

Music as Spiritual experience

Keynote address for Alister Hardy/MCU conference – The God experience – who has it and why? July 2004

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1. Introduction

There is a fine Jewish story that describes the origins of the Nigun the wordless Jewish song tradition:

The rabbi goes to the woods to celebrate his ritual. He finds the place, lights the fire, and sings the service. God says: 'It is enough.'

The rabbi goes to the woods to celebrate the service. He finds the place but has forgotten how to light the fire. God says: 'It is enough.'

The rabbi can no longer find the wood but he sings the service. God says: 'It is enough.'

The rabbi can no longer remember the words of the service. But he sings the tune. God says: 'It is enough.'¹

The story represents the move from the time when music was inextricably bound up with religious ritual to a freestanding music independent of the ceremony. And yet in this story, this now wordless song is still conceived of as a religious experience. The song itself constitutes what once was a complex ritual act.

HYPOTHESIS ONE:

- Does this mean that all music is a sacred experience?
- Is there a secular music?
- Is the aesthetic a contemporary version of spirituality?

HYPOTHESIS TWO

- Can music be extracted from its spiritual context and still retain something of its spirituality? What has spirituality to do with culture?
- What is the role of words in this process?
- Can spirituality be freed from a particular religious tradition?
- Is there a universal spiritual music?

Music is often used as a metaphor for the spiritual experience. William James uses the following description from a clergyman:

¹ I am grateful to Irith Shillor for this story.

It is impossible fully to describe the experience. It was like the effect of some great orchestra when all the separate notes have melted into one swelling harmony that leaves the listener conscious of nothing save that his soul is being wafted upwards, and almost bursting with its own emotion.²

So if music is metaphor for the religious experience, is music a religious/spiritual/mystical experience in its own right? Various theories have been advanced over history. It is intimately connected with notions of musical meaning which we shall explore later.

- The first is associated with music associated with spiritual ideas. Music does have a capacity to fuse with events and external ideas completely as in opera and also liturgical music. So there is a great body of music that has been joined to mystical texts or refer to mystical events. These are certainly spiritual in intention. However, the intention may not produce a spiritual experience for the performers or listeners.
- Another area is associated with hieratic qualities that we associate with it, like Harmony or subjective taste
- There is [another]...possibility, though, and this has less to do with subjective taste. However, it merges at the edges with the previous possibility, paradoxically enough. It is that music by its very nature is mystical. Perhaps we have to go back long before the age of canned music to view the art in such a 'special' light. Sir Thomas Browne wrote in **Religio Medici** (1642) 'there is a musick wherever there is a harmony, order or proportion..., even that vulgar and tavern Musick, which makes one man merry another mad, strikes in me a deep fit of devotion and a profound contemplation of the First Composer. There is something in it of Divinity more than the ear discovers; it is an Hieroglyphical and shadowed lesson of the whole world and creatures of God. . . In brief, it is a sensible fit of that Harmony, which intellectually sounds in the ears of God.' . . . This the most difficult as, from Plato on, listeners have cast much music in the role of the anti-mystical — the banal, the humorous, the sentimental, the furious, the violent, the coarse, the vulgar. . The categories are endless. Yet, perhaps the art of combining tones itself is innocent — we have projected on to that white screen our fantasies and our failings.³

Here Jonathan Harvey wrestles with where meaning resides in music. Is it in the sounds themselves? As Harvey suggests:

The more we concentrate on the music *itself*, the more we *become* the music` in *participation mystique*, with full consciousness the more we sense its true nature to be the play of ambiguity and unity: 'one knowing'.⁴

² James, William (originally published 1903, this edition 1997) *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, NY: Simon and Schuster p69

³ Harvey, Jonathan (1996) Introduction in Steer, Maxwell (ed.) (1999) *Contemporary Music Review: Music and Mysticism (I), Vol. 14 Parts 3-4*, , pp7-9 This quotation p7

⁴ Harvey, Jonathan (1996) Introduction in Steer, Maxwell (ed.) (1999) *Contemporary Music Review: Music and Mysticism (I), Vol. 14 Parts 3-4*, , pp7-9 This quotation p9

2. Theoretical Framework

a) The History of the Philosophy of Music

Sophie Drinker in her remarkable book on women in music dates the loss of the spiritual dimension to the loss of the goddess traditions.⁵ The ancient Greek philosophers developed the idea of music and the spiritual philosophically. Pythagoras in his notion of three sorts of music saw a resolution of the perceived division between body, mind and spirit.⁶ Music has had a developed spiritual significance in Judaism:

I don't want to simplify things too much, though. One post-Diaspora Jewish tradition where music played an important and positive role was in the mysticism and messianism of the Kabbalah. The strains were woven into the *Zohor* the thirteenth-century text so central to the study of Kabbalah, where Music is emphasized as a means to a kind of religious transcendence and ecstasy.⁷

There are parallels from this period in Christianity. Hildegard writes in the twelfth century:

Music is the echo of the glory and beauty of heaven. And in echoing that glory and beauty, it carries human praise back to heaven. (Scivias 3.13.11)⁸

Western culture has inherited from Graeco-Roman ideas⁹ and Christianity dualistic notions of the mind and body. In the Middle Ages the notion of God was central to music theory but often saw the flesh as evil. In Renaissance thinking we see the shift from the Christian view of music to more humanistic views by a rediscovery of Graeco-Roman ideas. In the hands of the philosophers of the Enlightenment the link between music and the spiritual became weakened and the search for the spiritual which had characterized the musical tradition of Europe for hundreds of years became an essentially human search. Words like truth started to reappear in philosophers like Heidegger (1886-1976).¹⁰ The notion of the connection with the Divine now

⁵ Drinker S. (first published 1948, reissued 1995) *Music and Women, The Story of Women in their relation to Music*, City University of New York, The Feminist Press. Pp127-142

⁶ James, Jamie (1993), *The Music of the Spheres Music, Science and the Natural Order of the Universe*, London: Abacus p 31

⁷ Westheimer, Dr Ruth (2003), *Musically Speaking: A Life through song*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania press pp26-7

⁸ Van der Weyer Robert (ed.) (1997) *Hildegard in a Nutshell*, London: Hodder and Stoughton p79

⁹ Rooley, Anthony, (1990) *Performance: Revealing the Orpheus Within*, Shaftesbury: Element Books pp13-14

¹⁰ "Heidegger approaches a work of art from two angles. On the one hand he asks what can make a human being see the world in a new light: on the other, he asks what the role of art actually is. The two questions turn out to be related. Heidegger's aim is to show how the work of art still - as in the aesthetics of the Romantics - is concerned with truth. Indeed it emerges that the work of art is one of

reappeared in the human sphere and music and the aesthetic came to be about the highest expression of human achievement. The spirits of the outer world can now be identified as human personality traits and emotions.¹¹ In composers' accounts the location of inspiration is the unconscious:

The moment at which a composer's experience is projected on his unconscious mind is an archetypal encounter of external and internal, of 'life' and 'art'; this encounter is experienced at its most concentrated form within the process of composition itself, where the composer's 'innate' inspiration collides with his 'learned' technique.¹²

The Post Christian West has often dismissed notions of spirituality as superstitious in line with scientific, objective rationality or to be avoided in the interests of religious tolerance.¹³ The notion of spirituality as part of self-actualization led people to regard the musical experience as the last remaining place for the spiritual in Western society.^{14 15}

The spiritual experience is now within the person rather than in the cosmos. It became associated with notions of self-fulfilment in Maslow's hierarchy¹⁶ of human needs in which he includes the aesthetic – the need for beauty, order, symmetry. This is placed immediately below his pinnacle of self-actualisation – realising one's full potential. Maslow defined peak experiences which included characteristics associated in the past with religious experience. These include an intense experience of the present, concentration, self forgetfulness, a lessening of defences and inhibitions, empowerment, trust, spontaneity, and a fusion of person with the world. Music is an important trigger for these peak experiences. This notion of the peak experience is also close to Csikszentmihalyi's concept of 'flow'. (Csikszentmihalyi M. and Csikszentmihalyi I.S. 1988, Csikszentmihalyi, 1993). Psychoanalysts like Robert Assagioli founder of psychosynthesis in describing the bringing together of areas of

the few things that can seriously open our eyes to the world in which we live.... Unlike previous philosophical schools, Heidegger does not associate truth with 'the world' as it is 'in reality' nor does truth have anything to do with measuring whether something is 'correct' or 'incorrect'. No, the true is what we human beings sense, purely and simply....Heidegger was a phenomenologist. The main point as phenomenology is that we consider objects as they appear. We should not worry about how they are constituted 'in reality', independent of human beings. For a phenomenologist it is only meaningful to ask about 'the world' as it manifests itself to the human being. The world of phenomenology is always the world of man." Nielsen in Beyer 1996 p174

¹¹ Contemporary texts like Vitz's *Psychology as religion or the Cult of Self-worship* (1979) reflect this.

