

AN EXPERIMENT WITH MUSIC

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“Show me the music of your nation and I will show you the level of your civilization.” These were the approximate words of a great philosopher, indicating that music is either an index of civilization or that it is instrumental in molding that civilization. According to Cyril Scott in his book *Music, Its Secret Influence Through the Ages*, Handel was responsible for ushering in the Puritanical religiosity of the Victorian Age, Bach directed Germany toward an age of intellectuality, and other composers were similarly influential. While we may feel author-composer Scott has grossly exaggerated this influence, that the music may be a result as well as a cause and a sign of the times, there is little doubt that music does exert a powerful influence on people.

On Convention Sunday of last year an attempt was made to seek reactions to certain music and possibly check on certain theories. A complete, exhaustive test would of course take a long period of time and deal with complex factors and varied personalities and conditions. The music chosen for this occasion was Bach’s B minor Mass, and all were requested to give themselves over to the music completely and maintain silence throughout the performance and for a minute or so immediately following, for music tends to produce an aura which is not immediately dissipated with the ceasing of the playing. It can be felt for some time after, and to interrupt that silence is to shatter the effect. It is natural to suppose different persons reacted differently, and yet there was a general feeling of exaltation which persisted throughout the day.

The primary purpose of music supposedly is to exalt, and may be an aid in breaking through to the Higher Consciousness, but much of music has the opposite effect. We call music good or bad according to its effect on one, yet some may insist that what is good for one is bad for another, that music is quite relative. The trained musician is usually convinced that good music follows faithfully the laws of good writing and good performance, for these laws are not arbitrary, but are derived from natural law itself.

Before hearing the recording, Dr. Wolff, in a short address, suggested there may be a different kind of test for the quality of music and that it is not relative to the individual, but is fixed. Music has a definite response within the Chakras, or psychic centers in the subtle being. That which would tend to raise the consciousness of one would be felt mainly in the higher centers of the body while a coarser type would have its main response around the lower centers. Music appealing to the mentality might be more readily felt in the region of the throat. The phrase “heart music” is not new to us, while that music of the vital plane which loves violence, tragedy, melodrama, etc., might strike a response in the region of the solar plexus or lower. Such may completely satisfy the listener without having any lifting effect. That music which suggests violence, lust, hate, etc., or is merely banal, when indulged in over a period of time can only serve to dull the finer senses progressively and in time result in a coarser being. Hence music may well be an index of the level of evolution of any group or individual.

Music is complex. Music alone can be very moving, but often the effect is heightened by a combination with the other arts, as in the music dramas of Wagner, where visual art, poetry and drama are integrated with the music. These other arts may strike corresponding vibrations in the Chakras in a little different manner, and the entire field of the arts in relation to the Chakras may be a fertile one for research. The surface is hardly scratched. More may also be said here about the effects of music. On occasion a transformation in consciousness has come not through any particularly great composition but through the beautiful tone quality of a single sustained tone of a singer. A student with some psychic vision reported thrilling to a composition of the aforementioned Scott played in recital by Fritz Kreisler, and at the same time saw flash from the artist rays of pure gold light. This might indicate that music is something, more than merely mechanical.