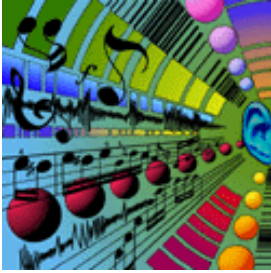


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Defining Music



The definition of music in technical terminology is “organized sound”. This definition is far from the actual meaning and qualification of music. The entire surrounding definition of music, at least to myself, is that it is a creative outlet of the mind and soul through which abstract emotions, thoughts, and feeling can be conveyed through the use of melodies, rhythms, chords, and specific components for the ears to recognize and perceive in a manner and medium that is universal. The art of producing music can be done in a combination of two ways. The first is the most primitive and simple means, percussion. Percussion is the use of some kind of mallet or “stick” to hit another object. This form was the first employed by primitive man. Years before a coherent vocalization of controlled pitch came from Man’s throat, he had the ability to use objects to hit other objects to produce a controlled rhythm. The second form as, already mentioned, is the human voice. The ability for control of this device is one that doesn’t take much effort for basic “singing” abilities, but to master the human for the reproduction of precise pitches of notes and rhythms, usually, requires years of study and practice. The ability to sing has been shown to be something that is inherent in people.

Meaning: some people are just born with the ability to sing and some aren't. The third and most complex form of music production is the use of wind instruments.

Over the course of approximately 20,000 years, the wind instrument has evolved into quite a complex array of instruments. The basic principles of the use of a wind instrument is done by placing the mouth on or placing a mouthpiece in the mouth and using the lungs, tongue, and lips to produce a sound specific to each family of instruments (brass and woodwind). The sound is then amplified and modified depending on the instrument and the final pitch of the notes created is manipulated by the fingers and hands covering holes, extending slides, and or pushing valves down.

The preceding section described the basic rudiments of producing music. The actual essence of music is so much more than a crude placing of valves, or the beating of a drum, or the single act producing notes in the voice. Music's purpose is for the artist and creator of a composition to employ certain tools to give the listener an impression of his feelings. In effect using a medium other than basic communication to convey thoughts. The composer must have a great understanding of music and technicalities to know exactly what to use to convey a specific idea or feeling. An example is the "attack" of a note. When a brass player plays a note it can take on many forms, if a note is produced with a harsh beginning and made to project and cut straight, it gives the listener a feeling of power and dominance. As opposed to starting of a note with soft breath and slowly vibrating his throat and or hands to give a vibrato effect, to give the listener a feeling of serenity and quietness.

These outward perceptions can also be altered by the use of rhythms and chord structure.

If a piece of music has fast changing rhythms and really “moves”, the listener gets a feeling of movement and the accompanying notes and their production add to the experience. In the same way, chord structure, which is the playing of different notes at the same time, can amplify a feeling of the particular section of a composition. If it is meant to be bright and positive the chord structure will be in Major keys and not have clashing or dissonant notes. To explain the meaning of Major and Minor Keys it would require extensive writing and listening, so for the purpose of the essay it will be left out.

In the same effect that music uses technical components to create moods and feelings, two examples of other outlets of creativity are painting and literature. They both use similar tools to evoke the same things as music does. A painter will use certain colors to give the observer a visual reference to what he is trying to convey, where as a writer will give vivid descriptions of a situation to allow the reader visualize and sometimes hear what is meant to be perceived by the particular work. A painter will also employ certain brush strokes and technique to give illusions of texture as will the composer use specific tools to convey auditory messages. Music, literature, and painting all are similar in that every culture or society has claims to its own specific form. The most specific is literature, in that a particular society can have sounds and words in their vocabulary that a society who they never been in contact with will have not have. The resulting is translations that have to be interpreted. Painting is a little less specific in a cultures portraying of ideas, because we all see the same objects, we just perceive them differently.

Music is more of a universal medium, the most specific element to a specific society or culture is the instrument used to produce the sound, because notes are the same all over the world, except in countries like India that use quarter steps between notes, where as the Western World and most other areas use a half step method.

In closing this essay, I believe through the ample reasoning and examples given, I have proven the definition of music as a universal medium for conveying abstract feelings, ideas, and thoughts. In essence, music is a more complex form of communication than standard speech or literature, but one that everyone, no matter the cultural or social background, can understand and enjoy.