¹² Harvey, Jonathan (1999) *Music and Inspiration*, London: Faber and Faber p71

¹³ Howard Gardner in his theory multiple intelligences postulates the possibility of a "spiritual intelligence". Gardner (1983) pxviii

¹⁴ Hay, David (1982), *Exploring Inner Space*, Harmondsworth: Penguin

¹⁵ Hills and Argyle (1998) studied subjects who were members of both a church group and also a music-making group like a choir. They reported greater intensities in music making in the areas of 'joy/elation', 'excitement', 'feeling uplifted' and 'loss of sense of self'. This would certainly seem to be indicated by the presence of many pieces of religious origin in the concert hall and on disc, now dissociated from their religious roots.

¹⁶ Maslow, Abraham. H. (1967), *The Creative Attitude*. In Mooney and Razik (eds.) *Explorations in Creativity* New York: Harper and Row pp40 –55

the personality uses a language of transcendence.¹⁷ Spirituality is sometimes seen as an adult returning to the unitary experience of childhood.

The New Age has rediscovered the notion of the spiritual, which is described in a variety of ways that includes Higher Self, a higher power and spiritual beings like angels. This diversity reflects the variety of traditions that make up the cluster of belief systems that constitute the New Age. Here transcendence is arrived at through physical practices such as chanting or dancing. The New Age is often regarded as a search for transcendent value systems in the face of rampant materialism. However, it aims also to see the body and the transcendent as connected. Peter Hamel (1978) draws on the work of Jean Gebser and Lama Govinda in seeing how this search was evident in various developments in popular music and how each phase then yielded to commercialism. He refers to the first recording of the group *Pink Floyd* ‘which still conveys a feeling of open joy’ (p36) to the beginning of *Underground* and then *Psychedelic Music*. All of these as they became commercial, in his opinion, lost the sense of ‘creating a powerful attunement experience.’ (p37).

Notions of the self are developed that include spiritual elements as in Rudolf Steiner’s concept of physical etheric, mental and astral bodies. A case study in the effect of Wagner’s *Valkyrie* on a young woman includes the following descriptions:

Before the performance began she seemed rather listless and indifferent. The health aura showed signs of delicate health. The astral body was full of the usual colors, with signs here and there of irritation...her mental body was replete with thought-forms of music, [she had been studying the score before the performance]... Before the first act was half over a great difference in her health aura was noticed; it now glowed and scintillated with new vigor...I noticed some streams of light protruding from her mental body like long, waving tentacles: on the end of each was a spinning thought-form similar to a vortex-like whirlpool in water, caused by suction As some familiar motif floated up from the general vibrations of the music...these tentacles in her mental body sucked the vibrations into themselves in large proportions.... The thought-forms already there, from the previous study of music, were strengthened until they filled the body with beautiful light. It seemed to relate her to the deep pulsations of the Law of Rhythm in all nature, and the experience made the separating walls (the vibratory difference) between the lower and higher mental bodies to disappear and the ego was able to approach nearer to the personality and to impress it with loftiest ideas...

What was the effect on the astral body? ...It was not very long ere it was great boiling mass of beautiful color – a mighty many-hued bird beating its wings against a cramped cage to escape...It found its way of least resistance and rushed through that – into tears... the young girl wept violently for a while, until some of the pressure of it was exhausted, then she grew calm

¹⁷“Because of the multiplicity of human nature, of the existence in us of various and often conflicting subpersonalities, joy at some level can coexist with suffering at other levels...A vivid anticipation of future willed achievement or satisfaction can give joy even when one feels pain...The realisation of the self, or more of *being a self*...gives a sense of freedom, of power, of mastery, which is profoundly joyous. The mystics of all times and places have realised and expressed the joy and bliss which are inherent in the union of the individual will and the Universal Will.” Assagioli (1974) p201

and for the rest of the evening was benefited – in fact she was a ‘new being’ when she left the hall.¹⁸

In the world of jazz and popular musics, notions of spirituality persisted through the seventies in the work of people like the guitarist John McLaughlin and Carlos Santana, leader of the American group, *Santana*. Quotations from eastern gurus permeate the sleeve notes to the records produced. It fitted well with notions of self-actualization that came from American psychologists like Carl Rogers. The discs reflected a merger at the level of transcendence of these phenomena:

Such musical journeys into the land of the unconscious and subconscious are so numerous in the contemporary music scene...with sounds which leave no doubt that those seas and deserts and landscapes are all symbols of that inner landscape which reveals itself to the meditator.¹⁹

Steve Turner in his study *Hungry for heaven*, argues that the conviction that we are made for a transcendent world’ is ‘essential’ to the spirit of rock music, drawing on such artists and Bob Dylan, Bob Marley, Yes and U2 and that this is not only in the words chosen.²⁰

The notion of a universal philosophy expressed in music arose in the West’s interest in Hinduism and Zen Buddhism in particular. Once established it could be used to underpin experiments in fusing other traditions where the notion of a universal concept of transcendence either sits uneasily or is expressed rather differently. In general, it was reflected in a particular expressive character using western materials. Gradually it affected the level of structure as well. It attempted to affect the level of value, substituting spiritual for financial values but considerable wealth followed a number of these fusions and the gurus who inspired them.

b) The Musical Experience

¹⁸ Heline (1964) pp136-7

¹⁹ Berendt, J.E. quoted Hamel, Peter (1978) translated by Peter Lemusurier, *Through Music to the Self – How to appreciate and experience music anew*, Tisbury: Compton Press (first published in German in Vienna 1976) p134-5

²⁰ Steve Turner, *Hungry for Heaven*, Virgin Books, 1988, pp8-9 quoted in Moore, Allan (1996) Signifying the spiritual in the Music of Yes, in Steer, Maxwell (ed.) (1999) *Contemporary Music Review: Music and Mysticism (II), Vol. 14 Parts 3-4*, pp25-33 This quote p25

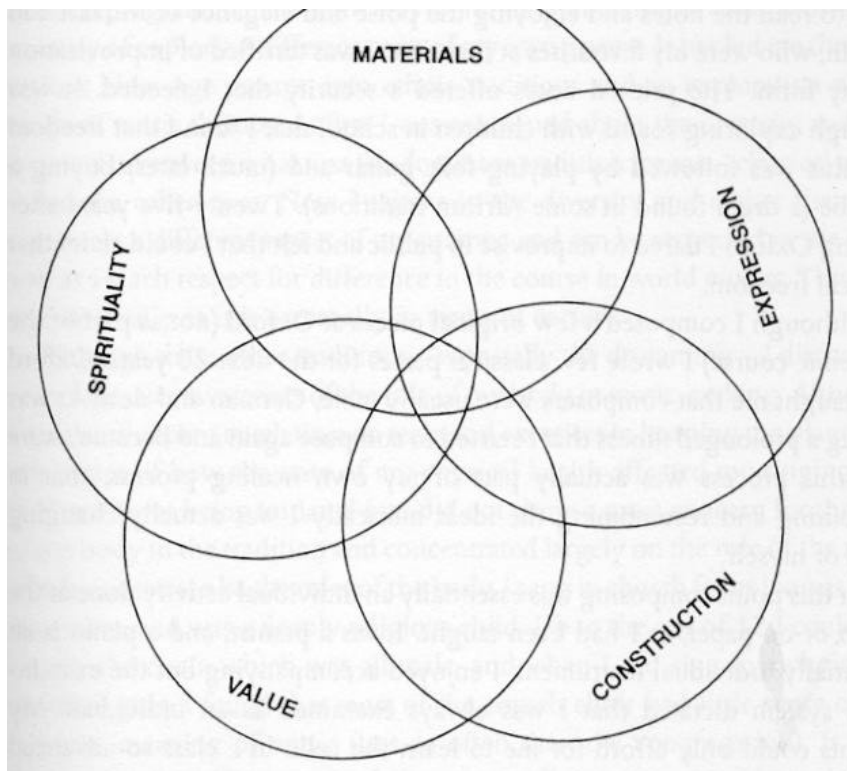


Figure One: Five areas of musical experience

I have written elsewhere about how in a piece of music five domains interact.²¹ These are

- Materials
- Expression
- Construction
- Values
- Spirituality

This is similar to James' writing on lines of enquiry which operate like various lenses.²²

The Five areas

The Five areas explored

All music consists of organisations of concrete Materials drawn both from the human body and the environment. These include musical instruments of various kinds, the infinite variety of tone colours associated with the human voice and the sounds of the natural world. In the sixties there was an increasing interest in the Materials of sound in the work of avant-garde composers as they reached for new and

²¹ To take Allegri's choral piece *Miserere* from sixteenth Italy, at the level of materials it consists of an organ and a four-part choir. At the level of expressive character it is peaceful with fluctuations as the plainchant verse come in. In form it is an alternating psalm with full harmonic verses and plainchant alternating verses. This is intimately related to its role as a psalm liturgically. At the level of value it is held as a masterpiece within the western canon of music and is frequently recorded and achieved a place in classical music charts. At the spiritual level it represents an important statement about the Christian's attitude to penitence based on a Jewish psalm, especially as expressed at the beginning of the penitential season of Lent.

