II. The Value of Music in World Cultures

Integration of the arts into everyday life

African Forest People

The African Bambuti (or Mbuti) of Zaire and the BaAka (Aka) of the Central African Republic, along with the Efe, Twa, and Baka, are collectively known as "Forest People." These peoples are foragers who live in bands of ten to twenty-five families. Often called pygmies (a derogatory term to the Forest People), they are among the smallest people in the world, averaging 4 feet 7 inches high. Although they decorate their bodies and some of their artifacts, most Forest People have traditionally produced no art objects, or objects designed only for aesthetic appreciation. Yet music and dance are central to their way of life, and in large part, set the tone for everyday experience. The dance is vitally linked to individual and community integration, natural and life cycles, healing, work and play, and ritual or religion. Dance is the primary means to commune with the Forest Spirit, which the Bambuti call "Mother" or "Father;" songs sung frequently among the BaAka are "We are children of the Forest" or "The Forest is good." Everyone in these bands participates in some way in their dance and song, with no separation of spectator and participant (although men and women sometimes dance separately, and may engage in transvestite dances in which the other sex is teased or parodied). Dance and song occurs regularly and often spontaneously, and may last a short while, throughout the night, or for days at a time.

Anthropologist Alan Lomax has suggested that the social structure of the Bambuti is reflected in their song and dance styles. The Bambuti, along with other Forest people and other African foragers, are peaceful; although they sometimes strike one another in anger, they do not fight with other bands or tribes. They are also one of the most egalitarian people within human history, having no chiefs or councils of elders, and settling problems or disputes through consensus or general discussion. (There may be temporary master hunters
or healer-diviners with special status in Forest bands. Unlike in some foraging groups, even women have equal social status in Forest culture, at least in part because they provide most of the food for the band. Bambuti women are also empowered in being responsible for building the huts in the band. Anthropologist Colin Turnbull reports that if a Bambuti husband refuses to compromise with his wife, he may come home to find his hut being dismantled.)

Although their culture is relatively homogeneous, the individual as well as the community is valued among the Forest People. The individual is nurtured through special ceremonies such as those that mark the transition into adulthood. The music and dance of the Bambuti elima, for example, which accompanies the onset of menses, is a festive celebration considered to be one of the most joyful and beautiful events in a young woman's life. The social cohesion of the Bambuti is illustrated by a story told by anthropologist Turnbull in which he made a crutch for a lame Bambuti girl. When the girl was at first embarrassed to use it, all the other members of the band made crutches for themselves and used them until the girl felt comfortable with hers. Michelle Kisliuk has written a poem of her experience of a BaAka mother lying over the grave of her daughter, crying "I die of pitypain, pitypain for child mine." Other women in the band gradually gathered around her, likewise singing "Pitypain mine."

Lomax compares Bambuti ritual to their social structure in describing their singing and dancing as "varied synchrony," a contrapuntal style in which each individual has a personal "voice" or movements but in which all the voices and movements come together in harmony. (The singing style of the Bambuti and BaAka, with its ostinatos and haunting yodeling effects, maintains a highly consonant sound in spite of individual improvisation or variation.). Simha Arom echoes Lomax's comments in describing BaAka song and dance:

... this music is collective and everyone participates; there is no apparent hierarchy in the distribution of parts; each person seems to enjoy complete liberty; the voices swell out in all directions; solo lines alternate in the same
piece without any pre-set order, while overall the piece remains in strict precision! . . . to sum it up in a few words: a simultaneous dialectic between rigor and freedom, between a musical framework and a margin within which individuals can maneuver. This, moreover, reflects perfectly the social organization of pygmies. . . 2

Lomax notes the highly emotional and physical nature of the song and dance of the Bambuti, which may serve to curb intense emotional or aggressive impulses that arise in the course of everyday life. The eroticism of the song and dance styles, with its highly relaxed vocalization and "multi-part trunk movement," may serve as a release of aggressive sexual impulses. (There has traditionally been little crime and virtually no rape in Bambuti and BaAka bands. The possible cathartic or moralizing effect of BaAka song is suggested in their words for conflict and peace: akami--literally, "noise"--and ekimi --either silence or ordered sound.) Although Forest People sometimes suffer from hunger, disease, and anxiety, the BaAka may help maintain a sense of harmony in troubled times by singing "There is darkness all around us; but if darkness is, and if darkness is of the Forest, then darkness must be good." The dance is at once playful and pleasureable and ritual of the highest order.3

Turnbull recorded no experiences of trance among the Bambuti, yet both Gilbert Rouget and Kisliuk write of trance states in the singing and dancing of the BaAka. (The !Kung San of the Kalahari desert in South Africa, who live a considerable distance from the Forest People but share their small stature and have similar social structures and dancing and singing styles, regularly experience trance in their "medicine dances," a trance in which music and dance play a determining role. According to Lorna Marshall, "the powers of autosuggestion that induce trance" among the San "are the loud singing that assails the ear for hours, the exertion of dancing, the repetitiousness of the rhythms, the physical nearness to others and the synchronization of movements with others."4 Many African peoples enter trance states in the midst of their singing and dancing as they become "possessed" by the spirits of ancestors or deities.)
The Navajo

For the Navajo of the American Southwest, like many Native American tribes, the "arts" are so vitally connected to daily life and significant life events--and to community, religion and ritual, nature, and healing--that there is no separate term for art or music in the Navajo language. Navajo "art" is also inextricably linked to temporal, social, ceremonial context or action. An example is the colorful and elaborate Navajo sand painting, which has meaning only within a ceremonial context and is therefore destroyed when the ceremony is finished. Theologian Sam Gill has suggested that we should "disassociate ourselves from the notion that for Native Americans art is a noun. . . we can think of the art of Native Americans as a process of creating and maintaining life-giving relationships."

The beauty and significance of Navajo poetry, song and dance in religious ritual helps them foster and maintain hózhóó, a sense of "walking in beauty." More all-encompassing than the Western concept of visual beauty, to be in hózhóó is to be in harmony with one's surroundings, to feel self-integrated and connected to other people, animals, the earth, and spiritual reality, to do everything and make everything with beauty. Hózhóó is personified in Navajo legend by the continuous life cycles of the deity Changing Woman, who represents "the perfect beauty secured in all creation, and is the source and sustenance of life." When out of hózhóó, one feels fractured and alienated, life seems out of balance, and there is a likelihood of emotional, spiritual or physical illness. (No doubt it is difficult to maintain or regain hózhóó amidst the poverty of the Reservation). 5

Hózhóó is sought through a Sing or a curing ceremonial, which may include elaborate chant or song, drumming, dancing, and the re-creation of sand paintings. (Most of the "great ceremonial chants" of the Navajo, which may contain up to 500 songs and thousands of lines of text, are intended and used for psychic or physical harmony or healing. Navajo song is likely to begin on a high pitch and gradually descend, often covering the span of an octave. Dane Rudhyar, who associates such a descending melody with various ancient, oral and other
cultures, suggests that it involves "an explosive release of energy, perhaps to bring a superphysical power down...into physical manifestation." The Blessingway ceremonial hózhóójí, literally "the way to secure an environment of perfect beauty," includes invocations for hózhóó:

With beauty before me may I walk
With beauty behind me may I walk
With beauty above me may I walk
With beauty below me may I walk
With beauty all around me may I walk
As one who is long life and happiness may I walk
In beauty it is finished. In beauty it is finished.

The Navajo condition of hózhóó may be further illuminated by the concept of ceremonial time, which Native American scholar Paula Gunn Allen suggests is characteristic of Native American ritual in general. According to Gunn Allen, ceremonial time involves an intense experience of the "now" that makes time seem timeless, and an integration with one's surroundings that renders space a fluid and dynamic unity. (Although they celebrated the solstices and observed a calendar of religious activities, the Hopi neighbors of the Navajo have no word for time, and use no future tense in their language.) Ceremonial time involves psychic integration, the integration of consciousness and event, person and event, the conception of time as significant event. Ceremonial time is personal time -- or in the ritual of the dance, group time; there is not a time someone dies, for example, but someone's death time. (In writing about death time, Gunn Allen suggests that the difference between a horrible death and a harmonious, healing death is the difference between the stopped moment and a balanced motion with what moves.) Dance, chant, and ritual happen in sacred or ceremonial time, and are critical to fostering and maintaining it in everyday life. Gunn Allen also states that ceremonial time is facilitated when the dancing involves whirling hoops. Hoops and circular or "spiral" dances (which are transformed with each cycle) help the
dancer transcend objective, chronological time, and are representative of the endless cycles of days, nights and seasons, and of the curling cycles and parabolas of time and space.  

Bali

Bali, a small island and province of Indonesia, is about half the size of Delaware and has a population of three million—plus over one million tourists per year. According to anthropologist Steve Lansing, the foundation for culture in Bali is not economics but poetry imported from India, and virtually all of Balinese society is modeled on the arts. The arts function as a primary form of education and enculturation in Bali; and according to popular wisdom, "everyone in Bali is an artist." The significance of this generalization is not appreciated until one visits Bali, and particularly the Balinese cities of Ubud or Densapar. Not only is there an abundance of art or highly artistic religious objects, structures or festivals in Bali; everyday objects are made with beauty, and everyday activities are often carried out with thoughtfulness and grace. (Even the tiny thatched huts of the very poor may catch the eye with their serenity and harmony.) The Balinese have produced highly sophisticated music, poetry (which is always sung), dancing, stage plays, puppetry and shadow puppetry (always accompanied by music), and are adept at woodcarving, metalworking, painting, sculpture, mask-making, bone carving, and the making of fabric and clothing. The woodcarving and silver work is among the most intricate in the world, and much of the sculpture, architecture and painting is spectacular or splendid. The importance of artistic cultivation in Bali and the neighboring, Indonesian island of Java is exemplified by the following instructions for a prince in a Javanese treatise called the RajaKapa-kapa. (Many Hindu, Javanese princes emigrated to Bali when Indonesia came under Muslim rule in the 13th-15th centuries.)

A man of condition must be well versed in the history of former times and the literature of his country, and know the correct mode in which each poem is
chanted, as well as the way of striking the gamelan. . . . He must be clever in painting, wood carving, gold-and iron-work, needle-work, and the making of shadow puppets and musical instruments. He must be skilled in horsemanship and the management of an elephant, and have the courage to destroy all evil men and drive away all women of loose character.¹⁰

Unlike most of Muslim Indonesia, Bali is approximately 70% Hindu and 30% Buddhist, with small populations of Muslim and other religious groups. (Priests and kings ruled Bali together until the twentieth century. The Balinese inherited the Hindu caste system, but do not observe it formally, especially since up to 90% of the population belongs to the lowest caste.) Religion is central to everyday life in Bali, and art is inextricably linked to religion; the arts are so interwoven into religious and everyday life that, as in Native American cultures, there were traditionally no separate words for art and music. Most of the music, dancing, stage plays, puppet shows and festivals in Bali, and much of the woodcarving, metal working, sculpture and architecture has religious significance. (One must be careful where one walks in Bali, for in many areas tiny offerings to the ancestor-gods or spirits are placed daily on the ground—in front of a home, a temple, a business, or virtually anywhere. These offerings may contain flowers, stones, morsels of food, bits of fabric, or other objects. All are unique and intended to be as close to perfection as possible; within hours they are destroyed and replaced.)

