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Music is joined at the hip with human experience of the sacred. Visionaries from Pythagoras to the present have glimpsed and mapped the ways in which the universe is tuned to a musical scale. Even the planets orbit the sun in patterns that reflect underlying musical ratios. Music is the language through which the universe communicates across and within itself, from the largest cosmic structures to its infinitesimal fragments. Since the dawn of human history, encounters with the spirit world have taken in and around music; like dance and music, the two have grown up inseparably. Only in the last few hundred years, in the West, has music ever seemed capable of existing independently from the divine, though few listeners anywhere would recognize such a separation in their own experiences with music. Across time and cultures, it is through music that worshippers express their praise to the divine, offer their supplications to a higher being, forge and renew their spiritual communities. Sacred song brings the individual soul closer to the divine presence, creating the I-Thou, but it also dissolves the boundaries between individuals, allowing the stubborn subjectivities of isolated worshippers to knit together in the presence of a transcendent reality.



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MUSIC IN THE SPIRITUAL LIVES OF AMERICANS”***