²² James, William (originally published 1903, this edition 1997) *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, NY: Simon and Schuster p23

sometimes startling sonic worlds. Following them, music education developed ways of enabling pupils to engage with the Materials of sound through improvising and composing activities. Titles of pieces like Stockhausen's *Mixtur* and books like *Exploring Sound* (Tillman 1976) reflected this trend. The rise of ethnomusicology at this time also included a renewed awareness of this area as instruments from different cultures became available to Western eyes and ears.

What is used in a particular piece or tradition depends of availability of materials in certain geographical locations and the technical abilities of those involved. The choice of instruments and vocal colours and ranges will also dictate musical pitches and rhythms - the keys and scales that can be used and associated motifs and melodic and rhythmic patterns. Different traditions also value quite distinct vocal and instrumental colours. The development of certain technical skills on the part of players and singers of various traditions is associated with this area and intimately linked with the developmental of instrumental shapes and vocal tone colours. Indeed, what is often identified in performance assessment as 'technical skills' is located within this area. Instrumental and vocal studies show a concentration on this area of the musical experience. There is a television cartoon that portrays a sad 'virtuoso' violinist sitting sadly a corner before a concert. When asked by a puzzled friend why he is so sad, he replies that he can play all the scales and arpeggios very fast, but that in the pieces they are all muddled up! Here is someone able to handle the Materials area of performance very well but unable to use these technical skills to enter any of the other areas of musical experience. This is evident to some degree in some contemporary performances that display a pyrotechnic level of technical skill with little Expressive understanding or grasp of the Construction of the music. There are some aspiring performers who wait in this position for a lifetime with their books of studies, unable to move from this area into the others in their performance skills.

And yet it is possible with the most basic technical skills to enter the totality of the musical experience if these areas are regarded as interlocking and not hierarchical. A good example of this is the instrument called the singing bowl. The instrument itself comes from Middle East and requires the mastery of the technique of running the stick around the outside of metal bowl to produce a 'singing' sound full of complex overtones. This sound produced with reverence, an understanding and connection with the 'feel' of a particular group and with the intention of calming and healing the people present, can have an amazing effect. I similarly remember a young boy of about nine who attended a workshop of mine preceding a performance of my one woman show based on the life of St Hild of Whitby. He brought with him a Scottish pipe that he wished to learn to play. As part of the workshop he learned three notes. These he used in a piece depicting air in the performance which took place in an ancient chapel, full of intense atmosphere and lit only with candles. In this piece he used his very limited and newly acquired technical skill to make unbelievably expressive sounds within the structure we had worked at in the workshop. His father attended the performance and looked across at his son with an attitude of rapt attention that drew father and son together in a moment that I guess neither will forget. It was a deep spiritual and personal experience that involved all the five areas in the model above but which was entered with limited expertise in the area of Materials.

The nature of the venue in this story also had a large part to play in the musical experience as it also includes the acoustic space.²³ The acoustic space is an important part of the Materials of music. Composers for ancient cathedrals knew that each building accentuated certain tones and wrote their pieces with this in mind. There is now a return to including the venues in the natural world for musical performances including the natural sounds found in them as part of the piece. Composers like Pauline Oliveros have demonstrated their concern for acoustic space by recording in spaces like the old cistern used for her CD entitled *Deep Listening* (Oliveros 1989)

In an age of recording techniques we are aware of the need to create acoustic space artificially. In recording an opera of mine we had the singer stand at different distances from the microphone to simulate the movement on the stage; in a recording I made of my own songs we used three different levels of reverberation to suggest a small room, a concert and a larger, sacred space.

In this area also, the relationship between the body of the performer/composer and the environment is established. The Materials from which instruments are made provide an intimate link between human beings and the natural world. In traditional societies, the process of making an instrument involved a reverence towards, for example, the tree that gave its wood for the making of the drum, and the player would regard him or herself as continually in relationship to that tree every time the instrument was played. Our industrialised society with its production lines for musical instruments dislocates the connection between the natural world and the materials of sound. The role of instrument maker is dislocated from the roles of composer and performer.

The area I have called Expression was sometimes designated in performance assessment as ‘musical’. There is a story of a private piano teacher who charged one rate to teach the notes of a piece (the Materials of sound) and another if you wanted to learn the Expression! This area is concerned with the evocation of mood, emotion (individual or corporate), images, memories and atmosphere on the part of all those involved in the musical performance. This concerns mood and atmosphere. If there are words present then these influence this area.

The composer and performer will often use variations in the speed and volume level of the piece to create changes in this area together with other aspects of musical construction like metre and scoring. But this area is where the subjectivity of composer/performer and listener intersect. The intrinsic meaning of the music reflecting the subjectivity of composer and performer is often completely changed by its intersection with the subjective experience of the listener. The listener may well bring extrinsic meaning to the music – meaning that has been locked onto that particular piece or style or musical tradition because of its association with certain events in their own lives. Popular music, in particular, often conjures up a range of associations. The phrase ‘They are playing our tune’ reflects the association of certain emotional events with certain pieces. This area of musical meaning has often

²³ Michael Deason Barrow describes how he started as a cathedral chorister in the 60’s. He describes himself as a Wiltshire bumpkin who was shot very quickly into cathedral singing in which he developed a sense of the spiritual that was to last for a lifetime.

been downplayed by classical theorists.²⁴ Lucy Green's books *Music on Deaf Ears: Musical Meaning, Ideology and Education* (1988) and *Gender, Music, Education* (1997) make a very useful contribution to this debate in defining two different meanings within the music itself which she calls inherent and delineated. What is clear, however, is that extrinsic meaning – that is, expressive meaning drawn from the listener's own previous experiences - is an immensely important component in this area that has often been ridiculed or ignored by musical theorists.

The debate between absolute and referentialist views of music has raged long and hard among the theorists and composers in Western culture. This is evidenced by Schumann/Brahms debate over programme music in the nineteenth century. Whereas traditions like those of the Far East have instrumental pieces with such titles as *The Crane's Story* and *Water on a Lotus leaf*, Western music, particularly post Enlightenment, has used titles concentrating on the Construction area like *Sonata* and *Symphony*. Indeed, children have often seen pieces with such titles as being of greater Value than those with titles in the area of Expressive character. For example, in an unpublished story entitled *Mexican beans*, the author describes her favourite piano piece aged 12 which bore the title *Mexican Beans*. She writes of her shame at announcing the title and how she wished it had been called something like *Sonata No 2*

This is an area of empathy and imagination and also of identity creation. Singing songs from different cultures can give children a chance to empathize with cultures different from their own. I set a prayer from the black township of Gugulethu and when I ask to children to sing it I tell them the story of how I collected it. One child said: "When I sing that song to myself I think that somehow I am part of those people you talked about so far away."²⁵

In the area of Construction, effectiveness often depends on the right management of repetition and contrast within a particular idiom. The way in which contrast is handled within a tradition – how much or how little can be tolerated – is often carefully regulated by the elders of the various traditions – be they the composers or theoreticians of the Western classical tradition or the master drummers of Yoruba traditions. For example, the degree of repetition in the pop tradition is often much greater and more overt than in avant-Western classical music. This is one reason why the audience for the two traditions is so vastly different.

Musical forms in various cultures have approached the balance of repetition and contrast that characterises this area in a variety of ways. Effective construction depends on a degree of repetition and contrast and development of certain dramatic, movement and musical themes. There is a micro design and macro design. The whole piece has an overall shape with certain themes running through it. At a micro level, each music piece will have an internal structure. Some of these will be quite simple like ternary form – ABA – where the first section recurs at the end. This can be extended to Rondo to produce an ABACA etc. where one phrase acts as a recurring refrain. Other forms are more complex and associated with particular idioms and styles like the middle eight of the popular song and the repeated chord sequence of the twelve bar blues.

²⁴ Rahn, John, (1994), What is valuable in art, and can music still achieve it? In John Rahn (ed.) *Perspectives in Musical Aesthetics*, New York: Norton p55

²⁵ In my two collections of songs from various cultures I give the background to the songs contextualizing the material. (Tillman 1987a and 1987b)

Construction issues are well documented in the pieces that make up the classical canon (Goehr 1992), indeed some might say over documented. Most courses in music in the West have concentrated their teaching in this area. The compositional side of my music education at Oxford University, for example, consisted largely of the reproduction of empty shells of the musical forms of High Art European Music between 1540 and 1900.

The principles and terminologies developed in the Western classical tradition have often been applied to other cultures, without sufficient regard for how thinkers within those traditions have regarded their own processes of musical Construction. For example, the more circular structures of improvised traditions often sit uneasily with the use of the terminology associated with the more linear notated traditions. How musical form is perceived in oral musical cultures differs markedly from its perception in literate musical cultures.