Balinese festivals are sacred as well as noisy and playful, and often concern keeping the forces of good and evil in balance. (Just as Balinese music does not seem to "progress" and "end" but rather represents an endless series of cycles that temporarily stops and starts, the forces of good and evil in Balinese drama maintain a continuous, cyclic interaction over time. The good characters do not win or overcome, and evil characters do not die; rather, all characters are led away in a trance as the drama stops, and will return when the drama recommences.) Every 420 days marks a special festival in which the gods are offered music, poetry, and flowers. The sound of the festival is believed to rise like incense to the world of
the deities, inviting them to descend and enter the festivities. This festival invokes, among others, the god Eka Desa Rudra, who keeps change from going out of bounds. The Balinese believe that this festival keeps not only Bali but the entire universe in harmony. Other festivals include rites of passage that take place for children at birth, the age of one month, three months, at celebrations for giving names, filing teeth, birthdays, and at various times in one’s life until the final ritual of cremation. (Cycles of three are particularly important to the Balinese. There are three main life-cycle rituals; three gods in the Hindu trinity; three parts to both the microcosm and macrocosm; ideally, three temples in a village; three main parts of the body in a dance; and three parts to a "gamelan" or musical composition.)

All Balinese villages have at least one temple, and all temples have a gamelan, a percussion orchestra consisting mainly of metallophones, gongs, gong chimes, cymbals, flutes, and one or two drums. Temples are purified through regular rituals including offerings and gamelan performances. The music of the gamelan is also played in festivals, music clubs, traditionally in palaces, and recently, as performances for tourists; yet virtually all gamelan performances are considered ritual offerings to Balinese ancestor-gods. There are over twenty-five types of gamelan in Bali, with different sizes and instruments; each village gamelan has its own particular significance and function. The gamelan is thought to symbolize the village order, with the gongs representing the respected elders, metallophones the adults, drums the village leaders, and smaller instruments the children. The music of the Balinese gamelan is dazzling in its virtuosity, and has a shimmering quality that results from some instruments being tuned slightly higher that others, producing very fast vibrations. *Kebyar* gamelan music, a twentieth century style which means "to flare up," is particularly complex and virtuosic.

Although most traditional gamelan music is subject to variation and transformation, no new music may be composed for certain sacred gamelan ensembles in Bali. These gamelans may be approached only by priests and musicians, and are kept in a safe and hallowed place. (The master musician in Bali serves as a devotional figure and a healer.) Offerings are
prepared and prayers are recited for the protection of the instruments before they are used. The oldest gamelans are considered the most sacred, being closest in time to ancient ancestors and having accumulated great spiritual power. The largest bronze gong in the Balinese gamelan, which is believed to have been invented by "priests of the skies," takes several years to make, and the creative process is considered a sacred experience.

Gamelan music, dancing, or other artistic activity is performed with ramé, a "relaxed busyness." Gamelan players executing extremely complex rhythms, for example, are able to carry on a carefree conversation at the same time. Such a relaxed busyness is cultivated from childhood. (In a visit to Ubud to study gamelan, my teacher's four-year old son played in his father's gamelan ensemble, and was already playing some of the advanced rhythmic patterns over and over in a relaxed state.) The ramé that is characteristic of artistic activity translates into everyday activity as well; the Balinese and Javanese can be quite active yet calm and at ease, even when performing difficult tasks over a long period of time. This lively ramé atmosphere is believed to promote a collective or communal spirituality.
Music in World Religious and Mystical Traditions

Tibetan Culture

Buddhism was introduced to Tibet around 763 CE by the Indian guru Padma Sambhava (Guru Rinpoche or "Precious Guru"), and by the thirteenth century was blossoming throughout the culture. Contemporary Tibetan Buddhism has preserved an ancient, oral tradition which includes extensive usage of music, chant, mantra and dance. Living Tibetan legend tells of singing and dancing dakinis (angel-like beings), other heavenly vocal and instrumental sound, and the healing power of chant. One of the most revered figures in Tibetan history was the ascetic yogi Milarepa, who transmitted his teachings through song. Milarepa was able to fill his entire body with bliss through the "untying of internal knots," a bliss expressed in a classic text entitled Milarepa's Hundred Thousand Songs. (In a song about the heightened or "bare attention" of mindfulness, Milarepa sang "Wisdom does not arise within dullness or agitation. Therefore, undistracted mindfulness is important.")

Tibetan Buddhist monks are known for their extraordinary chanting, which often includes low, fundamental tones that produce natural overtones (such that one tone can sound like two or more tones sounding simultaneously. Multiple overtones are also produced by Tibetan "singing bowls" and other instruments.) Notable chants sung throughout Tibetan culture include the Vajrasatva, the hundred-word mantra of the Diamond Being; and Gaté gaté para gaté para sam gaté bodhi svaha or "Beyond, beyond, wonderfully beyond, perfectly beyond, hail to enlightened being." Such chants are vital to religious practice at Tibetan monasteries. Tibetan sacred dances are also performed several times a year in a monastery's courtyard, and symbolize stages of the practitioners' progress in meditation. Such dances, which are described by Matthieu Ricard as "extraordinarily beautiful," are attended by the entire local Tibetan population.

Groups of monks and nuns in exile from Tibet in India and Nepal travel the world offering chant, the playing of visually splendid instruments, brilliant costumes, and sacred
movement, all of which are designed to bring healing and enlightenment to those who watch and listen. The splendid and colorful nature of Tibetan religious art and music has been influenced by the pre-Buddhist, animistic Bön religion of the stark Himalayas; and by Tantrism, in which the material world of samsara is not separate from the enlightened world of Nirvana, and in which the latter can be achieved through a mindful appreciation of the former. As in other cultures discussed above, the arts are so integrated into Tibetan religious life that there is no word for art in traditional Tibetan culture. Ricard, a French-born Buddhist monk in the Tibetan tradition, tells us that "sacred art helps to penetrate the nature of reality. Ordinary art [is] aimed at arousing the passions, sacred art at stilling them. Sacred dance, painting and music...establish a link with spiritual wisdom in the realm of forms and sounds."\(^{13}\)

In the United States, the ancient Nyingmapa spiritual practice of the lamas (priests) of the Tibetan Buddhist center Pema Osel Ling, in the mountains near Santa Cruz, consists primarily of chanting, and includes dramatic lama dancing accompanied by various trumpets, bells, gongs, and other percussion instruments. Some of the services and retreats at Pema Osel Ling involve continuous mantra chanting, with people participating in shifts, for seven full days and nights.

The German-born Buddhist scholar and Lama Anagarika Govinda explains at length the importance of the mantra in Tibetan Buddhist practice. In Buddhism (which arose from Hinduism in India), the mantra is a prelingual, primordial sound or "seed syllable" that gives rise to word, speech and thought. The prelingual mantra expresses the direct experience of the inner life, connecting "peripheral consciousness" with "depth consciousness." When pronounced with a pacified mind and open heart, Govinda teaches, the mantra can place the practitioner in tune with immediate reality and cosmic vibration. The mantra also accounts for the power of the seer or the singer (who originally transmitted Buddhist scripture):

The forms of divine life in the universe and in nature break forth from the seer as vision, from the singer as sound, and are there in the spell of vision and sound,
pure and undisguised. . . . What sounds from [the singer's] mouth, is not the
ordinary word. . . of which speech is composed. It is mantra, the compulsion to
create a mental image, power over that which IS, to be as it is in its pure essence. . .
Mantric sound can effect change or transformation, can translate into deeds or action. What
the mantra expresses by its sound, Govinda tells us, "exists, comes to pass."

As in Hinduism, the most important mantra in Tibetan Buddhism is OM. In Buddhism
OM is associated not with Brahman, but is the "universal sound" and represents an "ascent to
the infinite." Govinda suggests that OM may variously invoke senses or feelings of infinite
being, boundless space, omnipresent light, universal law, "omnipotent consciousness, all-
pervading divinity, all-embracing love, cosmic rhythm, ever-present creativity, or unlimited
knowledge. . . ." Recalling Plato and Confucius on psychic and environmental harmonies, he
suggests that OM is "the primordial sound of timeless reality, which vibrates within us from
the beginningless past, and which reverberates in us, if we have developed our inner sense of
hearing by the perfect pacification of our mind. It is the transcendental sound of the inborn
law of all things, the eternal rhythm of all that moves. . . ." 14

While OM represents the universal or an ascent to enlightenment, the Tibetan mantra
HUNG is integrative, invokes unity of the unenlightened and enlightened, or a descent of
enlightened reality into the heart or mind. Together the mantras OM and HUNG bring the
infinite into the finite, the eternal into the temporal, the formless into form. (Another
important Tibetan mantra, AH, is the basic sound of all language, inherent in all Sanskrit
consonants, and believed to give rise to speech, thought and awareness. AH has been
translated as "Let it happen.") OM MANI PEME HUNG (from Sanskrit OM MANI
PADME HUM) is the mantra of the thousand-armed Avalokitesvara, the Tibetan
Bodhisattva of Compassion. (A Bodhisattva is one who helps others to attain
enlightenment.) OM MANI PEME HUNG is described as "the eternal melody of Tibet," and
is regularly intoned not only by priests, who traditionally made up a significant part of
Tibetan population, but by virtually anyone Tibetan or of a Tibetan lineage. According to
His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, the three phonemes of OM (AUM) represent the body, speech, and mind respectively—both in the impure and pure or enlightened senses of the terms. MANI means "jewel" or figuratively, "enlightenment" or an altruistic intent to gain enlightenment; thus MANI represents the intent to transform the impure body, speech and mind into enlightened states. PADME or PEME mean "lotus," or figuratively, "an unfolding" or an "unfolding of wisdom;" and HUM or HUNG, in this context, represents the unity of intent and wisdom that will result in enlightenment. Together, the six syllables mean "the jewel in the lotus" or (in my translation based on the Dalai Lama's commentary) "May enlightened wisdom unfold within (all beings), purifying body, speech, and mind." The Tibetan Buddhist Surangama Sutra praises the "six-syllable mantra" OM MANI PEME HUNG as follows: "How sweetly mysterious is the transcendental sound of Avalokitesvara. It is the 'primordial sound of the universe'... Its mysterious sound brings liberation and peace to all sentient beings, who in their distress are calling for aid; it brings a sense of permanency to those who are truly seeking the attainment of Nirvana's peace." According to legend, Avalokitesvara refused to teach the six syllables without initiation into their deeper meaning and the visual, circular mandala associated with them. Govinda teaches that a mantra has power only for the initiated, for those who have undergone "a particular kind of experience connected with the mantra."

