

One of the most enlightening experiences is to learn about and experience the ways of life and values of a culture foreign to one's own. Throughout this quad, it has been very enlightening and interesting to learn more about the music of people throughout the world. One of the dangers of being a music major in a school where classical performance is the sole focus is to develop the kind of thinking that idealizes the music studied and performed as the only music worth hearing. While my personal view of music tends to do this to Western music, I have always been able to respect the quality of the music of other cultures. For me, the determination of whether music is good or bad is twofold. It depends on the technical aspects of the music and also that for which the music is propaganda. For example, if music of any culture is performed inaccurately, it is bad, even if it promotes something completely wholesome. In addition, a piece of music that is technically perfect, yet promotes something unwholesome, it is also bad. Any music that meets these two criteria is, to me, good music. Thus, music to which I do not enjoy listening or find intellectually stimulating, is good music by the aforementioned basis for analysis. While this may be a somewhat pretentious viewpoint for the judgement of different styles of music, I have no qualms about maintaining this viewpoint as I become more educated in relationship to all music. It is necessary that one be educated in music before any judgement as to the quality of any music can rightfully be made.

For me, one of the most enlightening experiences in this class took place during the discussion about whether or not music can be inherently good or bad. Never before had I given thought to the music of other cultures as being good or bad. Rather, I recognized it as unique to a certain culture and decided that I had no place to determine the value of the quality of that music. However, in hearing others' views about deciding

the quality of the music from another culture, I was (and still am) forced to think about the standards to which I hold and by which I judge music, as well as the universality of those standards. The real enlightenment here pertained to my understanding of God, the standards by which Christians are called to live, and also the universality of those standards. In this instance, the discussion about music seemed to be just the crust of the discussion and the filling was how the standards discussed apply to our lives as Christians.

Another enlightening exercise in this class was reading the passages from Ronin Ro's Gangsta Rap: Merchandising Rhymes of Violence. Having never been a fan of rap music, and having gone so far as to denounce rap as having no musical substance, I naturally began to read the selections with a bias. As I read, I began to realize that although rap comes from a section of Western civilization and culture, it is in its own way the music of a sub-culture. With a better understanding of the differences in lifestyles between the culture in which I live and the culture in which rap music prevails, I find myself battling a desire to resort to pure relativism to judge the quality of music. How simple and easy it would be to dismiss the idea of determining the quality of music by taking a "hands off" approach. In this case, where I am neither a fan nor even certain of the assertion of rap as music, I believe it is best to leave the determination of the quality of rap to one who is able to evaluate it from a purely stoic and unbiased perspective.

The video on the music of South Africa proved to be quite interesting. Throughout the video, I could not help but feel resentment for the narrator promoting his own political agenda through the video. I am well aware that since the time of the Greek

philosopher Plato, music has been viewed as having the most power over men's souls. To Plato, as well as nearly two thousand years of Christian thinkers, music is a tool to be used for the shaping of a person's character, and not as the means to achieve political goals or ideals, regardless of how worthy such ideals or goals may be. The narrator of the film viewed music as exactly the latter of these two examples. By promoting the music performed by the black people in the rural area and rejecting the music of the black artists who "sold out" to the white control, the narrator revealed his bias. While the black musicians who refused to give in to the censorship of the racist apartheid government were praised for remaining faithful to the cause, the black musicians who entered the mainstream music industry of South Africa by blending traditional African aspects of music with modern and "white" musical practice were portrayed as traitors to the cause. This narrator is an example of the close mindedness that is such a danger to one who has been trained and educated in the classical music of a culture.

The greatest insight I have gained through listening to and learning about the music of other cultures (and sub-cultures) and also learning more about those other cultures is that the approach to music when determining quality must be one of openness, but openness within a set of guidelines. Much like Gordon's motto of "Freedom within a framework of faith," an adequate analysis and judgement of music requires musical education in the culture from to instill the technical requirements of good music. Also, in that same vein of thinking, there must also be the willingness to remove one's self from any emotional attachment with the music to be analyzed. Throughout this quad, I have come to realize the relative value of music to the cultures from which it comes, and also

that there are certain universal standards to which music must be held if one is to determine the quality of such music.