This is the area where many claims for a spirituality associated with order have been made by traditional writers on aesthetics and spirituality linked with James's view of the religious experience:

Were one asked to characterize the life of religion in the broadest and most general terms possible, one might say that it consists of the belief that there is an unseen order, and that our supreme good lies in harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto.²⁶

The area of Values is related to the context of the music making experience. All musical experiences are culturally related. This is, perhaps, the place where there is most intersection between this model of the five areas of musical experience with that of subjugated ways of knowing identified earlier. Musical performances contain both implicit and explicit Value systems. Some are within the sounds of the music itself and some are to do with the context of the music making. However, these two areas of Value interact powerfully. Notions of internal values are a subject of debate in musicological circles (McClary 1991 and 2001) but as soon as a text or story are present, Value systems will be explicit within it, like the heterosexual values of the traditional love song and the maternal love of the lullaby. All musical pieces stand in relation to the culture in which they are created even if that relationship, like the protest songs of the sixties, is to challenge that culture. Various forms in the history of music theatre have reflected the racism, sexism and elitism of their cultures, as illustrated in the elitism of opera or the sexism of some contemporary rap traditions. In a conversation with the director of a various choirs I discovered a person who included in some programmes only musical pieces that she would consider as empowering of women, while in other programmes she would highlight the Value systems underpinning the Western canon.²⁷

This area of musical experience has often been ignored by theorists who have preferred to see individual works of art in a way that dislocates them from their social

²⁶ James, William (originally published 1903, this edition 1997) *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, NY: Simon and Schuster p59

²⁷ Unpublished conversation with Jane Ring Frank, Boston, Massachusetts, US, January 2003.

context.²⁸ In summarising the relation between music and social issues, Shepherd and Wicke write:

As we have argued, music is capable of *evoking*, in a concrete and direct, yet *mediated and symbolic* fashion, the structures of the world and the states of being that flow from them and sustain them. In operating on people through a technology of articulation, we can now argue that the sounds of music serve as well to *create* those structures, and to create them in a dialectic of perception and action *consistent* with the quintessentially symbolic character of human worlds.²⁹

External values are present in the context of the performance. There is a difference between a Christmas school nativity play and a High mass in Westminster Cathedral. The creation process will also have certain value systems. A truly democratic process will involve everyone involved in all decisions. The level of democracy involved in the process will be reflected in the values of the final product.

The available finance will be culturally determined. Opera, for example, as a form requires a large amount of money hence the problems with the maintenance of the tradition when the power of the aristocracy who supported its development is now reduced. Factors like the cost of tickets will have cultural implications that will be reflected in the piece itself.

There is a powerful interaction between Value systems and the other areas of the musical experience. For example, in the area of Construction, the creative process itself will have certain Value systems implicit within it. Some musical idioms use more democratic processes than others. The classical tradition has been quite hierarchical in its structures with a single composer constructing a piece alone, while jazz and many ethnic traditions are more democratic in their creating processes. More of these interrelationships relating to the practices of music education will be explored below.

I am defining Spirituality in this model as the ability to transport the audience to a different time/space dimension - to move them from everyday reality to 'another world'. 'Liminality' would be another possible term, as defined by Turner (1969, 1974) or the 'limit experience' (Tracy 1975). Academic postmodernism with its mistrust of metanarratives has completed the marginalisation of this area, already started by post Enlightenment suspicion of anything concerned with magic or belief (reflecting the dominant value system described above).³⁰

But the perceived effectiveness of a musical experience is often closely related to this area. Insofar as a musical experience takes us out of 'everyday' consciousness with its concerns for food, clothing and practical issues and moves us into another dimension we regard the musical experience as successful, whether we are a composer, performer or listener. Indeed some would see music as the last remaining

²⁸ This has corrected in the essentially contextualised view of music taken by ethnomusicologists.

²⁹ Shepherd, John and Wicke, Peter (1997), *Music and Cultural theory*, Cambridge; Polity press p138-9

³⁰ There is a real need for academe to reconsider its position with regard to this area – to consider, for example, the possibility of a plurality of in the area of metanarrative. Debates about the area of liminal experience in the arts may well facilitate this process.

ubiquitous spiritual experience in a secularised Western culture (Boyce-Tillman 2001b).

And it is the subject of this paper. Here we need to look at the nature of the spiritual experience. There is a line stretching through Schleiermacher, James and Otto to contemporary schools of meditation.

Rudolf Otto in his *The Idea of the Holy*. He analyses the 'Mysterium Tremendum and fascinans' as having the following elements:

- The Element of Awefulness. This he links with fear, differentiating it from ordinary fear and linking it with the Christian feeling expressed in the hymn 'Holy, Holy, Holy.' - a sense of respect for something beyond.
- The Element of 'Overpoweringness' ('majestas'). There is a feeling of one's own submergence, of being but 'dust and ashes' and nothingness. And this forms the numinous material for the feeling of religious humility.
- The Element of 'Energy' or Urgency. Vitality, passion, emotional temper, will, force, movement, excitement, activity, impetus. (P23)
- The 'Wholly other'. The stupor before something 'wholly other', whether such an other be named 'spirit' or 'daemon' or deva'...
- The Element of Fascination

He feels something that captivates and transports him with a strange ravishment, rising often enough to the pitch of dizzy intoxication; it is the Dionysiac-element in the numen. 31

But all writers agree that it is difficult to define. There is a general sense of being opposed to material and the everyday and later we shall see how this is founded on Western dualisms of mind/matter and ecology/technology. 32

How does this circle interact with the others? Wilfrid Mellers in his influential book *Caliban revisited* suggests that indigenous musical cultures use two very different rhythmic devices to achieving spiritual ecstasy through music. The first he called 'corporeal'. This is characterized by regular stresses which produce feelings 'incantatory and hypnotic'. The second he termed 'spiritual'. Here regular stresses are counteracted, yielding an effect 'liberative and, therefore, ecstasy-inducing'.³³ The first he links with rock music. Allan Moore suggests a:

a third strategy which seems worth separating from these two, wherein the absence of any explicit beat creates a 'floating' quality, in which Time's passage, far from our being set free from it, seems to be totally ignored (this is the movement of the chant, which Mellers prefers not to separate from his 'spiritual' rhythm).³⁴

Later in the article which is entitled *Signifying the spiritual in the Music of Yes*, he looks at how the presence of the spiritual in the rock traditions and particularly the

³¹ Otto, Rudolf, (1923), *The idea of the Holy: An inquiry into the non-rational; factor in the idea of the divine and its relation to the rational* Oxford: Oxford University Press pp 12-40

³² Moore, Allan (1996) Signifying the spiritual in the Music of Yes, in Steer, Maxwell (ed.) (1999) *Contemporary Music Review: Music and Mysticism (II)*, Vol. 14 Parts 3-4, , pp25-33 This quote p26

³³ Mellers, Wilfrid, (1967), *Caliban Reborn: Renewal in Twentieth century Music*, NY, Evanston, London: Harper and Row p3

³⁴ Moore, Allan (1996) Signifying the spiritual in the Music of Yes, in Steer, Maxwell (ed.) (1999) *Contemporary Music Review: Music and Mysticism (II)*, Vol. 14 Parts 3-4, , pp25-33 This quote p26

music of the group Yes. He shows how their lyrics are based on Hindu texts and how this is reflected in the structure/texture of the music itself.³⁵

In music written within particular religious traditions the nature of this world will be more tightly defined with ideas of God, heaven, and spiritual beings articulated in forms appropriate to the relevant tradition.

These five levels of musical experience enable us to examine a musical experience through five different lenses and includes the surrounds of the music as an inextricable part of the experience - so reinforcing the 'intertextuality' of the experience.

So can we use this model to examine the history of musical traditions in the West? At various times, various aspects of the musical have been prominent. The Middle Ages saw the supremacy of spirituality within a Christian spiritual frame. The Enlightenment saw a shift to Construction and the Romantic period to Expression. Modernism turned to a combination of Materials and Construction. But later in the twentieth century the interest in Spirituality increased with such pieces as the Beatles' *Within you and without you*,³⁶ John Coltrane's spiritual jazz of *India, Om* and *A Love Supreme* and Terry Riley's improvisatory musical structures, reflecting his contact with eastern musics and philosophies.

c) **The model revisited**

For this paper I am revisiting the five circle model to locate the spiritual experience as the interaction between these areas. So it can start or be concentrated in one of the areas but in the end the four areas have to interact in a way that satisfies the needs of the participating person or community. If we regard the spiritual or 'transliminal' experience as an important part of the musical experience, how can we facilitate this experience?

Here I postulate that the spiritual experience is formed by the relationality between the four areas of Materials, Expression, Construction and Values. When that fit is perfect for the participant - whether s/he be listener, composer or performer - then there is the experience that we call spiritual:

For the first twenty-five minutes I was totally unaware of any subtlety... whilst wondering what, if anything, was supposed to happen during the recital.

What did happen was magic!