India

Renowned yogi B. K. S. Iyengar writes that sound vibration is the "subtlest and highest expression of nature," and the contemporary Hindu population of India has maintained the Vedic belief in the power of mantra, chant, and music. As in ancient India, the most important Hindu mantra is OM, which Iyengar describes as the universal sound, the seed of all words, and as the best means of communion with God or Brahman, the divine Soul, or the Universe. Mantras or mantram (chants formed of mantric seed syllables) that are chanted regularly in India include OM VAK VAK (OM is Brahman and VAK is speech or the
Word, so OM VAK would be the Word of Brahman), OM PRANA PRANA (PRANA is spirit or breath), OM BRUH (life-giving power), OM BRUVAH (allayer of miseries), OM SWAH (source of happiness), OM JANAI (creator of the universe), OM SATYAM (truth) and OM SHANTI, SHANTI, SHANTI (peace). Holy or Divine names are also chanted repeatedly in India. In the Anandashram in Manhangad, Kerala, India, for example, devotees are advised to chant a Holy Name—OM Sri Ram jai Ram jai Ram—as continuously as possible. (Sri is a title of respect for the Holy Name Ram, an avatar or incarnation of a Hindu god; jai means "hail.") Hindus regularly gather for the kirtans, or sessions of devotional chanting, for bhajans, in which the chants are simpler in form, or for other songs or prayers. New York-born yogi Krishna Das, who has studied extensively in India, travels across the United States leading kirtans. (Krishna Das's Monday night kirtan sessions at the Jivamukti Yoga Center in New York City center regularly draw between 200 and 300 people.) The chants involved, which are accompanied by the harmonium and the tabla or drums, invoke the names of various deities (Shri Ram jai Ram or OM Namaha Shivaya), and are intended to merge the singer with the Divine. As in India, Krishna Das's kirtans can last for several hours, and often inspire exultant cries and movements.

India is also well known for its ornate and sophisticated music, dancing, art, and craft. As in Hindu-influenced Bali, music is strongly associated with religious ritual, and is also performed at rituals celebrating transitions in the life cycle, and at seasonal and calendar rituals. The classical musician in India is likely to be engaged with musical activity from dawn until well into the evening, whether teaching, using music for meditation, or playing for rituals, concerts, feasts, festivals, or other events. (Classical concerts are relaxed and informal—participants may eat, stroll or converse during the concert—and are likely to last three to four hours.) Especially in southern India—and as in ancient India—a traditional musician is likely to be a member of the Brahmin or priestly class. Classical musicians use music in large part to fulfill their dharma, or individual ethical duties and obligations. Renowned sitar player Ravi Shankar states that the musician's art should be characterized by
"humility tempered with love and worship," and by practice and discipline leading to self-realization. The musician learns his art through hours of daily imitation of his guru or teacher, who welcomes the student into his family and is venerated throughout the student's life. Shankar suggests that a fruitful disciple-guru relationship should be characterized, among other things, by "purity of mind and body, humility, a sense of service, and a devotional attitude and spiritual attitude."

Musicians in India are yogis, and seek through their music to achieve both self realization and Nada Brahma, or "God (or Brahma, or Ultimate Reality) as sound." Shankar explains the relationship between self realization and the search for God:

Our tradition teaches us that sound is God--Nada Brahma. That is, musical sound and musical experience are steps to realization of the self. We view music as a kind of spiritual discipline that raises one's inner being to divine peacefulness and bliss. We are taught that one of the fundamental goals a Hindu works toward is in his lifetime is a knowledge of the true meaning of the universe--its unchanging, eternal essence--and this is realized first by a complete knowledge of one's self and one's own nature. The highest aim of our music is to reveal the essence of the universe it reflects. . . . Thus, through music, one can reach God.

(This emphasis on both self realization and universal truth is exemplary of the Upanishadic concepts of Atman and Brahman.) Shri Ramana Maharshi describes Nada as "the easiest and most direct method to reach God. Just as a child is lulled to sleep by lullabies, so Nada soothes one to the state of samadi [an accomplished meditative state]; again, just as a king sends his state musicians to welcome his son on his return from a long journey, so also Nada takes [the] devotee into [the] Lord's abode in a pleasing manner." Shankar also draws on ancient Hindu scripture to describe two types of sound--a vibration of the pure air near heaven called "unstruck sound" and the struck sound of vibrations of air near the earth. It is the unstruck sound, the ever-present and eternal sound of the universe, with which the yogi is
most concerned. (This unstruck sound or shabda recalls the valued "hidden harmony" of Heraclitus and the "silent music" of Confucius. Shankar also recalls the Harmony of the Spheres in stating that music reflects the "orderly numerical patterns of the universe.")

Virtually all Indian Classical music is accompanied by a sruti. In early Hindu scripture, sruti refers to direct revelation; in music, the sruti sounds as an omnipresent drone (usually consisting of two tones a perfect fifth apart), a foundation or ground from which a melody can soar. (The perfect fifth of the drone might be considered a "direct revelation" of a basic ratio of the natural overtone system.) There are seven main tones in an Indian scale, and each tone is associated, among other things, with a deity. The raga on which a melody is based may take the form of a scale and is sometimes translated as a mode; but a raga encompasses much more than a sequence of tones. The literal meaning of raga is a "coloring" of the mind; ragas are associated with various emotions or sentiments. (Unlike much western music that may change moods rapidly, a piece built on a raga maintains the same mood for a long period of time--a condition that can carry a significant emotional force.) Shankar describes the raga as made up of sequence of notes within an octave, and as distinguished by the number of notes, ascending or descending forms, prominent notes, notes of various lengths, characteristic phrases or melodic figures, and a particular mood. M. R. Gautam describes the earlier Jati, on which the raga is based, as "a group of luminous notes with an integrated discipline of sruti relationships, a power to stir the mind and evoke sentiment, and a built-in capacity for infinite expansion." He defines the contemporary raga as a melodic mode with rigid conditions laid down for its elaboration, and yet capable of infinite improvisation. (The Hindustani music of northern India is more improvisational than the Karnataka Sangeeta music of the south.) He suggests that "just as the yogi disciplines his body and mind in order to experience that unity-consciousness and be in communion with the Infinite and obtain total release from the thralldom of flesh and matter, so also the raga of Indian music, while appearing to be very rigid in its form, is capable of limitless variety and
expansion." Like musical tones, ragas have been associated with various deities and what they stand for, as well with as colors, climates, times of day, etc.

There are nine main sentiments, or rasas, which ragas may express: the erotic, humorous, compassionate, furious, valorous, fearful, odious, wondrous, and peaceful. (Other rasas include bhakti rasa, or devotional passion, and the more recent gana rasa, abstract aesthetic appreciation.) A complete assimilation of a work's rasa is said to lift the listener outside of the ego and the mundane world; a rasa is of the Divine essence, and akin to Brahmananda, or the bliss felt in realizing the Divine Self and Ultimate Reality (Atman-Brahman). When one merges with the rasa-experience, Gautam writes, "the complete effacement of the experiencer's ego and its total identification with the art lifts the experience from the particular to the universal plane." Not everyone, we are told, can respond to rasas in this way; a person capable of such a blissful experience is a rasika. A medieval Indian poem tells us that

A poet's song
Sings in the hearts of poets: the common throng
Does not respond://
The ocean's swell
Wakes to the moon: do tides rise in a well
Or muddy pond?

David B. Reck has commented on the various amounts of accessibility--and different sentiments or sensibilities--that may also be attributed to various Indian composers. Within the Southern Indian tradition, Muttuswamy Dikshitar (1776-1836) is said to write music like a coconut; the hard shell of his brilliant structures "must be broken to taste the sweet nut and milk inside." Syami Sastri's (1762-1827) music is like a banana: "the fruit is not so difficult to get to, but one must peel off the bitter skin before enjoying its flavor." Tyagaraja's (1767-1847) music is like fresh, ripe grapes: "to enjoy it one needs merely to bite into it. Even the skin is soft and sweet." Not surprisingly, Tyagaraja's songs are by far the most popular in
India. (These important composers mark a Classical age in Indian music that roughly coincides with the High Classical age of Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven in the west.)

The *tala*, or rhythmic pattern of a piece, has its origin in the terms *tandava* (ta-), the cosmic dance of Shiva, and *Lasya* (-la), the cosmic dance of Shiva's consort Parvati. The *tala* may thus be regarded as a reflection of cosmic rhythm. *Tala* is also related to the Sanskrit root *tal* which means to fix or establish, so the tala is a foundation, like the drone, on which a song or piece is established. (*Raga* and *tala* are said to be the mother and father of Indian music. The basic *tala* within a piece is accompanied by complex rhythms in percussion instruments.) The particular *tala* or rhythmic pattern chosen is repeated over and over within a piece; according to Gautam, this continuous cycle is in "conformity with the Hindu concept of creation, a cycle beginning with Creation or Irradiation of Divine energy, followed by a Preservation, and ending with withdrawal into the Divine."\(^{21}\) Evidently the "withdrawal into the Divine" occurs in musical experience when one is fully synchronized with the cosmic rhythm of the *tala*—or figuratively speaking, with the dances of Shiva and his consort Parvati.

The importance of rhythm in Indian music is also manifested in the importance of the dance, which is so often associated with music that the term *sangita* (*sangeeta*) encompasses both vocal and instrumental music and dance. (Remember that music of southern India is called *Karnataka Sangeeta*.) Like Indian music, classical Indian dance has strong connections to Hindu religion. And like Indian melody and rhythm, Indian dance is among the most complex in the world. In the Shri Shivabalayogi Maharaj Trust in Bangalore, India, one can witness people from various walks of life dancing in sacred trance. According to one of the devotees, the bliss of this trance "cannot be described. I have never [experienced] any other pleasure which can be compared with this." David Roche writes that trance in India occurs in the form of "shamanic journeying, voluntary spirit possession, hyperemotional involuntary possession, or meditative awareness," and is strongly associated with music.\(^{22}\) (It may be that the ancient *Vedas* discussed in Chapter 1 were considered to be
direct revelation because they were originally sung or uttered in trance.)
Sufism

All day and night, music, a quiet, bright reedsong. If it fades, we fade.

Please, universal soul, practice some song, or something, through me!

