



NOAH CRESHEVSKY

"What do you believe is the spiritual significance of music?" is artfully worded and open-ended. Those qualities make it something of a Rorschach inkblot test, revealing as much about the respondent as about the topic. From time to time, a friend of mine reminds me that he is a *"very sensitive person"*. I always believe that the message within the message is that he is *"more sensitive"* than most other people, and certainly more sensitive than I. In the same way, a consideration of the spiritual significance of music invites a comparison between spiritual significance in music as it relates to spiritual significance in other aspects of life. Comparative sensitivity and spirituality measurements tend to become competitive speculations in which players turn the concept of spirituality into a gladiator event. Despite misgivings about opening Pandora's box, Justin St. Vincent's enticing inkblot induces me to walk a perilous line that separates humane aspiration from inhumane sectarianism.

Spirituality can be found everywhere, since it is a condition of being, rather than a condition of doing. Artists do not have a greater or lesser claim to life than do laborers or those who live but do not labor. Spirituality does not make more of the composer than of the day-worker. Spirituality does not more lavishly grace the souls of our leaders than the ostensibly inactive geriatric man and woman who require help to even turn from right to left. Spirituality is existential rather than experiential. If Earth itself is but a blip upon the boundless fabric of creation, what possible specialness can there be in a particular parcel of land in a particular region of our tiny globe? There is nothing new about the observation that celebrations of national pride frequently turn into horrific orgies of ethnic cleansing; nevertheless nations soldier on to identify and glorify their real and imaginary innate characteristics, gods, and customs. Tribalism in all of its manifestations, including the tribalism of artists, must be resisted. I think it is our moral and spiritual duty to know, and to remind others, that the spirit of life animates all creatures. Where there is life there is spirit. Spirit is universal and immortal; each of us, including the atheist, glorifies the spirit in his or her own way.

Born in 1945, I began studying music formally in 1950. I have spent a lifetime composing music. I do not pray and I am opposed to the concept of organized religion, since allegiance to any group creates an *"us"* versus *"them"* mentality. Tribalism has a proven record that is far more negative than positive. My way, and your way too, in my opinion is but one way. For me, the surest path to spirituality has been primarily through music. Even for me, one flame burns more brightly still than the flame of music, and that is the flame of the eternal flame of spirit itself. Were it not for my personal faith, my musical efforts would have been for no one but myself. I think it would not have been enough.



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