³⁵ Moore, Allan (1996) Signifying the spiritual in the Music of Yes, Steer, Maxwell (ed.) (199) *Contemporary Music Review: Music and Mysticism (II)*, Vol. 14 Parts 3-4, , pp25-33 This quote p28

³⁶ At the level of Materials this is apparent in the use of the sitar in the accompaniment; at the level of Expressive character there is the reference to Hindu philosophy in the text - 'That life flows on within you and without you.' In Form it follows the strophic form with its middle eight that is familiar in the world of pop although it uses an Indian raga as the basis of its melody which sets it apart from the vernacular of that tradition. . Its inclusion on this album by the Beatles who were already famous gave it a clear and immediate value. At its Spiritual level it picked up a significant aspect of the Zeitgeist of the age of the Hippies and Flower power, which saw a significant increase in the spiritual traditions of the east and a move away from traditional Christianity.

After some time, insidiously the music began to reach me. Little by little, my mind all my senses it seemed- were becoming transfixed. Once held by these soft but powerful sounds, I was irresistibly drawn into a new world of musical shapes and colours. It almost felt as if the musicians were playing me rather than their instruments, and soon, I, too, was clapping and gasping with everyone else...I was unaware of time, unaware of anything other than the music. Then it was over. But it was, I am sure, the beginning of a profound admiration that I shall always have for an art form that has been until recently totally alien to me. ³⁷

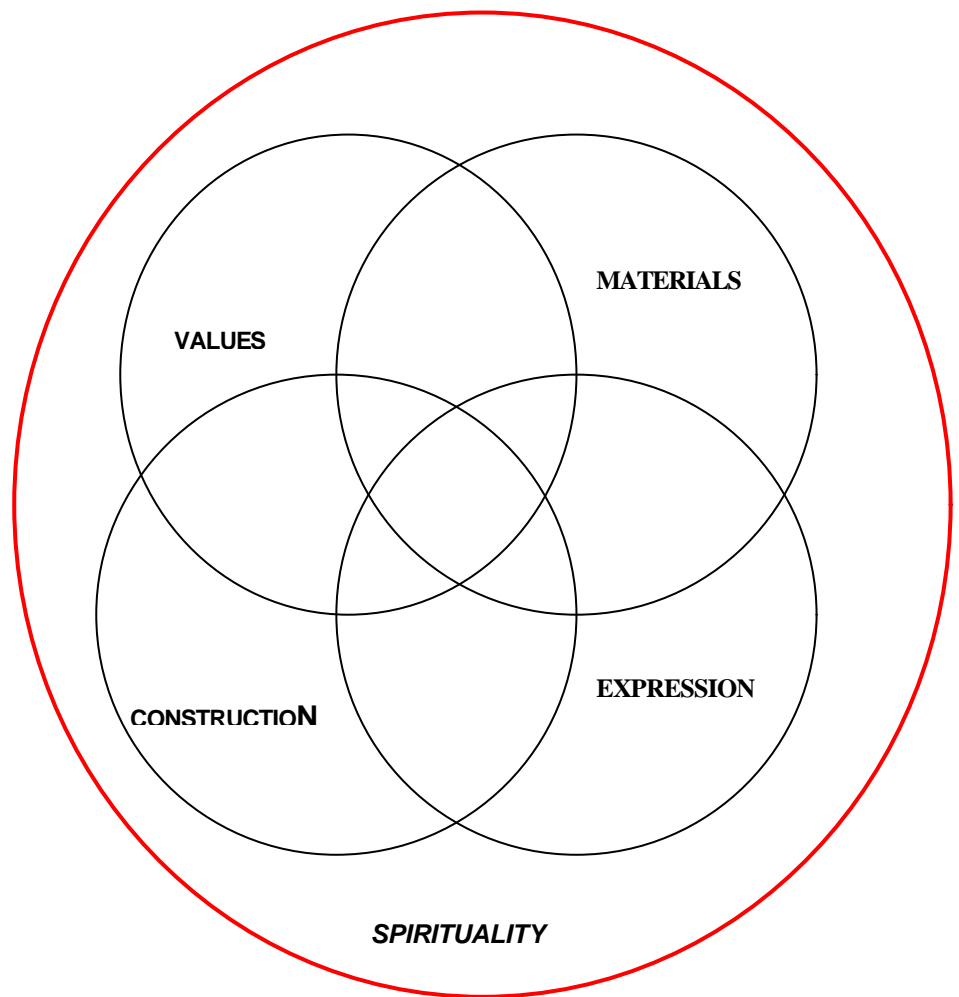


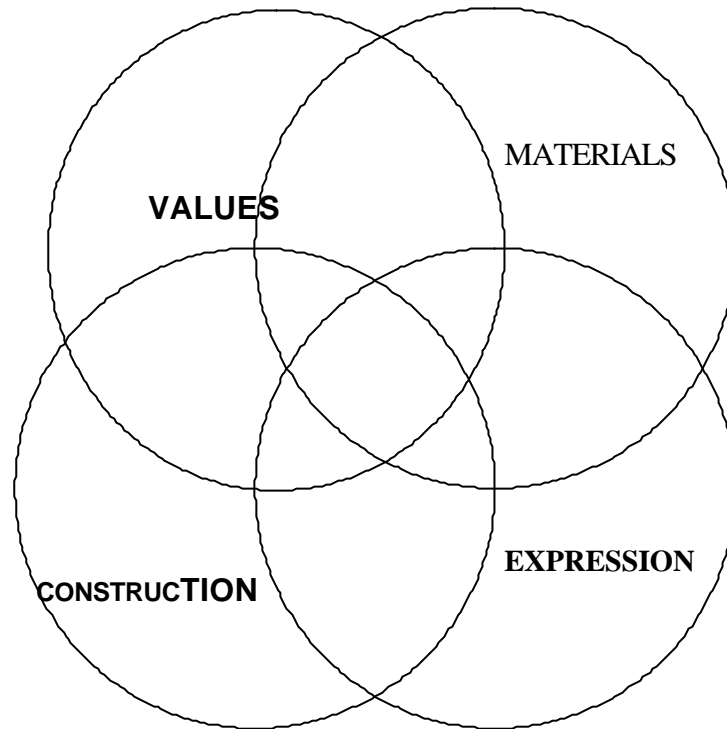
FIGURE The complete spiritual experience

The converse of this is where there is a disruption in one area or between two areas that means there is no spiritual experience at all. For example, A disruption in value systems can affect the total experience. For example, while in Greece I encountered a group of Greek orthodox worshippers who were deeply racist and homophobic. When

³⁷ Dunmore, Ian (1983), *Sitar Magic, Nadaposana One*, London: Editions Poetry. Pp20-1

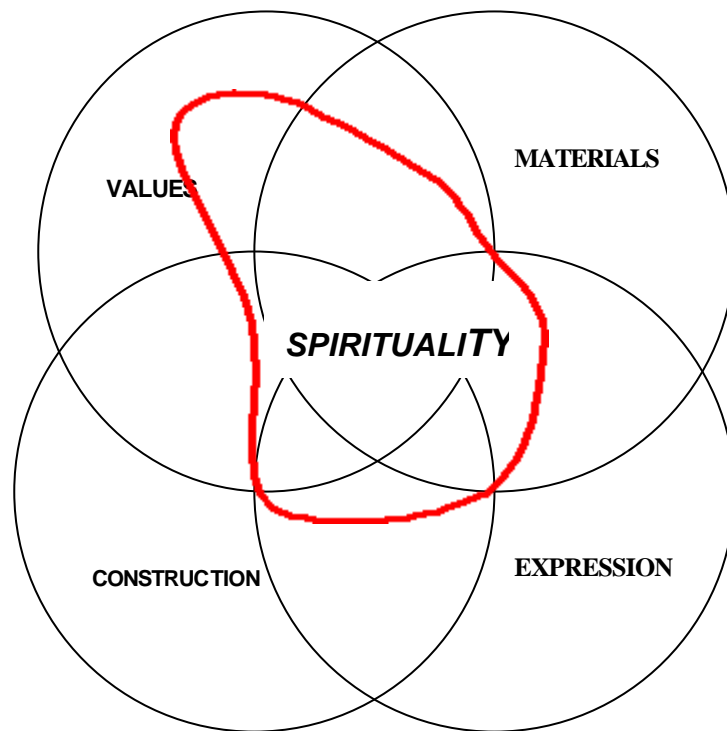
I turned on television on the Sunday morning there was Greek orthodox chanting. I had in the past found this a wonderful experience but now the value systems that I had encountered interfered with the experience.

