



ATOMIC OPERA

JOHN SIMMONS

The spiritual significance of music is the same as all human activity. Music's spiritual significance is more obvious to us due to the nature of art, and the way in which we use music. For example, the way we associate music to significant moments in our lives. The term "*spiritual significance*" itself is colored by certain presuppositions that will affect how this question is answered. For Gnostics, Platonists, Pietists, and Mystics, the "*spiritual*" realm is disconnected from the physical world, which must be somehow transcended by various means. Therefore, music's spiritual significance may lie in its ability to lift one "*above*" or "*out of*" the physical world, but I don't hold to this viewpoint.

The Biblical and Christian view is that the physical and spiritual realms are involved in one another. God created the physical world, and is distinct or transcendent from it, but He is also immanent and operates within it. The physical world is the arena in which spiritual things are played out. This reaches its apex in the doctrine of the Incarnation. God created man as a physical and a spiritual being, so all of man's activity has an inescapable spiritual significance. All of our work arises first from within our spirit, then is made manifest in the physical world. In the case of music, concepts or emotions from deep within our souls are given physical expression, and are then perceived, and taken into the souls of others. Music serves as a means by which the spiritual is mediated to others.

I also want to add that "*spiritual*" does not necessarily equate with good. Many see the spiritual realm as more pure or uncorrupted than the physical world, but that is not the Christian view. There is both good and evil in the spiritual. Another dimension is then added to music's spiritual significance. That dimension is obedience. Man's work, including music, is governed by God. This is spiritually significant in the degree it does or does not mediate God's attributes of beauty, goodness, and truth. A positive example may be illustrated by considering a well-composed piece of music in which there is rhythmic and harmonic order, consonance and dissonance, tension and release. A negative example may be illustrated by chance music, or a twelve-tone piece in which chaos, randomness, and aesthetic relativism are assumed. Both are communicating what is in the soul of the composer. One is communicating spiritual truth, and one is communicating spiritual falsehood. The spiritual significance of music is that it can communicate a person's belief about the beauty, goodness, and truth of God into the world.



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DRUMMER IN ATOMIC OPERA