Oh musician of my soul play His song play His song with my every breath. ---Rumi

Sufism, the mystical tradition of Islam, dates from the ninth century CE--about two hundred years after the life of the Prophet Muhammad--and has spread from the Middle East to Africa, Europe, Asia and the New World. (Some Sufis trace their practices to the time of Muhammad.) A practitioner of Sufism may be called a Sufi, which means "wool" or "pure," because early Sufis wore simple wool cloaks; a (Turkish) dervish, a term derived from dar or door, because Sufis went from door to door asking for food; or a faqir, which means "poor," in that the heart of the Sufi is attached to nothing but God. Like Islam in general, Sufism is based on the Koran, and stresses honesty, charity and service. Like other mystics, Sufis seek direct experience of God, the essential Unity or Divine Infinity, and believe this experience can be achieved variously through intellect (although an intellect based on intuition rather than discursive thought), through ecstatic experience, and especially through love. After their formal training, which during the time of Rumi took 1001 days, Sufis live within the everyday world, practicing patience, gratitude, love, and service as well as meditation, contemplation and ritual. Many Sufis believe that all great religions and spiritual leaders were sent by God. A minority believe that because Sufi teachings are universal (and pre-dated the prophet), it is not necessary to be a Muslim in order to be a Sufi; or that a purity of love is a better pathway to God than organized religion or codes of conduct. Sufism has always been controversial within Islam, and some Sufis have been tortured or executed for their beliefs and practices.

There are four stages of practice in Sufism--first, study of the religious law of Islam; second, the pursuit of the mystical path under the guidance of a sheik; third, pursuit of the
Truth of the religious law and mystical path; and finally, achievement of Gnosis or knowledge of spiritual truth. At the level of Gnosis, the practitioner realizes that everyone and everything is one with God. Love and an open heart are necessary for progressing through these stages. Love is best viewed as a love for all things, and God is the ultimate Beloved. (In some Sufism, worldly love may be a bridge to love of the divine. The love poetry of the thirteenth century poet Sufi Jala al-Din Rumi—such as

I want to hold you close like a lute,

so we can cry out with loving

—is some of the most cherished poetry in the world.) The heart may also be opened through "awareness of the heart," through which the practitioner is freed of everyday concerns; "remembrance," which involves a prayerful mindfulness of God; or a "remembrance of the soul" in which mindfulness and invocation have become continuous. Remembrance is facilitated through special Remembrance ceremonies (zikr), and through the chanting and repetition of 99 Divine names, attributes or mystical terms such as "There is no God but God" (La ilaha illallah..."), "Life," "Truth," "Peace," or "Power." According to James Fadiman and Robert Frager, remembrance among the Sufis "descends from the tongue to the heart and from the heart to the soul."37

The formal recitation and repetition of Divine Speech or Names in Sufism is called dikr. Dikr achieves its power through its relation to the Divine Command ("Let there BE...") that created the world, and through the belief that God and His Name are one. Titus Burkhardt explains as follows:

The Divine Name, revealed by God Himself, implies a Divine Presence which becomes operative to the extent that the Name takes possession of the mind of him who invokes it. Man cannot concentrate directly on the Infinite, but by concentrating on the symbol of the Infinte, attains to the Infinite Itself. When the individual subject is identified with the Name to the point where every mental projection has been absorbed by the form of the Name, the Divine
Essence of the Name manifests spontaneously.... Thus union with the divine Name becomes Union with God Himself. 38

For many Sufis, the Greatest of the Divine Names is said to be hidden (like the "hidden music" of the ancients), and some Sufi schools of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries split over whether the dikr itself should be silent or spoken aloud.39

T. Spencer Trimingham describes a dikr he witnessed which lasted for hours. It started with clear, slow enunciation of Names and attributes, accompanied by rhythmical movements such as swaying back and forth, up and down or backwards and forwards. Then, "concentrating on one attribute, the pace is quickened, the ejaculations become more staccato and change to grating, barking or growling." After this increase in intensity and a subsequent period of relaxation the dikr began anew.40

Music and poetry have always been controversial, and sometimes forbidden, in Islam. There was no instrumental art music in Arabia during the time of Muhammad, and both music and poetry were widely associated with secular and immoral behavior. Yet there had always been a poetic, rhythmic and musical effect in the recitation of Divine names, and as a result, Sufis have written treatises on the proper usage of music and poetry. Carl W. Ernst writes that the Sufi love of music is "based on the faint recollection of hearing the beautiful voice of God saying 'Am I not your Lord?' Listening to music therefore becomes a way of transporting oneself back to that moment of harmony with God in pre-eternity." In the twelfth century, the great theologian Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali attempted to integrate Sufism and Muslim orthodoxy. After studying various early writings, he came to the conclusion, in his The Revival of Religious Sciences, that music gives rise to ecstasy or ecstatic trance(wajd) when there is a passion for God, and when "no sound strikes upon [the listener's] ear but he hears it from Him and in Him."41

In a thirteenth century treatise called "On Listening to Music" by Sufi Ruzbihan Baqli, Baqli writes that all living things with a spiritual capacity yearn to listen to music, for "spirit lives by listening to music." Yet only authorities in mystical knowledge are actually
prepared for music listening, for spiritual attributes are mixed with bodily attributes in music. Baqti warns that "as long as the dirt (of bodily stimulation) is not cleaned off, one does not become a listener in the assemblies of music," and that those with strong physical natures, but "whose hearts are dead, should not listen to music, because it bears harmful fruit for them." Listening to music should be "God's listening to music," for music is "from God, by God, in God, and with God." Writing of various kinds of listening, Baqti suggests that listening carnally promotes heresy, listening intellectually gives rise to interpretation, listening with the heart promotes observation. Yet those who listen with the spirit become present, or "beyond presence," experience "wonderment and raving, astonishment upon astonishment."

A Sufi treatise on "The Melodies of Listening to Music" written anonymously in 1972 instructs practitioners to recite verses from the Koran before and after listening to music, and to avoid concentrating on the quality of a singer's voice or the beauty of the singer's countenance. Those with lustful desires or "attached to metaphorical love" should not listen at all. Attention and care, if needed, should be given to those listeners who reach an ecstatic spiritual state. The singer himself should understand spiritual states, have a subtle sense of taste, and should not "engage in vocal exercises or show off his art." Recalling Hasidic teachings, the treatise also states that "Performing music is itself a cause of happiness and joy;" that "In the unfolding of spiritual stations, only by listening to music can one attain results;" and that those "stations of the spiritual path that one can only reach with difficulty through severe discipline can easily be attained by means of listening to music."42 (Clearly, Islamic and Jewish mysticism have been mutually influential throughout history).

Among various Sufi groups, the chants of the Zaouia Sufis of Morocco are purely vocal, and those of Pakistani Qawwals are accompanied only by hand clapping. Other Sufi chants are accompanied by drums, flute, harmonium, and other instruments. Both music and dancing are characteristic of the Turkish Mevlevi version of the Sufi spiritual concert called the sama ("hearing" or heard music.)43 A sama session ordinarily involves prayer, recitation
of the Koran, dikr, and a teaching session, after which the qawwal or singer begins singing Sufi poems. Both song and dance are accompanied by various instruments, and the dance involves turning, whirling, and jumping. Some contemporary Sufi dancing and other practice includes women.

All of these activity in the sama frequently led to states of ecstasy or trance. Al-Ghazzali wrote in his Revival of Religious Sciences that one should not abandon oneself to trance while dancing unless it becomes impossible not to, and that one should always try to dominate the state of trance. He stresses that dance should always be "measured" motion rather than "agititated" or unmeasured.4 Later in history, the sama came to be enhanced with sacred numbers and symbols, smells and colors, perfumes and incense, and even the use of alcohol and other intoxicants. The Mevlevi sama was banned by Atatürk in Turkey in 1925, but since 1954 it has been performed in Konya on the anniversary of Rumi's death. More about the whirling dances of Sufis mystics will be presented in Chapter VI, on music and movement.

The twentieth century Sufi Hazrat Inarat Khan believes that music—along with the rhythm of the waves and the tides, the courses of the days and seasons, and the movement of the heavenly bodies—reflects the "law working throughout the whole universe," and that "He who knows the secrets of sounds knows the implications of the whole universe." All beauty in nature and art, Kahn adds, is "silent music." Kahn quotes Sufi poet Sherif as saying that "I, by the light of soul, realize that the beauty of the heavens and the grandeur of the earth are the echo of Thy magic flute." (Relative to silent music, Rumi wrote that

We rarely hear the inward music,
but we're all dancing to it nevertheless,
directed by the one who teaches us,
the pure joy of the sun,
our music master

and that "few will hear the secrets/ hidden within the notes." The poet Kabir wrote
If you want the truth, I'll tell you the truth,

Listen to the secret sound, the real sound, which is inside you...

The music from the strings no one touches."

Khan also states that all of life is "one music," and that true spiritual attainment comes in tuning oneself to the harmony of this music—through one's inner vibrations, pulsations, the beating of one's heart, one's general pace, one's health or tranquillity, etc. The universe may be considered a symphony in which each individual contributes one note or pitch. An individual who has found his own unique identity or gift has found his "natural" or "key" note, and thus has found his proper place in the scheme of things."
Music in World Cultures: Correspondences

The African Forest People and the Navajo are representative of many oral cultures, and Bali and (to a large extent) Tibet are representative of literate cultures, in which sound, music and dance seem integrated—as they were in ancient cultures—with religion and with everyday life. Especially in the oral cultures, music and dance are practiced by everyone or nearly everyone, and set the tone for general life experience. All of these cultures offer a model of an aesthetic life, illustrate what it might be like to "walk in beauty," or act, speak, think, and feel in beauty.

As in many of the ancient traditions, to live "aesthetically" in these cultures is to live in harmony. The Bambuti and BaAka, Navajo and Balinese engage in music and dancing to bring about individual, social, and environmental harmony; and the Navajo and Balinese, to help effect cosmic harmony. The harmonizing or unifying effects of music are also mentioned frequently in the religious and mystical traditions discussed above. These cultures and traditions also offer a vision, then, of how music can be used to help effect a harmonious life. (Harmony is linked strongly to the Navajo concept of "walking in beauty.") Because harmony is always associated spirituality in these cultures, the cultures also illuminate the roles that sound, rhythm, movement, and harmony can play in a spiritual life.

Along these lines, we have seen in Chapter I that much of the spiritual communication in the ancient world was musical. Although western peoples tend to relegate speech and music to separate categories, much of vocalizing in the ritual discussed above—whether in oral cultures or in religious of mystical traditions—falls within a continuum of speech, stylized recitation, chant, and song. Within many African bands and tribes, for example, song, chant, declamation and speech are juxtaposed in music or ritual (a combination that continues in the spiritual communication of some African American or African influenced preachers and congregations). Further, what is often regarded in the west as a dichotomy between the aesthetic or specialized movement of dancing and nonspecialized movement or stillness—
with stillness most likely to be associated with worship—may, in the world cultures, take the form of a continuum as well, with various forms of movement ranging from stillness to hand clapping to swaying to intense dancing playing various roles in both religious ritual and general life.

