



HEATHER FRAHN

Music; what is this? All music and sound is made up of countless harmonics. It's an array of infinite combinations of sound and silence, which are always absolutely unique. No two plucks of a guitar string could ever be exactly the same; and like nature, no two things are exactly the same. This is the beauty of life itself. Music is a part of nature and is a natural phenomenon intimately connected to all the vibrating life in this world.

Since time began, according to many sacred texts and cultural beliefs, the world was created with sound. Everything which is created is in constant vibration and emanates an energy, including inanimate objects, all realms seen and not seen, all of nature and every human body which has lived or ever will live.

Spirituality; what is this? It can mean a variety of things to different people. But there is a commonality amongst cultures, religions, and forms of spiritual practice, and that is the use of music and sound. As we take a look into history right up to the present we can see that music, song, sound, and prayer have been used to celebrate spiritual occasions, worship gods and goddesses, perform rituals, express stories of joy and bring people closer to their sense of "God", what ever form that takes for each individual.

If spirituality is having belief in and awareness of more than just this tangible world, then music definitely fits the bill. It is said that monks practice the ancient form of vocal harmonic singing because the fundamental "drone" note created by the voice is the energy vibration connecting them to the earthly plane, whilst at the same time the melodic whistling of the high vocal harmonics are the energies connecting them to the spiritual plane. This is one example of how sound can be seen as both tangible and ethereal.

There is something profound about music in that its presence can connect the human spirit to its own source. Music invites the listener and musician to enter the now, this moment; from here we can truly experience music, truly open our hearts and unite with the essence of that which is spirituality. Is this why people can have a powerful connection with the vibration of music, sound and song lyrics?

This "sense of timelessness" or "at one with God" or "connection to the human spirit" can be felt through music. It can be experienced by listening to your favourite artist at a rock concert, to hearing the sheer beauty of an operatic voice, to chanting a mantra in repetition, to drumming out an African rhythm



or by simply strumming your guitar humbly in your bedroom. The power of music and the spirituality it brings can be the same no matter what form it takes.

As millions around the world have a daily spiritual practice of devotion, I too have this daily practice through the creation of music and the giving of music in different forms. I have been a singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist for over fifteen years, and I know that if I don't "*get my fix*" so to speak, of the energy that playing music brings to my life, I can get irritable, feel a bit lost and have low energy; much like a monk without meditation, or a Muslim without prayer, for example. I did often wonder to myself over the years why this is so. Through my own research about the spirituality of music itself I can now see direct correlation between wellbeing and music, either as musician or listener. Even though my mind can make sense of this correlation now, for many years I felt that there was something special about music that I "*couldn't quite put my finger on*" or find the words to express. In hindsight, I think people experience music's phenomenon in the following ways, for example, someone may be feeling down or low in energy, and then after hearing a live band, or by singing for a few minutes or putting on a favourite piece of music on CD that person feels really great! Why? Could it be there is a great power in the combination of (a) pure sound vibrations resonating through us, with (b) meaningful lyrics? And if the music is performed live, there is an added feeling of (c) a connection with the musicians performing and the other people in the audience, plus the gift of (d) being there in the moment as the music is being played live by real people right before our eyes. This combination can have a very positive effect on us and leave us feeling great after such an occasion. This positive effect could be called a "*spiritual experience*". Now, whether we consider ourselves to be "*spiritual*" or not, whether we pray to a God or not, to me it doesn't really matter, because if we enjoy music in what ever way we do, then music is touching our soul, it's finding a path into our hearts in a way like nothing else can; and it's in this way that music simply is, a "*spiritual practice*".

Ironically music and sound is an important tool to finding silence. Silence; the peace which lay inside of us that can become smothered by the noise from our surroundings, and also from the noise within our own minds. Some of the great spiritual figures in history have put vast importance on silence, a place where the mind stops chatting at you and you can just be at one with yourself, be at one with the love in your heart, and this silence can add more power to prayer. For example, it can be a great spiritual practice to listen to the gaps between the words in a song, or the spaces between beats in a drumming rhythm or the silence beneath the sound you're hearing, or even the silence beneath the silence in a quiet room. Through this sort of concentration one can experience a quiet peace, which could also be called a "*spiritual experience*".

Of course there are a myriad of significant ways in which music and sound meet with spirituality in each individual, but to conclude I'd like to pose the question, have you ever thought about what the world would be like without music? What would your existence be like without music, melodic sound, and



The Spiritual Significance Of Music

expression or connection through songs? I have tried to imagine an existence without music on the planet and I feel it would be very grim indeed. It is my hope that people will continue to acknowledge the importance of music in the world. May we all connect with the gifts that music can bring.



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