



KURT BESTOR

As a composer who has written and performed music for more than three decades, I have struggled with understanding music beyond the notes, rhythms, harmonies, and orchestration of my craft. I could speak volumes about counterpoint, theory, and the history of music, but am always hard pressed to explain why music evokes such strong feelings upon listening to it. However, I have some theories about it which I could share.

Music has and continues to be, at its most visceral level, the inner expression of our deepest emotions; love, pain, anger, and happiness. It's no accident that, upon hearing of a loved one's death, people groan from deep down a most painful "*melody*", and when one is caught up in the rapture of extreme happiness, it's natural to want to dance a joyful "*rhythm*". I believe that these "*musical*" expressions are as natural as sleeping and eating for humans. The body, when ambulating does so in a naturally rhythmic way and the dances done by peoples the world over are the body's way of expressing joy and devotion. These "*natural*" musical expressions are why I believe that there's really no way to explain through science or musical theory the "*spiritual*" connection to music. Yes, neuroscientists have been able to pinpoint which section of the brain is excited by music and which chemical is secreted, but have yet to truly describe exactly why. I'm sure that day will come eventually.

Of course, the subject to be discussed is the "*spiritual significance*" of music. Because, as I mentioned before, music is a natural expression of our most intimate and powerful emotions, during times of spiritual connection there is no better way to truly express devotion or rapture. Because religious devotees feel so strongly about their subject matter, words alone seem inadequate to describe their deep feelings about God and His creations. Music digs deeper and for this reason is it virtually the universal way of worshipping. Perhaps another reason that music is significant as it pertains to spirituality is that it lends an air of artistic mystery to the already mysterious topic of religion and spirituality. What better way to portray the mysteries of deity and its connection to us than with the most undefined art – that of music. It can't be seen, felt, or smelled – a bit like deity itself. I purposely avoided labeling music as a "*gift from God*" because frankly I don't really comprehend the dogmas of religion. For me, it's just the most natural way for me to wax rhapsodic about the love of family, the beauties of nature, and the myriad of human emotions I feel each day.



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