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In western thought, the notion of music and spirituality extends back to the ancient Greek philosophers who recognized music as an important catalyst for integrating and inspiring the mind, body, and spirit. Such strong links between music and the spiritual arise due in part to perceived intangible, yet powerful characteristics that both share. Hence, music often becomes the ideal partner, a reinforcing agent, to the world's religions by impacting the senses and wielding power to transform the listener from a mundane awareness to the spiritual. This process manifests differently throughout the world's cultures, and often carries diverse symbolic meanings for both listeners and performers. For instance, in the Christian Church, singing Gregorian chants equates with prayer. Among the Sufi living in Asian and Middle Eastern countries, music contributes to socially based, devotional, and ecstatic trance-like states. Some East Asian Buddhist monks perform music as "sound" offerings to Buddha. Some avant-garde jazz musicians living in New York City describe a style of free-form, collectively improvised music that dissolves the ego, whereby musicians evolve a kind of communal or spiritual awareness that shapes performance.



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"AVANT-GARDE JAZZ MUSICIANS: PERFORMING 'OUT THERE'"