As in ancient cultures, all of the cultures and traditions discussed associate sound, music and movement with inspiration, possession, or trance, and believe that music can effect spiritual states of ecstasy, bliss, or well being. In many if not most oral and mystical traditions these states are believed, as they were in the past, to promote health and healing. And as in many ancient cultures, music is also viewed in these traditions as a means to commune or merge with God, Divine Spirit, the Infinite, the One, ultimate reality, or cosmic or natural rhythms. The oral cultures use music to commune with their nature spirits or deities; Sufis and Jewish mystics seek to achieve union with God through reciting His Divine Names; Hindus, some Buddhists, and the Jewish and Sufi mystics recite mantras or chants in order to achieve unity, respectively, with Brahman, an ultimate reality, or God. In many oral, religious and mystical traditions, sound is able to facilitate union with the divine in that it inhabits both the material and divine worlds. Because God, Brahman, or ultimate reality is usually associated with eternity, sound or music is often associated with both time and the timeless in these cultures.

In other correspondences, contemporary Hinduism and Sufism and traditional Kabbalah recall the ancient idea of a divine hidden or silent music or sound. As in ancient cultures, the most important function of music in the cultures discussed above is to praise the divine. Hinduism, Kabbalah and Sufism—along with some mainstream Judaism and Christianity—continue to associate sound with the creation of all things. (Among oral cultures, both the Navajo and Hopi believe that the world or human beings respectively were created by the chanting of a god and a goddess; and traditional Aborigines believe that the universe was sung into creation.) The mystical cultures in particular (including Buddhism and Hinduism) emphasize the importance of the breath in musical and spiritual activity. All of
the cultures regard music's great beauty as one of its most important attributes. The Jewish
and Sufi mystics associate music with the intellect and the Sufis especially, with love. (Like
love, music can consume an individual and provide a sense of union with the beloved—in this
case, the music itself. Since Sufis are likely to view music as a manifestation of God, music
can help foster love for the ultimate Beloved.) All of the traditions incorporate or relate
cycles, spheres, or circles to their music or ritual, which often symbolize the natural cycles of
days, seasons, and other natural and life processes. (Circle dances are practiced throughout
traditional African culture as well as in Native American and other oral cultures. Kabbalist
Abulafia had visions of the circles used in his tzeruf practice. Idel compares these circles to
the mandalas of Hinduism and some Buddhism, and notes that Carl Jung viewed the circle as
"an archetype of the process of the individualization of the personality, or in religious terms,
the cleaving of the 'I' to God."\)

Although many contemporary listeners find music beautiful, enjoy the sounds of poetry
and storytelling, and are engaged by certain sounds of the natural and cultural world, many
would say that the "magic" or mystery of sound and music in the ancient world is largely
lost. Yet beliefs of various ancients in the power and value of music are clearly echoed in the
world cultures and traditions discussed above, echoes that foster careful attention and
devotion to music. In the following chapters, some of the claims about music made in
ancient and world cultures and traditions—claims about music and ultimate reality; music and
transformation of consciousness; music, wisdom, and ethics; music, movement, and ecstasy;
music and emotion; music and the intellect; music and healing; and the potential dangers of
music—will be considered in relation to music of the past and present. Music, I believe, can
lead us where it led the ancients, and where it continues to beckon some of our
contemporaries—if we would but further heighten our sensibilities, and listen with new ears.
Notes

1See Kisliuk, Seize the Dance! BaAka Musical Life and the Ethnography of Performance (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 3-7, 44; Colin Turnbull, The Forest People (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961), 132, 185; Turnbull, The Mbuti Pygmies: Adaptation and Change in the Ituri Forest (New York: Hold, Rinehart and Winston, 1983), 93; Alan Lomax et al, Folk Song Style and Culture (Washington D. C.: American Association for the Advancement of Science Pub. No. 88, 1967); 203; and David Locke, "Africa" in Jeff Todd Titon, Worlds of Music, 3rd ed. (New York, Schirmer, 1998), 129-43. It has been argued that Forest People may be peaceful because they are small in stature and number, and because they tend to have a lower social status relative to other African tribes or villagers. (Groups with low social status tend to be egalitarian among themselves.) Contemporary anthropologists often warn against idealizing the culture of the Forest People, or the assumption that their culture reflects what was once a prehistorical paradise.


5According to the 1990 census of the Navajo Reservation, 58% of the Navajo are below the poverty level, the average per capita income is $4,106, 25% of the labor force is unemployed, 52% of occupied housing lacks plumbing, 54% of homes are heated by burning wood, 77% of housing units have no telephone, 26% of housing units have no vehicle, and 33% have no bedrooms.


'*Quoted in *The Three Worlds of Bali*, Odyssey Videos #203, PBS, 1981.

'*One is almost immediately surrounded with huge sculptures of Hindu gods when deplaning at the Ubud airport. I studied gamelan for three weeks in Ubud, and the grounds surrounding my hotel (the Kokokan, at the Agung Rei Cultural Center, which includes several museums and offers instruction in various arts) were the loveliest I've seen. The hotel rooms in every price range were elegant. Food was cosmopolitan, fresh and delicious, and was served and presented beautifully, at the hotel or in recommended restaurants. Various virtuoso musical performances, dances, plays, shadow puppet shows or festivals were held nightly in Ubud, and the costumes and make-up involved were elaborate and splendid.


Govinda, 18, 47.


Quoted in David B. Reck, "India/South India," in *Titon*, 225-6.

Gautam, 22.


See Epstein, 64, 60; Leaman, 173; and Elior, The Paradoxical Ascent to God: The Kabbalistic Theosophy of Habad Hasidism (Albany: SUNY, 1993), 103.

Epstein, 74, 76.


Quoted in Scholem, Major Trends In Jewish Mysticism (New York: Schocken, 1969), 134. See also Shiloah, 136.

Idel, The Mystical Experience . . . , 61-4; Epstein., 79, 93-9; Idel, The Mystical Practice . . . , 14-23; Besserman, 37-8; and Shiloah, 149-50. Modern Kabbalists, such as those at the Yeshiva Beth El in Jerusalem, do not practice letter permutation.


Besserman, 60, 64.


Scholem, Major Trends . . . , 108.

Quoted in Epstein, 114.

See Ibid., 121; and A. Z. Idelsohn, Jewish Music In its Historical Development (New York: Henry Holt, 1929), 414, 106-8, 411, 416-7. "Rebbe," which came to replace Rav (Master) among the Hasidim, is a diminutive, affectionate term.


Amnon Shiloah (131) tells of witnessing a midnight vigil of a group of Hasidim in contemporary Israel:
Should chance bring you to Jerusalem's ancient Western Wall at midnight you are likely to witness the strange rite of *tuqqun hatstot* the midnight vigil--being performed by Hasidim. They fervently recite prayers and . . . supplications aloud, lament the destruction of the temple, and bemoan Israel's exile and dispersion. In the synagogue, at the eve of the Sabbath when the sun is about to set, one can see all the worshippers turn toward the entrance to greet the "bride" as they reach the line "Welcome O Bride, the Sabbath Queen," . . . Thus the congregation, likening the Sabbath to a queen and bride, invites her to enter; some even dance before her as one dances before a bride.

*Essential Sufism*, ed. James Fadiman and Robert Frager (HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), ix-xi, 1-5, 16. A nine-part transformation of the self is also required of the practitioner, beginning with a domineering or unaware self, and which include stages of pleasure taken in spiritual activity, a sense of peacefulness, an appreciation of the insight brought by life's difficulties, and a fearlessness and acceptance. When at last the "Pure Self" is reached, the ego is completely transcended and the practitioner is one with God (a state called *baqa*, "eternal life in God," or *fana*, "annihilation in God.") See Ibid., 12-28. A recording of a "Remembrance" or *zikr* ceremony, *Chant des Dervishes de Turquie*, is available from Arion Records.

*Burckhardt*, 101.

*AnneMarie Schimmel*, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 175-7. According to Hazrat Inayat Kahn, HU is the most sacred of all sounds in Sufism, comparable to the Hindu mantra OM. HU is the ultimate name for the Supreme Being, the beginning and end of all sounds, and the spirit of all words. See Kahn, *The Mysticism of Sound and Music* (Boston: Shambhala, 1996), 172-3. (The recitation or repetition of God's Divine names is also found in Christianity, especially among mystics and in Eastern Orthodoxy and Catholicism. Such recitations or chants include *Kyrie*
eleison or "Lord have mercy," *Veni sancti spiritus* or "Come, Holy Spirit," *Alleluia* or "Praise Yahweh," and so forth.)


4*Teachings of Sufism*, selected and trans. by Carl W. Ernst (Boston: Shambala, 1999), 96; Rouget, 268.

4See Ernst., 97-103, 105-17.

4Shiloah, *Music* . . ., 31, 40. Shiloah writes that there are three types of *sama*--divine, spiritual, and natural or sensual. In the divine *sama* practitioners speak to God, and God is in everything they hear. Spiritual audition consists of "hearing with a spiritual ear how all things sing the Glory of God" and natural *sama* concerns that which is actually practiced by mystics (40-1).

4Ghazzali quoted in Tringham, 195-6; and Rouget, 260-1.

4Quoted in Gass, 193, 195.

4Khan, 3, 95, 109-11, 173. According to Peter Michael Hamel, one can find one's "key" note--the note that most resonates with one's body and psyche--by lying on a semi-hard couch, breathing consciously, and finding the vowel that seems easiest to sound. Note the corresponding area of the body in which the sound resonates. Lower the sound as much as possible, and sound it with the out-breath, concentrating on it with the in-breath. Establish and record its pitch; the next day, establish its pitch again, which may be different. After a few days the proper pitch should be clear. Hamel states that one knows immediately when she is singing her own note, and that singing it can be blissful and invigorating. See Peter Michael Hamel, *Through Music To the Self*, trans. Peter Lemesurier (Longmead: Element Books, 1986), 186-8.

4Gass, 36.