FIGURE



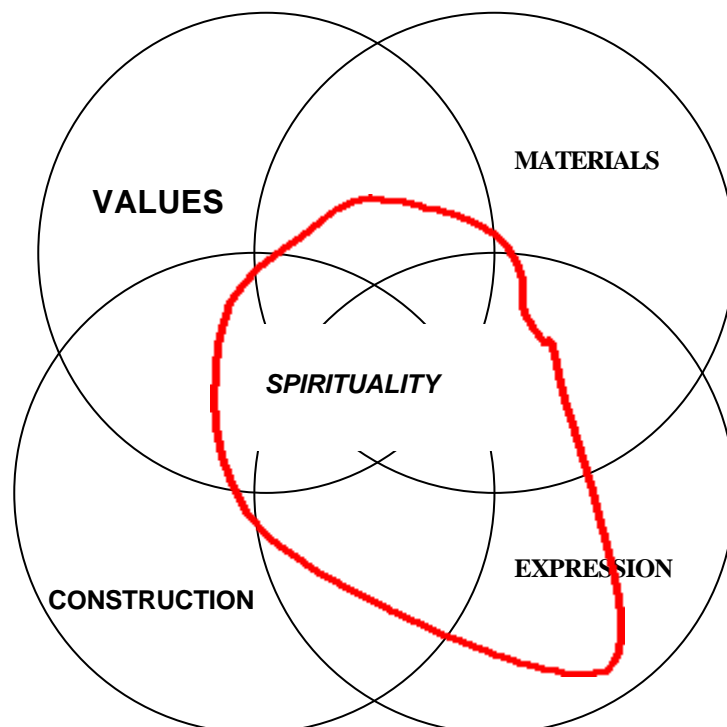
But there are different intensities in the experience which may start by a close relationship between two of the areas. Here is an example which might be a parent watching a child playing their first piece. The grasp of materials may be minimal but the powerful interaction between the Values and the other areas causes a spiritual experience.

FIGURE



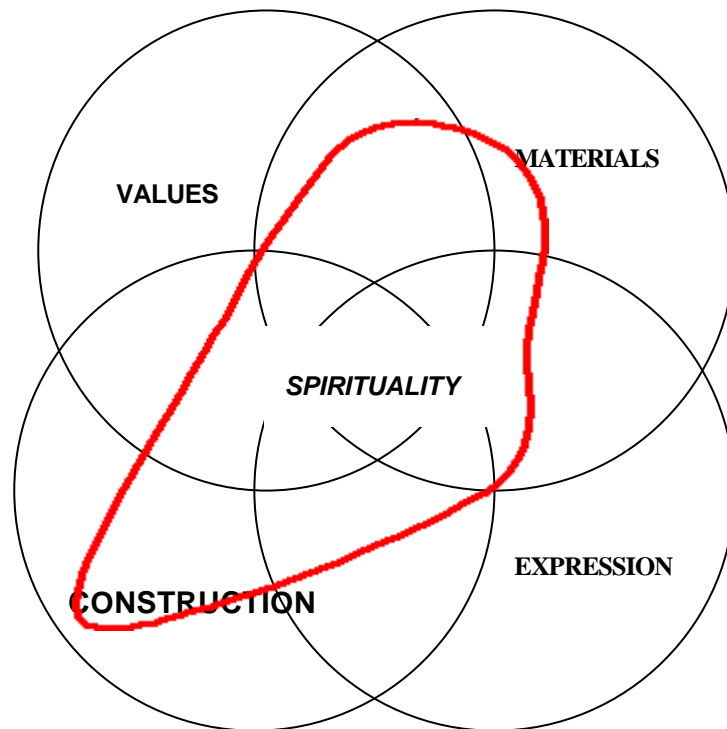
Here is an example of 'they are playing our tune where Expression and Values come together powerfully when the Construction may be weak.

FIGURE



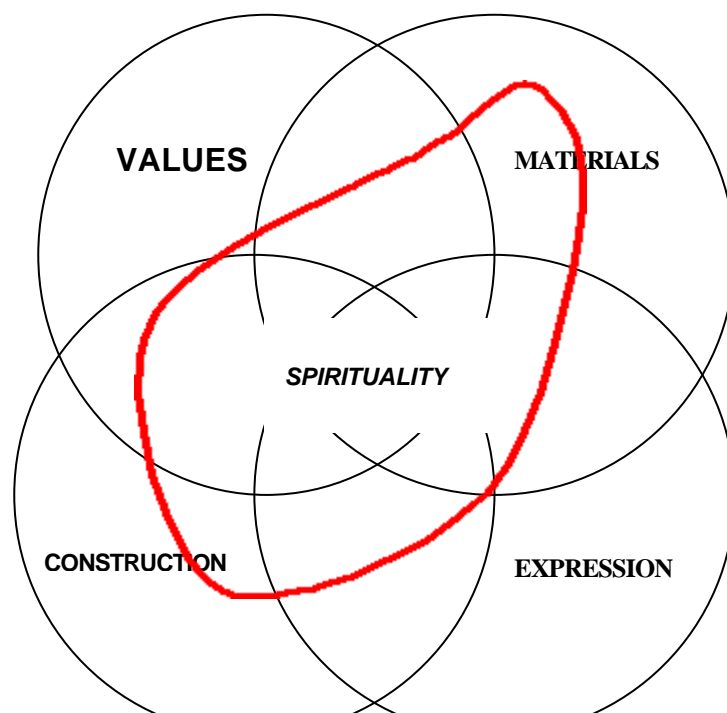
Here is an example of pattern created by a piece from the Classical tradition like Beethoven or Mozart where the area of Construction interacts powerfully with Expression:

FIGURE



Here is an example of a piece where the listener is taken up with the technical prowess of the performer which comes together with the other areas:

FIGURE



d) But music has become an increasingly complex phenomenon. Music can be entered through three activities:

- Performing/improvising
- Composing/improvising
- Listening in audience

In Western traditions the functions of composing and performing have been split by means of notation. And listening in audience has become big business. My approach is that the four circles and the potential for a spiritual experience need to be considered in all these experiences. ³⁸ However, certain areas have become prominent in the three areas:

- Materials with performing
- Construction with composing
- Listening with expression

However, spirituality appears to function differently within the activities:

The connection between music and mysticism takes two distinct forms. In the first, music takes the content of mystical belief as its own content. There is a moment in the process of making the music when metaphysical beliefs are encoded into the music, in such a way that they will have some manifest presence. Significant for the composer, in the completed piece. By this I mean that the music wholly or partly consists in the performance or transmission of a ritual, or of a metaphysical structure. The clearest example of this approach are provided by such western composers as Olivier Messiaen who have encoded metaphysical structures in their work.

In the second type, the intervention of mysticism is primarily in the productive process as process. If we define rituals, as those organised activities whose meaning devices from metaphysical considerations, then what we are speaking about here is the intervention of ritual into some dimension of music making. ³⁹

³⁸ The area of spirituality has often been regarded as the most sophisticated area of musical experience and one left to adults who have made a studied decision to embrace a faith. But, in my opinion, the musical experience whether accessed through performing, composing or listening/dancing is a holistic experience and all the areas resonate at any given time.

³⁹ Hodgkinson, Tim (1996) , Siberian Shamanism and Improvised Music in Steer, Maxwell (ed.) (1999) *Contemporary Music Review: Music and Mysticism (I), Vol. 14 Parts 3-4* , 59-65 This quote p59

Let us consider the areas separately. It is theorists who, in general, have had problems with the area and composers' and listeners' accounts of the musical experience regularly include it. Handel, for example, recounts experiences of angelic figures surrounding him, during the composition of messiah. Classical composers' accounts are filled with notions of spirituality.⁴⁰

So Jonathan Harvey, a contemporary composer locates this not with a divine presence but in the unconscious as we saw earlier. Earlier he had asked:

What is inspiration? At one level, an answer is easy to provide.....the catalyst of the creative process.....[But] it excludes an element most would argue was essential to any meaningful definition of inspiration: the element of mystery.⁴¹

Clara Schumann's account of Robert Schumann's madness provides an interesting case study here:

From the night of Friday the 10th February, 1854 until Saturday the 11th, Robert suffered from so violent an affection of the hearing that he did not close his eyes all night. He kept on hearing the same note over and over again, and at times also another interval. By day it was covered up by other sounds

[Written in April, 1854] The aural hallucinations increased markedly from the 10th to the 17th of February. We consulted another doctor, Regimental Physician Dr Boger, and Hasenclever also came daily, but only an advising friend.

On the night of Friday the 17th, after we had been in bed for some time, Robert suddenly got up and wrote down a theme, which, as he said, an angel had sung to him. When he had finished it he lay down again and all night long he was picturing things to himself, gazing towards heaven with wide-open eyes; he was firmly convinced that angels hovered round him revealing glories to him in wonderful music. They bade us welcome, and before a year had passed we should be united and with them . . . Morning came and with it a terrible change. The angel voices turned to those of demons and in hideous music they told him he was a sinner and they would cast him into hell. In short, his condition increased to an actual nervous paroxysm; he cried out with pain (for as he said to me afterwards, they pounced on him in the forms of tigers and hyenas, to seize him and two doctors, who luckily came quickly enough, could scarcely hold him. I will never forget this sight, I actually suffered the pains of torture in it. . . .

On the 20th, Robert spent the whole day at his writing desk, with pen and ink before him, and listened to the angel-voices...[he] would often write a few words, but very little, and then listen again. He had a look full of rapture that I can never forget; yet this unnatural rapture wounded my heart as much as when he was suffering from the evil spirits. Ah! all this filled my heart with the most dreadful worry about how it would end; I saw his mind ever more unsettled, yet had no idea of what still awaited him and me...

