord isn't music. It is a building block of music – and there's a big difference. In the English language, if I write the letter 'e', is that a 'good' 'e' or a 'bad' 'e'? Neither. As a building block of the English language it is a neutral entity. However, I can put that letter in conjunction with other letters and communicate something like...

Prais**e** the Lord

or

I hat**e** God.

In both of the above usages I have taken neutral letters and put them together to communicate something to you. However, what I have communicated is definitely not neutral, and my intent is clearly conveyed.

Some people would have us believe that music is neutral. Music is a language which can capture and control the very thoughts and actions of an individual, a crowd, or a nation. It is the fountainhead for good and for evil.

As we must be discerning in the choosing of our friends and our food for a happy and healthy life, so we must be careful and prayerful in the music we choose to listen to or to sing.

Music Is A Science and An Art

Music is both a science (predicated upon mathematical precision of arranged notes) and an art (based upon one's ability to skilfully play these notes). All true music meets the scientific requirements. It is based upon certain rules, but it is also a direct expression of man's heart and soul.

The reason most Christians think musical taste is unimportant is that they do not understand that the laws which govern music are created by God. They can be used as God intended, or they can be used as man intends.

Melody, Harmony, and Rhythm

When we refer to music, we are referring to the *score* or *composition*. Not to the lyrics.

There are three parts in a musical composition:

- The melody
- The harmony
- The rhythm

There must be a perfect balance of rhythm, melody, harmony ... and proper volume, each element appropriate to the others. There must be structure and poetry in the music; it must be easy to remember.

Melody:

The melody is sweet music, tunefulness ... the melody carries and reinforces the words.

“Melody is the very essence of music” (the classical music composer, Mozart).

“Melody is the main thing” (the classical music composer, Haydn).

Harmony:

The harmony must be in agreement [with the melody].

Rhythm:

The rhythm is the accent and duration of notes.

True rhythm is good – the King James Bible, for example, has a miraculous and mathematically ordered rhythm. It is the very quiet rhythm of the heartbeat of God. The Bible’s rhythmic beat is hardly noticeable, just like the beat of the human heart. Our body is set to certain rhythm.

Rhythm becomes problematic when too much rhythm or the wrong sort of rhythm is used ... the most serious problems come when a loud dominant rhythm is introduced into the music.

Light or Dark

Like human nature itself, music cannot possibly be neutral in its spiritual direction. Ultimately all uses of tone and all music lyrics can be classified according to their spiritual direction: upward or downward. ... To put it plainly, music tends to be of either the darkness or of the light.

So Music Isn’t Neutral?

No. Not according to EVERY serious scientific, medical, physiological, and psychiatric research known. Not according to EVERY serious musicologist. Not according to the Word of God. All the known disciplines of science, musicology, academic, medicine, physiology, as well as the Bible deny that music can be neutral.

Music is the most powerful stimulus known among the perceptive senses. The medical, psychiatric and other evidence for the non-neutrality of music is so overwhelming that it frankly amazes me that anyone should seriously say otherwise.

Elizabeth McDonald, (10 November 2015)

Quoted, compiled, and edited from the following Sources:

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