In the Bible, Genesis 2:7 teaches that "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being;" and in Luke 23:46, the dying Jesus cried out "Into Thy hands I commit my spirit," and then "breathed his last." When we "inspire" or inhale we breathe in life force or life's energy, and inspiration denotes increased or sudden awareness or insight. "Expire" can mean to exhale or to lose one's spirit in death. ("Conspire," which unfortunately has taken on negative connotations, means to "breathe with.") Rabbi Simeon linked spiritual experience explicitly with "gathering the breath of God," and many other traditions have regarded the breath as a means of connecting with God, the Divine, or an ultimate reality. (Christian mystic Nicephorus the Solitary wrote that "breathing is a natural way to the heart," and ultimately to the Kingdom of God within.) And as we have seen, most of the religious traditions discussed above and in previous chapters connect the spiritual breath to the utterance of mantra, recitation, chant, or song. To make such sound is to vitally engage the breath (spiritus, prana, al-ruh, etc.), to make manifest with the out-breath the "inspiration" of the in-breath, and to express this inspiration with devotion and beauty. Music in general and vocal music or sound in particular can thus be regarded not only as an important pathway to spiritual experience, but as a manifestation of life force--or spirit--itself.

Spirituality and Western Chant

_The arts were discovered as a result of some breath that God sent into the body of man._

--Hildegard von Bingen

Within western history, one of the most important means of connecting with Divine Spirit has been the singing or experiencing of religious chant. (Medieval writings state clearly that any emotional or sensual reactions to sacred chant, or any response that we would term "aesthetic," would be strongly counterproductive.) In order to maintain the spiritual effect of chanting, chants were sometimes sung not only on holy days but periodically throughout any given day. In medieval Christianity, for example, chants were sung by monastics not only at Mass--which was performed on Sundays and a host of holy or "Feast" days-- but several
times a day in the daily Offices. Catholic Church father Gregory of Nyssa (c. 330-c.395) believed that chant or the "psalms" could transport humanity to the stable, pure time of the Garden, and away from the treadmill of earth time since the Fall. St. John Chrysostom (4th cen. CE) wrote that "nothing so uplifts the mind, giving it wings and freeing it from the earth, releasing it from the prison of the body, affecting it with love of wisdom, and causing it to scorn all things pertaining to this life, as modulated melody and divine chant composed of number;" and that chant can "invoke the grace of the Spirit...sacifying mouth and soul." He quotes St. Paul as saying that one can be "filled with the Spirit" by "singing and making melody unto the Lord" (Ephesians 5:18-9). St. Basil (4th cen. CE) taught that "when the Holy Spirit saw that mankind was ill-inclined toward virtue" he "blended the delight of melody with doctrine," thus educating the soul. A psalm, he continues, "is the work of the angels, the ordinance of Heaven, the incense of the Spirit." A psalm is therefore

... the tranquillity of souls, the arbitrator of peace, restraining the disorder and turbulence of thoughts, for it softens the passion of the soul and moderates its unriliness. [T]he singing of the psalms brings love, the greatest of good things, contriving harmony like some bond of union and uniting the people in the symphony of a single choir. ...Can we not learn [from the psalms] the splendour of courage, the exactness of justice, the dignity of self control, the habit of repentance.

St. Jerome (4th cen. CE) taught that psalms "properly affect the ethical seat, so...we may know what ought to be done and what avoided" and that "he who treats of higher things, the subtle investigator of the harmony of the world and the order and concord of all creatures, this one sings a spiritual song." Recalling words of Gregory of Nyssa cited above, twelfth-century mystic Hildegard of Bingen later wrote that "so that mankind could be awakened to...the divine sweetnesses and the praise which Adam had enjoyed before his fall—the...holy prophets, taught by the Spirit which they had received...composed songs and canticles..." (The references to chant "composed of number," effecting "harmcny and union," and the
"harmony of the world" reflect the influence of ancient Greek thought. The associations of music with harmony, spirit, eternity, virtue, calm, and courage echo various ancient beliefs covered in the Chapter I.

What made (and continues to make) chant so conducive to spiritual experience? Gregory of Nyssa's belief that psalms can transport the listener into the pure, stable time of the Garden of Eden, before the treadmill of time after the Fall, suggests that chant can offer a sense of timelessness, a glimpse of eternity. (This allusion to eternity recalls the ancient Greek concept of kairos, which was contrasted with cronos or chronological time. Kairos is deep time, feeling the effects of a span of time, or even an eternity, all at once. It was also thought of as the "right time" or favorable moment, a moment of illumination or epiphany.)

Gregorian chant, an oral tradition named for the sixth-century Pope who organized the chants within the Catholic liturgy, is well suited to this purpose. One reason for this chant's suggestion of timelessness is its relative lack of rhythmic or melodic repetition. There is no beat or meter in most Gregorian chant, and any suggestion of rhythm or repetition is negligible. (Beat and rhythm are likely to engage the body in regular movement, or movement in time. Early Church fathers stated repeatedly that music should not engage the body.) Timelessness is also suggested by the lack of direction, implication or drive to cadence in chant; tones do not seem to be "moving" or "heading" anywhere in particular, but to evoke a persistent sense of "presence."

Chant's seemingly timeless musical flow can also invite a focused attention, a state of peacefulness, and a sense of connectedness. The monophony, small intervals and relatively narrow range of chant help narrow the attention and invite careful focus on the present moment. Although music is generally associated with emotion, the relative lack of dynamics and tempo changes in Gregorian chant, along with the small intervals, serve to calm and steady the mind rather than to stimulate movement of the passions. Gregorian chants are often sung or recorded in a highly resonant hall, resulting in a lingering or echoing effect that
surrounds and penetrates the listener, giving the impression of infinite space. This effect, along with the highly connected nature of the tones and phrases in chant, invite the listener to connect or become one with the music, letting go of self-consciousness. Along with the associations drawn from the sacred texts of chants, these senses of timelessness, focus, calm, and connectedness can evoke a strong spiritual sense.

Based on the strong relation between spirituality and the breath, the spirituality evoked by Gregorian and other chant is likely to be enhanced for practitioners by the breath control needed to sing the long and connected phrases involved. An effective way to "entrain" with chant and its spiritual effects, for listeners as well as for singers, is to breathe along with the music's phrases, or to breathe consciously while listening to the music. Musical entrainment is further facilitated when the musical phrases conform fairly well to the natural breath, and when the tones move with or approximately with the heartbeat. (Some of us may be breathing faster than nature intended. Robert Gass, who has been studying various types of chant for over 30 years, states that listening to chant tends to slow the breath from twelve to fifteen breaths per minute to between five to eight breaths per minute, a rate he considers optimal for mind-body health.6 Physician Andrew Weil states that the breathing most conducive to health is slow, deep, soft, and regular—characteristics, we might add, often induced by meditation as well as the recitation or singing of spiritual sounds. Freud suggested that human attraction to rhythmic regularity represents a wish for the "sameness" of death; but perhaps the subtle regularity of the natural breath could also suggest the sameness of eternity.)

Breathing with Music

Readers who would appreciate knowing of chants or music which coordinate well with the breath might consider the "Sanctus" from the Gregorian Mass for Christmas Day. (A performance which illuminates the meaning of "enchantment" is Choralschola der Wiener Hofburg-kapella from Phillips Classics.) Breathe in quickly with the singers before each
phrase, and then breathe out slowly as the phrase is sung. After the first two phrases on "Sanctus," which together last about twelve seconds, the remaining phrases of this chant are uncharacteristically symmetrical at twelve seconds each (and when sung, fall within Gass's optimal breath rate at five breaths per minute). Although the chant offers no strong sense of repetition or periodicity, breathing along with its phrases invites us to breathe out as "rhythmically and evenly as the sea," and perhaps to connect the sound with a regular, calming pattern that ordinarily would not register consciously. For those with good breath control, symmetrical phrases of fifteen seconds each are also found in the ABA form of the "Kyrie" chant of this same Mass and recording.

Chants composed by abbess, poet, artist, prophet, and healer Hildegard of Bingen, whose life was marked by both deep depression and rapturous visionary experience, suggest spiritual ecstasy rather than spiritual solemnity. As is typical of twelfth- and thirteenth-century music, her chants are often performed with a drone that may have been borrowed from the East during the Crusades. A drone provides a solid ground or foundation for a chant, allowing it the possibility of "flight" in the form of a wider melodic range and wider intervals. Along with a wide melodic and intervalic range, Hildegard is known for her distinctive or mixed modes and the colorful imagery in her texts. Relative to Gregorian chant, her chants are often performed energetically and rhapsodically.

You may enjoy breathing along with Hildegard's Responsory *Favus Distillans* from "11,000 Virgins: Chants from the Feast for St. Ursula" (Harmonia Mundi 907200, with the crystalline voices of Anonymous 4). The breath-taking text, which involves St. Ursula addressing herself to Christ, drew inspiration from the Song of Songs:

A dripping honeycomb was the virgin Ursula
who longed to embrace the Lamb of God,
milk and honey under her tongue;
because, like a fruit-laden garden and splendor of flowers,
she gathered a throng of virgins about her.
Therefore rejoice, daughter of Zion, in the noblest dawn
Because like a fruit-laden garden and splendor of flowers
she gathered a throng of virgins about her.
Glory to the father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit
Because like a fruit-laden garden and splendor of flowers
she gathered a throng of virgins about her.

The phrase structure in this chant is more irregular than in the Gregorian chant cited above, with phrases lasting from five to thirteen seconds. Yet responsories usually have repeated sections, and the second of this chant's two sections—the first with fifteen or five plus ten phrases (after the introductory phrase *Favus distillans*), the second with thirteen or five plus eight phrases—is repeated, resulting in an ABB form. Each of these three sections concludes with four identical phrases of nine seconds each (on *ad se collegit*), calming the earlier, more ecstatic irregularities with the serenity of regular rhythms or breaths. (These last four phrases, at six and one half breaths per minute, fall within Gass's optimal breath rate.) Of these last four phrases in each section, the second and fourth gradually die away as the breath subsides.

Although the phrases of western chant tend to relatively long compared to more contemporary vocal music, phrases tend to be even longer in the chant of religious traditions in which attention to the breath is a continuous feature of spiritual practice. Consider the haunting Buddhist chant "Inviting the Bell," with its eastern mode and inflections, from the Plum Village Monastery of Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh (from "Drops of Emptiness," Sounds True M003D). Although sung in an eastern mode and with a wider range than Gregorian chant, a coordination of the breath with this chant once again reveals remarkably regular breath-cycles. With the exception of the initial phrase of eleven seconds and one of thirteen seconds, all of the thirteen phrases are fourteen seconds long, slowing the breaths to less and four and one half per minute. Except for the initial shorter phrase, all phrases begin with or reach a peak (such as that at the end of inhalation) which gradually
descends into nothingness. The chant begins, ends and is interpolated with the resonant sound of a gong, with each sounding lasting, at seven seconds, half as long as the vocal phrases.