⁴⁰ Harvey, Jonathan (1999) *Music and Inspiration*, London: Faber and Faber p3

⁴¹ Harvey, Jonathan (1999) *Music and Inspiration*, London: Faber and Faber pix

During the days that followed, things remained much the same. He felt himself surrounded alternately by good and evil spirits, but no longer did he hear them only in music, often they spoke. At the same time his mind was so clear that he wrote touching, peaceful variations on the wonderfully peaceful, holy theme which he had written down on the night of the 10th; ...On Sunday, the 26th, he felt a little better, ...he ate a large supper very hastily. Then suddenly, at 9:30, he stood up and said he must have his clothes, ..."It will not be for long. I shall soon come back, cured." ⁴²

This account of his madness shows clearly how processes that had served him well in composition are now out of control. The passage reads not unlike a shamanic journey. It is interesting to reflect that if the notion of the divine and the mystical had been more part of the western tradition, Schumann might have developed ways of handling the 'other world' in which lay both the roots of his creativity and the roots of his madness.

Leading contemporary composers have absorbed ideas from other cultures, sometimes located in particular phases in their lives. These have provided conceptual ways of linking the transcendent and the physical. Karlheinz Stockhausen wrote widely on religion and music drawing heavily on eastern traditions. Here he uses the notion of the chakras to explain his ideas on music and healing:

Each of us is... a person with many levels ... I have a sexual center, three vital centers, two mental centers and a suprapersonal center. If I can perceive that, I have come far enough to have awoken seven different centers in myself. And with different things I can bring each center into vibration.... There is also music that goes through all the centers: hence there are moments in which you are addressed in a purely sacred, a purely religious way; and other moments in which you are addressed purely sensually, purely erotically. That is pretty reckless music. One must be very strong to be able to experience that completely. Above all, this music must be exceptionally well balanced, fantastically composed. If it is not, then there are overloadings, and when one hears it one is overexcited in a certain way, and brought out of equilibrium. Hence it is naturally better if one hears music that draws one up higher than one is by nature. We are mostly pretty physical sacks, are we not - all of us? ⁴³

We can see here how he struggles to bring the embodiment of the Eastern tradition together with the more transcendent Western tradition; in the middle we can see how he rates the physical as 'lower' than the spiritual. His work *Aus den Sieben Tagen* required of its performers that they fast and meditate for seven days before playing it. Its instructions read more like a manual of mediation than a musical score:

A note lives, like YOU, like ME, like THEM, like IT.

⁴² Quoted in Godwin, Joscelyn, (1987) *Music, Magic and Mysticism: A Sourcebook*, London: Arkana pp234-6

⁴³ Godwin, Joscelyn, (1987) *Music, Magic and Mysticism: A Sourcebook*, London: Arkana p288-9

Moves stretches and contracts.
 Metamorphoses, gives birth, procreates, dies, is reborn.
 Seeks, stops seeking, finds, loses, marries,
 Loves, tarries, hurries, comes and goes. Stockhausen 1968

It influenced the growth of free improvisation groups using aleatoric principles like those run by the American composer Pauline Oliveros and Terry Riley

The German composer and music educator Carl Orff had notions of ecology underpinning his musical philosophy and used it to bring the physical as a significant element in the musical experience:

Elemental Music is never just music. It is bound up with movement,, dance and speech, and so it is a form of music in which one must participate, in which one is involved not as a listener but as a co-performer. It is pre-rational, has no over-all form, no architectonics, involves no set sequences, ostinati or minor rondo-forms. Elemental Music is earthy, natural, physical, capable of being learnt and experienced by anybody, child's play ... Elemental Music, word and movement, play, every-thing that awakens and develops the powers of the soul builds up the humus of the soul, the humus without which we face spiritual soil-erosion. When does soil-erosion arise in nature? When the land is cultivated in an unbalanced way, when the natural hydrological cycle is disturbed 'by over-cultivation, when forest and hedge are sacrificed on utilitarian grounds to the drawing-board mentality - in short, when the balance of nature is undermined by one-sided encroachment. And in the same way we face spiritual soil-erosion when man estranges himself from the elemental and loses his balance.⁴⁴

The French composer Olivier Messiaen made his own synthesis of Christian/Gnostic mysticism with Hindu belief systems. This underpinned many of his works, many of which concerned religious themes. Minimalism was also with associated with meditative techniques and ideas from the East. Both Terry Riley and La Monte Young studied with Prandit Pran Nath of the singing school of Kirana in northern India. The work of Steve Reich and Philip Glass bear the marks of similar influences. The contemporary Danish composer, Per Norgard is pictured on the front of a book on his music in a position in which he 'listens for the deep "shadow tune" of the ocean surf'⁴⁵.

Other composers have developed meditative techniques to aid the process of composition. Andrew Downes writes:

For me, prayer and meditation...lead to the ability to calm one's mind and focus one's thoughts in the context of an inner personal environment of peace and tranquillity, however stressful life has become In this way I an able to practise my art whatever the circumstances, whereas previously, any kind of personal stress or problem was liable to stem the creative flow.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Hamel, Peter (1978) translated by Peter Lemusurier, *Through Music to the Self – How to appreciate and experience music anew*, Tisbury: Compton Press (first published in German in Vienna 1976) p18

⁴⁵ Beyer Anders (ed.) (1996) *The Music of Per Norgard: Fourteen Interpretative Essays* Aldershot: Scolar Press p17

For a composer such techniques are invaluable. Indeed, I would say that they are essential. Focusing logically and entirely on the sound of music is incredibly difficult in a world filled with words, unharmonious noise, deadlines and stress...Downes 1998

Such techniques are sometimes found in the preparation of performers:

The physical state of the performer is therefore as much part of our potentially resonant system as any other component. Unfortunately most musicians only pay attention to their bodies when a problem arises – a strained muscle, a technical difficulty or an aching back are common examples....From our point of view as musicians, it is important to note how a balanced state which allows us to perform unhindered by ‘technical’ difficulties is dependent on our mental state being itself free from obstacles....If we regard music as an alchemy of spirit and material, we also accept that true creativity springs naturally from a mind unburdened by ego and mental aberrations. Nevertheless, despite the varying degrees of spiritual development which are to be found in any group of people, including orchestras, the power of music is such that it can overcome this obstacle and indeed remove it completely, depending on the resistance of the musicians....We do however have to generate a conscious awareness that such states exist, if want states of resonance to be the norm – for this reason, the importance bringing spiritual criteria out into the open cannot be overemphasised, especially in Western society. When an amateur plays with love, the hardened professional is shamed into silence....I have in the past suggested to an orchestra (The Electric Symphony Orchestra) that we have a group meditation session before rehearsals and concerts....The concerts themselves were both excellent and memorable....⁴⁶

He initiates a meditation programme but finds his own lack of expertise a drawback and in the end settles for a short period of silence.

A great deal of stress in Western performance has been laid on technique (Materials) and the notion of the spiritual appears less here perhaps because of the absence of improvisatory elements

Mysticism appears in music either as musical content or as an intervention into the process of music-making. This article discusses the latter in terms of the experience of the improvising musicians Tim Hodgkinson and Ken Hyder. During the search for a method of improvising without predetermined structural constraints they began to look at the state of mind of the performers, and this led them to investigate shamanism....The most important element they as Westerners were able to draw from a shamanic culture was the very close connection made between the natural environment – considered as sound- and the inner state of a person’s being.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Gonski, Richard, *Symphonic Mind: States of Consciousness in Orchestral Performance*, in Steer, Maxwell (ed.) (1999) *Contemporary Music Review: Music and Mysticism (I)*, Vol. 14 Parts 3-4, pp55-64 this quote 61-2

⁴⁷ Hodgkinson, Tim (1996) , *Siberian Shamanism and Improvised Music* in Steer, Maxwell (ed.) (1999) *Contemporary Music Review: Music and Mysticism (I)*, Vol. 14 Parts 3-4, , 59-65 This quote p59

The contemporary lutenist, Anthony Rooley, attempts to restore this dimension when he sets out the sense of sacred space that a performer needs to create:

As audience and performer become more attuned to this simple truth, the more the performing space is filled with awe and wonder. In the beginning...there is utter rest, utter silence.... from which the performance begins to manifest. In the symbolic beginning of creation as represented by the beginning of the performance we need some simple techniques to exercise ourselves with...Like taking a breath...The simple technique for beginning a performance clearly is not always easy to do when several hundred people are watching your every quiver.⁴⁸

In indigenous traditions music notions of spirituality are much more part of the conceptual frame. It has traditionally been used to control and modulate the spirits and a music without spirituality is inconceivable. Nisa is an !Kung woman in Botswana. In an account collected by Marjorie Shostak in 1970 and 1971, she describes herself as a master at trancing to drum-medicine songs with many successes in curing people with her hands:

I know how to trick God from wanting to kill someone and how to have God give the person back to me.⁴⁹

