

MUSIC AND THE JOURNEY OF MAN

SPIRIT
AWAKENING

1. Since the dawn of consciousness, the spirit of man has been punctuated and nurtured by the rhythm and language of musical form. With the breakloose of consciousness came the awareness of both freedom and awful nothingness. Music has served as a chief enabler of the spirit throughout the journey of man, giving him a way to articulate and express the intensity and radical tension that life is. When life begins to go deep into man's interior, he learns to sing and make music. Music touches deep within him eliciting a response beyond the emotional.

ONTOLOGICAL
DEPTHS

2. As man gained lucidity, pain cut deeply into him. Music has given him a roadmap into the non-rational which no mere rehearsal of objectivity satisfies. The poetic ground of human expression lies beneath and beyond the rational and objective. It comes out of the ontological depths. "Musical feeling" is rather something 'wholly other,' which, while it affords analogies and here and there will run parallel to the ordinary emotions of life, cannot be made to coincide with them by a detailed point-to-point correspondence. It is, of course, from those places where the correspondence holds that the spell of a composed song arises by a blending of verbal and musical expression." (Otto)

HISTORICAL
REFLECTION

3. As groups of people in community have built the movements that have carried and propelled history, music has played a key role. The Hebrew history reflected in the Old Testament reveals time and again the songs, both sacred and profane which nurtured them. Plato wrote of the power of music and song, and in our own time and century it has been crucial to the glue of various movements from the singing of the armies of the world wars to the labor and youth movements of history. It is said that Mao remarked you can tell the state of a revolution by the pitch of its music.

CENTURY
TWENTY

4. The music and singing of the 20th Century have exemplified the incredible alteration of consciousness and society's expression of it in musical form. In the past fifty years we have seen emerge the style of music which has helped man through the chaos of our age. The introduction of jazz in this century as an experimental mode proved to be an enduring expression for the masses of people of our time. Similarly, the writers of more classical music broke all barriers of form and harmony to produce the sounds of discord in their works. Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring" created wild reaction in Paris in 1912 when people literally rioted in the streets in protest. It is as though the times have called for discordant music, as they have called forth this response in all the arts. And yet amid the discord has been music of harmony, as though expressing man's hope that the world will come back together again. And strangely too, the discord of one age becomes the harmony of another.

SINGING AS
ART FORM

5. The putting together of words and music creates a distinct and unique art form in singing. Singing itself holds three dynamics in tension: the melodic line together with poetry, the tempo and beat, and the pause or silence within the song. These crucial elements must work together in the blending of voices to produce

THE
MOVEMENT

10. Music seen as a powerful tool in the life of any man and any community was an early experiment in the Spirit Movement. At different times in its history the Church has written its own words to tunes which spoke to the spirit of the man on the street, to melodies which he found himself humming. In the early 50's one of the first experiments of the Movement was to take the tune Waltzing Matilda which everyone knew from the movie "On the Beach" and add the words of the Lord's Prayer. This part of the experiment has continued, using popular music, folk songs, and more classical tunes with the classical language of the Church. In 1965 as the Movement turned to work in 5th City a new dimension of music burst forth in the writing of the new secular words for current and popular tunes. Combining the words of the four RS-I papers to popular tunes produced some of our most popular songs. In 1968 the music began to speak of the new religious deeps that man was experiencing, moving from a secular articulation of the Word to an articulation of aspects of the life style of man on a spirit journey.

THE
WORLD

11. In creating the symbolic framework of a group the selection of the song is of utmost importance. In choosing songs both the indicative and the imperative are present with the primary beat upon the indicative. For as man grasps life the indicative is prior to the imperative. In thinking through the mood of a group and what songs to choose, the question is raised: "What is it that is moving in on the group?" not any "ought" about the situation. The two fundamental guidelines for choosing songs are the capturing of the mood by sensing the state of being of the group and the tone or mood you want to create for the task before the group. This takes brooding that goes on in the middle of the night, with a willingness to change your mind at the last minute. And a guru with sensitivity to a group will choose the songs to be sung with deep seriousness and be willing to say no to a suggestion from the group that is not on target.

THE
DRAMA

12. Everyday of our lives we have the opportunity to encounter music and singing in countless ways. We are programmed by society to listen to Muzak or other forms of canned music. The disc jockeys of radio literally decide which songs will be popular with the youth by playing their choices over and over. In the turn toward the future the question must be one of discerning the new mood of intentionality and of creating a climate for music that will endure and be helpful for the times in which we live, creating a new screen for people to hear the music and songs that will sustain and nurture the spirit deeps. For example, the songs that are played on an elevator or in an airport could be ones that do this.

THE
WALTZ

13. Richard Wagner wrote of Strauss music: "These irresistible waltzes that first catch the ear and then curl around the heart until all of a sudden they invade and will have the legs." The waltz is that music that has the pulse and verve of gaiety plus the nostalgia and sensuous longing that comes of knowing the tragedy of life. It's as though the waltz sees the abyss on either side and dares live in it. Picture the ledge on a high building with a waltzing couple