I am appreciative and grateful that characteristics often associated with spirituality—a sense of connectedness, a loss of self-consciousness, an intense focus, an alteration of time, etc.—can be evoked by music even if it was not written expressly for liturgical or spiritual purposes. As with the chant, these characteristics associated with spirituality can be facilitated by coordinating the breath with the phrases of the music. The entrainment that can result from breath coordination can also help offer an understanding, I believe, of the sensibilities, rhythms, or concepts of time characteristic of the historical context in which music was written.

When listening to vocal or instrumental music with relatively short phrases or with a periodic phrase structure, I generally breathe in for the first phrase and breathe out for the second, proceeding accordingly. (It is important to select music that synchronizes fairly well with one's natural breath, and not to restrict or force the breath in any way. Because exhalation tends to be longer than inhalation, you may wish to exhale more air than is inhaled. You may also want to breathe along only until some sort of resonance with the music is felt, or to simply be conscious of your natural breath while listening.)

Although the monophony of chant, in which all singers sing the same vocal line, could be interpreted to reflect a monolithic world view, the polyphonic music of the western Renaissance juxtaposes lines that are similar yet independent, perhaps reflecting world views that are beginning to diverge. The Renaissance was also moving toward a more secular world, and its sacred music, although still reflective of spiritual sensibilities, seems more reflective of the passage of earth-time than the stability of heavenly eternity. The first section (to 1 minute, 26 seconds) of the luminous "Gloria" from the Missa La sol fa re mi by the great sixteenth-century Netherlands composer Josquin des Prez (try Peter Phillips and The Tallis Scholars, Gimell CDM009) recalls chant's sense of connection, continuity and
flow. But attention is expanded through the elegant but complex imitation of the polyphony, and breathing along with the regular, four-beat metrical pattern suggests more of a succession in time. (The smoothness of the musical lines may make finding the beat rather difficult; after the brief monophonic chant on "Gloria" in the beginning, the first two beats correspond to the first two notes of the polyphonic part of the piece.) Natural rhythms are evoked by this performance in that the beats correspond approximately to beats of the heart, moving slightly slower than one beat per second; and breathing in and out with the four-beat phrases conforms to Gass's optimal breath rate. When I asked a class of students to time their numbers of breaths per minute before and after listening mindfully to this piece, virtually all of the breath rates diminished, and some were claimed to be divided in half.

After the Renaissance, time was more likely to be thought of not as simple succession but as continuity, evolution, development, progression or duration, in music and in general. Breathing with the regular, four-beat phrases of the exhilarating first movement, and the flowing 6/8 rhythms of the lyrical second movement of the Double Violin Concerto of J. S. Bach (1685-1750) evokes a stronger sense of periodicity than music of the Renaissance, and a more directed motion in time. (Try Salvatore Accardo, Margaret Batjer and The Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Phillips 416 413-2). At the same time, these and many other Baroque compositions can evoke a strong impression of a unified whole, with the interaction of the musical voices and rhythms seeming to move or work together like clockwork—or representing a miniature version of the "mechanistic universe" posited by seventeenth-century philosopher René Descartes. (Descartes believed that the various parts of the universe worked together like a machine.) The steady rhythms and tonal stability of Baroque music can calm and pacify the body and mind; according to a recent book on sports psychology, Baroque slow movements tend toward "a rhythm of sixty beats per minute, often with a slow bass which tends to synchronize the heart and breath rates."7 Although the Concerto cited above is purely instrumental and not specifically religious, Bach's work in general was written with spiritual devotion and intent. Pablo Casals and Jasha Heifetz
performed Bach suites as a meditation every morning, and Albert Schweitzer played Bach on an out of tune piano in his jungle hospital to renew his strength and peace.

High Classicist Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-91) lived in a more humanistic age in which the prospect of individual freedom and choice was championed, a sense of freedom that is often expressed in Mozart's and performances of Mozart's melodies, rhythms, phrases and structures. (Mozart's contemporary, Joseph Haydn, offered even more asymmetry of phrase and structure.) Classical music differs from Baroque in that although sonic events are conditioned by previous ones and logically placed within the structure, they do not seem as necessary or inevitable. One is always aware that the composer could have made a different choice from a multitude of possible choices within the style and system. Following the philosopher T. W. Adorno, David Greene has suggested that in Baroque music, the primary theme or motive is identifiable as such, yet seems wholly subordinate to the overriding social order. The Classical theme is more like a free subject creating a future which fulfills the past.  

Synchronizing one's breath with the three-beat phrases of the solemn second movement of Mozart's Clarinet Concerto in A major, K. 622 (try Richard Stoltzman and The English Chamber Orchestra, RCA Victor 60723-2) at first offers a periodicity that synchronizes strongly with the breath in its rising and falling motions, invoking a spiritual sense. But as the piece progresses, and especially when the clarinet is playing alone in a cadenza-like manner, there is a sense that the regular motion in time may be compromised, that the phrases may not conform precisely to the periodic structure. These moments of contingency and irregularity heighten the listener's sensibilities, engaging the intellect and giving rise, perhaps, to the sense of "enlightenment" valued at the time.

Themes in the Romantic era themes are continuously varied and extended as they travel through various key areas, seeming to evolve or transform over time. Many Romanticists strove for fulfillment or organic unity as the ultimate end of this thematic evolution. Yet the fulfillment sought in Romantic music is not always achieved; throughout the era, melodic
and harmonic goals are subjected to more and longer delays, and the listener is likely to be confronted with more ambiguity than clarity. Especially late in the era, expectations that are set up may not be actualized; goals are projected but not reached. Phrases and sections became less clearly articulated, and forms begin to lose their organic quality. The second movement of Romanticist Frederic Chopin's Piano Concerto no. 2 (as performed by Murray Perahia and the Israel Philharmonic, Sony Classical SK 44922), although calm, serene, and moving at one beat per second at the outset, eventually offers much more contingency, irregularity, and ambiguity than we find in the Classical era, stimulating the passions characteristic of Romanticism. Although Chopin lived a secular life and was not writing "spiritual" music per se (and early Church fathers would probably express concern about the intensity of feeling associated with his music) the serenity and transcendence suggested by much of Chopin's work seems nonetheless conducive to spiritual experience in the broadest sense of the term.

In the twentieth century the linearity and sense of wholeness characteristic of the works of earlier eras often breaks down completely, and new concepts of time and causality are reflected. Philip Glass (1937--) describes below the experience he seeks to elicit in his minimalistic music. (Minimalism, one of many contemporary musical schools or techniques, involves the continuous repetition of a small group of musical materials, with occasional alterations that offer no strong sense of development or progression.)

Once it is established that nothing is "happening" in the normal sense of the term and that instead the gradual "surveying" of the musical material can hold the listener's attention, perhaps he can discover a new kind of attentiveness, one in which neither memory nor anticipation (the psychological axioms of Baroque, Classical, Romantic and modern music) have anything to do with the quality of musical perception. It is to be hoped that music will then become free of dramatic structures, as pure sound-medium, as the "now."
The music of Glass, who has Buddhist sensibilities, can come close to invoking the bare attention and sense of timelessness evoked by ancient chant. Breathing with the second movement of the Glass's String Quartet no. 5 (Kronos Quartet, Nonesuch 79356-2) can seem to create, paradoxically, both a meditative state and a sense of urgency conditioned by our complex western culture and history. I find in general that coordinating my breath with music I find appealing, and that comes close to synchronizing with my natural breath, is musically, culturally and spiritually inspiring, can calm or invigorate, and elicits a strong sense of well being.

Part 2: Spiritual features in contemporary secular music and movement:

The groove, the zone, and flow

*It don't mean a thing*
*If it aint got that swing.*

-----Louis Armstrong

Plato stressed that education should include equal parts of music (*mousike*) and gymnastics, and these disciplines were considered most valuable when cultivated as spiritual practice. (Remember that Plato praised the Egyptians for limiting music to spiritual purposes. The Olympic games of ancient Greece were dedicated to the gods.) Although many contemporary westerners would not claim to be living a spiritual life or even to have strong spiritual feelings, some may have experiences similar to spiritual ones when feeling peak experience such as the "groove" in music, the "zone" in athletics or other pursuits, and what Mihaly Czsikszentmihaly has termed "flow." Both music and movement, of course, may be experienced in the dance—which may be the ultimate means to achieve peak experience. But in light of Plato's teaching, and the remarkable similarity of descriptions of peak experiences in music (or the arts) and athletics, I should like to examine these experiences in light of one another. The zone and the groove are highly appealing and much sought after in contemporary life, and may account at least in part, along with feelings of
competition and solidarity, for an intense attraction to—or even reverence for—sports and music. Because such experiences in music or athletic performance can be enhanced by conscious breath work, and because their characteristics echo aspects of spirituality, their tremendous appeal for some might be partially due to a thirst for spiritual experience that many of us have lost. (In terms of the relationship of athletics to spirituality, it is notable that Tim Floyd, Head Coach of the Chicago Bulls, instructs his players in meditation as part of their basketball practice. The character of Olympic Gold-winning runner Arnold Hill, in the film Chariots of Fire, remarked that running was his way of feeling God’s pleasure.)

The "zone" in athletic theory refers to "zone of optimal-arousal" or the "zone of optimal functioning" hypotheses. Zone hypotheses are based on early twentieth century research indicating that heightened arousal enhances athletic performance up to a certain point or "peak," after which a continued increase in arousal detracts from performance. "Arousal" has been defined in this context as the intensity level of physical or mental behavior, and can be measured by heart rate, blood pressure, respiration rate, electrocortical activity, biomechanical indicants such as adrenaline, etc. Various degrees of arousal may be interpreted differently by different individuals, however. In what M. J. Apter calls a "telic" motivational state, for example, the individual is serious and goal-directed, and high arousal is felt as negative affect, high anxiety or stress. In a "paratelic" motivational state, the individual is in a playful, process-oriented state in which high arousal is highly enjoyable.² (In ancient Greece, Dionysian possession was called "telestic;" in the aforementioned terminology it might better be regarded as "paratelestic.")

Sports psychologist Ken Ravizza has interviewed twenty athletes known for performing at their optimal zone of arousal, and asked them to list features characteristic of their peak experiences. Over eighty per cent of the athletes, in twelve different fields, listed the following: a) loss of fear; b) no conscious thought about performance; c) total immersion in the activity; d) focused attention or concentration; e) effortless; f) a feeling of control; g) time-space disorientation (time slows down); h) the universe is perceived as
unified and integrated; and i) experience is regarded as involuntary, temporary, and unique. Characteristics reported in other studies include focus on the present, "enthusiasm bordering on joy," feelings that everything is "right" or as it should be, being "cocooned" or detached from the environment and distractions, and a strong sense of clarity. One athlete described a peak performance as follows: "I felt physically very relaxed, but really energized. . . . I experienced virtually no anxiety or fear, and the whole experience was enjoyable. I experienced a very real sense of calmness and quiet inside, and everything just seemed to flow automatically. . . . Even though I was really hustling, it was all very effortless." (Robert Kaplan has written that fine athletes are cat-like "geniuses at always having their bearings.")

As in spiritual or mystical practice, techniques for enhancing peak experience in athletics often begin with focus on the breath. In "Techniques for Regulation of Arousal," Dorothy V. Harris lists "muscle-to-mind relaxation strategies" that facilitate the peak performance characteristic of the zone. She begins with breathing exercises, including "complete breath," "sighing with exhalation," "rhythmic breathing," 1:2 ratio inhalation/exhalation breathing; counting down from 5 to 1 while inhaling; and "concentration breathing," which consists of focusing only on the breath rather than distracting thoughts. Her "Progressive Relaxation Exercises" also begin with deep breathing, and include meditation and visualization techniques. Among the strategies discussed for Harris's "Learning How to Increase Activation and Energy" are more breathing exercises and listening to music (although subjection to loud music, Harris warns, can decrease energy levels). In Richard M. Suinn's Seven Steps to Peak Performance: The Mental Training Manual for Athletes, Step 1, "Relaxation Training," focuses on "centering" with the breath, a technique also used for Steps 2 4, 5, 6 and 7—"Stress Management," "Self Regulation," "Mental Rehearsal," "Concentration" and "Energy Control." (Peak experience or something similar, incidentally, is also likely to be felt in Eastern practices which combine focus on the breath
and physical movement, such as yoga, Qi Gong, T'ai Chi, etc. Qi Gong sometimes involves making "healing sounds" on the exhalation.)

The athlete quoted above who recalled that everything "just seemed to flow automatically" in peak performance is reminiscent of the work of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi of the University of Chicago, who has written several books on what he calls the optimal experience of "flow." Some characteristics of the state of flow are that action and awareness merge into a "one-pointedness," that consciousness is free of distraction, there is no fear of failure, that self-consciousness disappears, that there is a distorted sense of time, and that activity becomes "autotelic" (performed for its own sake. Art, music, and sports, says Csikszentmihalyi, are often autotelic.) Other characteristics of flow are a balance between challenges and skills, immediate feedback to one's actions, and the step-by-step setting of clear goals—although Csikszentmihalyi notes that the last characteristic is less likely to apply to aesthetic endeavors. Writing of the loss of self-consciousness in flow, he suggests that we "might even feel we have stepped out of the boundaries of the ego and have become part, at least temporarily, of a larger entity. The musician feels at one with the harmony of the cosmos, the athlete moves at one with the team, the reader of a novel lives for a few hours in a different reality." He quotes poet Mark Strand on the sense of time distortion when writing:

Well, you're right in the work, you lose your sense of time, you're completely enraptured, you're completely caught up in what you're doing. . . . The idea is to be so. . . . so saturated with it that there's no future or past, it's just an extended present in which you're, uh, making meaning. . . . When you're working on something and you're working well, you have the feeling there's no other way of saying what you're saying.

This last sentence recalls the "zone" in which everything "feels right." Although Csikszentmihalyi does not refer specifically to the breath in his discussions of flow, he states that flow is most likely to occur when individuals have found their own natural or personal
rhythms, and a harmonious relationship to space and time.13 (The term "flow" itself seems apt characterization of the smooth and regular respiration of the meditative state.)

The experience of flow and the zone seem similar to what the Greeks called poetic rapture or to the often compelling nature of the musical experience. Although watching athletic events or observing art can be exciting and inspiring, music may be especially likely to give rise to peak experience--for perceivers as well as those directly involved in music making. Like flow and the zone, musical perception, as well as creation and performance, can involve a focused attention or presence, a resistance to distraction, a lack of self-consciousness, an alteration of time, a strong sense of clarity, a sense of joy or well being, and senses of unit harmony with one's surroundings. (Peak experience when listening to music may be as close as many contemporary westerners come to "enchantment.") A peak experience when performing or otherwise making music involves an immersion in the activity, a merger of action and awareness, a sense of control, a lack of worry about failure, immediate feedback one's actions, and a balance between skills and challenges; ideally, the music is just challenging enough to carry one's musical skills to their peak. Music performance also involves an integration of body, feeling, intellect, and beauty. (Regarding the groove, the zone and freedom from fear or worry, remember the frequent ancient association of music with courage or freedom from fear. Recently, psychologist Hajime Fukui has remarked that "National anthems, work songs, party music and war music all have the same effect. The diminish fear [and] relieve tension."14

This quote from jazz pianist Paul Bley on getting in the "groove" alludes to the sense of well being, the balance between challenges and skills, the sense of being in the right place and time, and the immediate gratification characteristic of flow or the zone, as well the to the beauty of the aesthetic experience:

...there has to be a groove to get into. That's the hard part. Once you're into it, you don't have to keep deciding whether or not the next phrase is going to be
good or not. A soloist can usually tell by the first phrase whether it's going to be a good solo. When you get into something to start with, don't worry about the rest of the set; it's going to be beautiful. If anything, just hold back, because it'll all come out eventually anyway. The important thing is getting on the right track—the right pattern—in the right way and exerting the control and practice necessary to get it.¹⁵

Whatever you name it, the experience Bley describes applies to any musical performance that "works," that carries the performer or listener to a heightened realm of consciousness. (As an undergraduate, I was extremely pleased when the respected Eurhythmics teacher at Oberlin College, upon hearing me play my string bass for the first time, told me that I "cooked.")

Experiencing the groove in music or other pursuits is particularly valuable if one is able to apply that experience to life in general—to groove, if you will, to a hidden harmony throughout one's daily existence. (In Disney's The Emperor's New Groove, the Emperor is singing and dancing when someone interrupts him and he loses his groove. While out of the groove, he is changed by an enemy into a llama. The rest of the film focuses on the Emperor's learning a new groove in life, and once he has assimilated this groove—becoming a much better person in the process—circumstances arise that allow him to become human again.)

When the groove is felt in a group performance (or the zone in a team experience), players—and to some extent, perceivers—may well be experiencing entrainment of bodily rhythms, including the rhythms of the breath. In my own experience, consciousness of the breath and breath control play an important role in music not only for vocal, wind and brass study and performance, but for string, keyboard and percussion performance as well. Music teachers of these latter instruments often relate music or musical performance to the breath in music lessons. (Even conscientious performers sometimes hold or distort their breath during difficult passages, however, and the guitar professor at our University sometimes marks reminders to breathe in a student's score.) Although not all musical phrases conform easily to
respiration—especially in twentieth century music—one can often hear pianists or string players inhale before playing a phrase in performance, as they connect or entrain their breath to (at least the beginnings of) some musical phrases.

Clearly, descriptions of the groove, the zone, and flow echo characteristics of spiritual experience as defined above and in previous chapters. Peak experience in music, athletics and spiritual experience may also bear similarities in being associated primarily with the synthesizing, right hemisphere of the brain. Given that respiration is governed by the right hemisphere, it is not surprising that meditation is most likely to engage that hemisphere. Music perception, and especially melody, is processed principally in the right hemisphere, although the left hemisphere seems to be more engaged when trained musicians listen analytically. Both hemispheres, and perhaps especially the left, are likely to be engaged when performing music or practicing technique. It seems intuitive to suggest, however, that once technique is mastered, the "magic" of the groove may strongly engage the right hemisphere as well.16 Similarly, although one would expect the left hemisphere to be active in (especially team) sports, research has shown that the right hemisphere is likely to be engaged during the performance of an athlete who has mastered his or her skills.17

Performers experiencing the groove, flow or zone may also be most likely to generate alpha brain waves. Alpha waves (8-12 Hz), which are generated when an individual is relaxed, aware, and oriented mainly toward the inner world of consciousness, are slower than the beta waves (12-35 Hz) generated by active thought and attention to the external world. Theta waves (4-7 Hz) are associated with a drowsy or dream-like state, and delta waves (.5-3 Hz) with sleep. (It is interesting to note that AUM—the three phonemes of the mantra OM—represent waking consciousness, dream sleep and deep sleep respectively.) EEG studies show that alpha waves are likely to be generated by the brain during meditation, and that highly experienced meditators may generate "theta trains." (Practitioners in deep meditation are not drowsy but intensely aware of both the internal and external worlds. According to
scholar and physician Tomio Hirai, "theta trains" differ from the theta waves, "which appear in the drowsy state, in that they demonstrate a rhythmical sequence of regular persistence mixed with regular alpha waves in a background pattern."\(^\text{18}\)

It may seem counterintuitive to associate peak performance with alpha waves, in that faster beta waves are usually associated with creativity or performance; there is also some evidence that peak performance is associated with even faster "gamma" waves (35 Hz or higher). High beta waves (18-35 Hz) have also been associated with anxiety, however, and it would seem to follow that gamma waves could be reflective of anxiety as well. Such anxiety would compromise the effortlessness characteristic of most peak experience. Notably, some EEG research in sports medicine indicates that vigorous exercise can generate a relaxed state characterized by alpha waves. (As serious runners know, intensive exercise is also likely to release beta endorphins, naturally produced opiate-like peptides.) Music EEG studies show that listening to music can also generate alpha waves. In a study by Peter Richter, Helmet Petsche, and Oliver Filz, three experienced musicians generated both alpha and beta waves in listening to various types of music. What is most interesting about this study, however, was that when one of the listeners who was also a composer was composing, he generated mainly alpha and \textit{delta} waves. (Since delta waves are generally associated with sleep, the subject may have been producing delta waves in a waking state; or perhaps "delta" in this German study refers here to wavelengths others would call theta or theta trains.) In view of this data, and given the highly relaxed, effortless states of the groove, flow, and the zone, it would not surprise me if alpha waves, or even theta trains, can be experienced in peak or optimal experiences of athletics and music performance as well.\(^\text{19}\)

The importance of the groove or the zone in music and athletics may shed some light on Plato's belief in the importance of studying and engaging in music and athletics, in education and in everyday life. Perhaps Plato regarded these disciplines as valuable not only because they developed the mind and the body, but because they were likely to foster heightened
sensibilities or a spiritual state of consciousness. In view of the fact that Plato's *mousike* involved poetry, dance, mathematics, and astronomy as well as music, it is notable that Czikszentmihalyi's book on the "flow" of creativity included interviews with 87 highly creative people, 60 of whom worked in either the arts, mathematics, or the sciences. (It would have been interesting if Czikszentmihalyi had interviewed athletes as well.) Any individual, within any field--or outside a field--can be creative, and even highly creative. But fields of art, math and science, along with athletics, seem particularly likely to be associated with creativity or "inspiration," and are fields Plato linked to the divine.
Notes


5 The god Cronos, the father of time, was a Titan who was eventually defeated by his son Zeus. Kairos was the youngest son of Zeus.


9 Quoted in , 151.