Listeners' accounts often concentrate on the Expressive area . As we saw in the account of the sitar recital above it starts in the expressive area and then moves to the Materials (the sounds themselves) before moving to the Spiritual experience:

d) **Spirituality and culture**

So we can return to our opening questions about all music being sacred. ⁵⁰
The fundamental question is: are such value systems exported with the music and do they depend on the culture of the listener? How far can such value systems be exported through the music? Here a diagram showing the interface between the areas of religion, culture and spirituality is helpful:

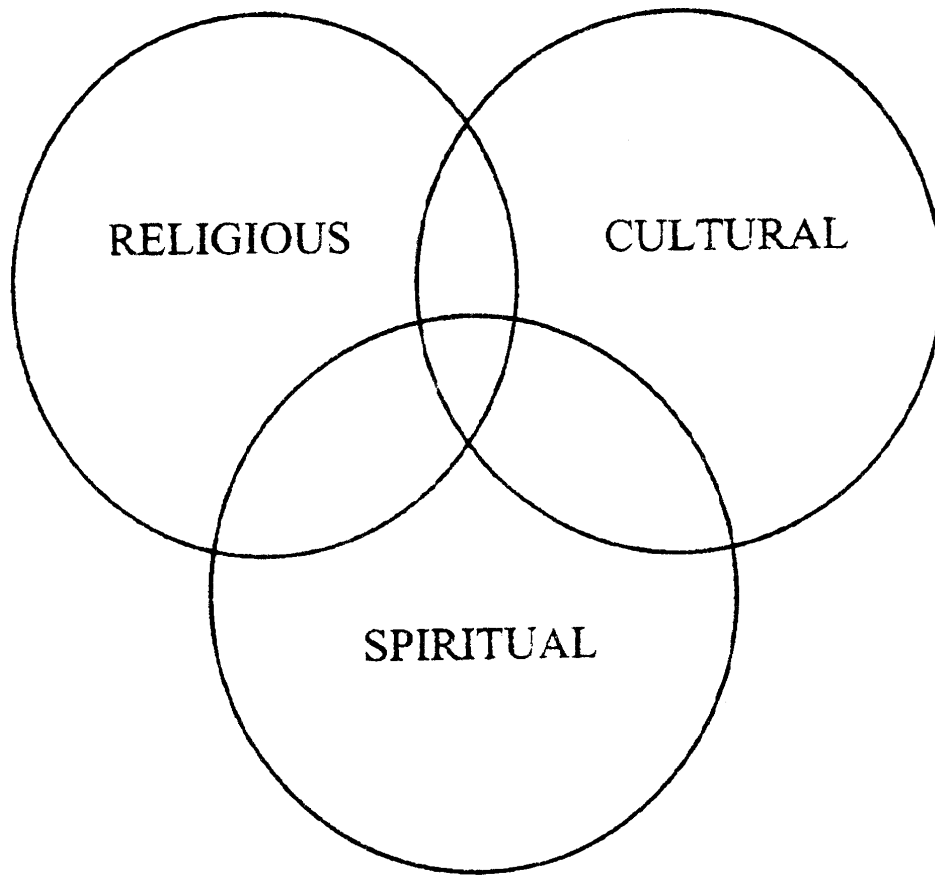
FIGURE: Spirituality, Culture and Religion (Ian Ainsworth Smith)⁵¹

⁴⁸ Rooley, Anthony, (1990) *Performance: Revealing the Orpheus Within*, Shaftesbury: Element Books p49

⁴⁹ Young, Serenity (ed.) (1993), *An Anthology of Sacred Texts by and about Women*, New York: Crossroad p250

⁵⁰ Feld, Steven (1982), *Sound and Sentiment: Birds, weeping, poetics, and Song in Kaluli expression*. Publications of the American Folklore Society, n.s. 5. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press

⁵¹ Ainsworth-Smith, Ian (1998), The Spiritual and Pastoral Dimensions of Chaplaincy Work, *Journal of Interprofessional Care* Vol. 12 No4 , November pp383-387



Ian Ainsworth Smith (1998)

Chapter 8: Figure Three

~~DIAGRAM A~~

Religion, culture and spirituality interact. This helps us to see the dilemma of a universal spiritual music? Is there a single experience? Is the experience defined by the experiencer? Certain images that appear in visionary experiences are specific to a specific religion like the appearances of the Virgin Mary. The way the experience is constructed – its ritualistic patterns - depends on the surrounding culture. What this diagram shows is not only the overlap between the areas but how each area appears to stand free separate from the others. In this argument this is particularly significant for the area of spirituality:

In previous periods, the sensations I am experiencing would probably have been described as the inspiration of God, or of a mysterious unconscious. It is possible that, in the future, they will be understood along the lines I have described – or along some other lines, appropriate for our culture and age. Inspiration cannot remain constant: each composer must discover it anew.⁵²

⁵² Harvey, Jonathan (1999) *Music and Inspiration*, London: Faber and Faber p162

In many traditions all music is indisputably sacred. Steven Feld in his remarkable research on the Kaluli people of Papua New Guinea argues that for them the cultural system *is* sound. In *Sound and Sentiment* he demonstrates how the Kaluli hear reality through music and sonic rituals like laments

Theorists are divided in the area of the exporting of musical meaning. Postmodernism has emphasized the plurality of meaning. Leppert is suspicious an omni-dimensional quality in music that we might call spiritual. He emphasizes music's specific materiality, history and gendered nature⁵³. Rouget wrestles with this notion in the area of possession:

There is something paradoxical about music and possession... Music occurs as one of the component parts of those systems, and the role it plays varies with the models upon which those systems are structured. But, since music is itself a system, its relations with each model is equally determined by its own organization, thus accounting for their protean character. How can we try to grasp such a constantly shifting reality?⁵⁴

However, we may now be in an age where the concentration on the individual is such that it is not only impossible to generalize from culture to culture but from individual to individual.^{55 56}

Lawrence Sullivan in introducing his anthology entitled *Enchanting Powers: Music in the World's religions* comes down in favour of exporting meaning with the music:

Religious music adapts its sacrality and redemptive power to new cultural expressions encountered through colonialism, immigration and market forces (such as advertising or distribution systems). In this way, each contributor discloses important correspondences between religious music and other fundamental realities in the cultural world of the performers, including: patterns of history or social organization or emotion; conditions of the soul; powers of the state; histories of material production; structures of law; motivations that vitalize new generations; manifestations of ethnicity and class; models of cultural memory; and even local conflicts and forms of disenfranchisement provoked by the politics of globalism itself (as evident in global economies of music recording and distribution as well as in universalizing forms of analysis). These elements and more are found in religious musics and transported within their performed expressions.⁵⁷

The fact that these meanings are embedded in the structures does not mean that they are necessarily able to be decoded by the listener. A somewhat naïve view

⁵³ Leppert, Richard (1993) *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation and the history of the Body* Berkeley: University of California Press

⁵⁴ Rouget, Gilbert (1987) translated by Biebuyck, Brunhilde, *Music and trance: A Theory of the relations between Music and Possession*, Chicago and London; University of Chicago Press p 31

⁵⁵ James, William (originally published 1903, this edition 1997) *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, NY: Simon and Schuster p45

⁵⁶ from Seeley, J. (1886), *Natural Religion*, 3rd edition, Boston pp91,122 quoted in James, William (originally published 1903, this edition 1997) *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, NY: Simon and Schuster pp76-7

⁵⁷ Sullivan, Lawrence E (1997) *Enchanting Powers: Music in the World's religions*, Harvard: Harvard University press pp9-10

of the nature of musical meaning permeates much popular thinking about music which sees it somewhat as a lorry transporting goods from one place to another – i.e. that what the composer/performer put in can necessarily be retrieved by the listener *in the same form*. Although such logic can by simple experimentation with programme music be refuted, it is nonetheless possible that in areas like the sacred it is potentially true and that such a theory can be modified to suit the more intuitive areas of human experience, when it will not fit the more material and concrete areas.

In many circles music understood to be religious in origin does have particular significance beyond that of music of non-religious origins. As we have seen above, whether this is the same religious meaning as it had for the originators is a matter for debate. The New Age would claim that there is a special dimension within religious music.

However, the importance of the religious origins of particular music may simply be the result of the increasing dependence our society has on words for entering the musical experience.⁵⁸ If we know that the origins of the music are religious we are more likely to have an experience that we would define as religious. So we see here how complex the interface between the areas is. What this discussion shows us is how significant the area of values is the spiritual dimension of the musical experience.

The rest of this paper will look at various aspects of this experience in an attempt to define spiritual showing how the various areas of the model resonate within them. It will start with the area of Expression and move to notions of self-actualisation. This essentially individualised notion will lead to an examination to the role of ethics and social justice. The communal and/or unitive nature of the experience will lead to the states of ecstasy and trance and the place of hallucinogens, which will lead to the role of the body in the spiritual experience. These explorations will be linked with the models already discussed:

- The areas of musical experience
- The three entrances to the musical experience
- The interface between culture, religion and spirituality

Characteristics of the spiritual experience in Music:

a. The role of emotions

Expression and values

The experience of the listener often starts in this area. And many theorists see how the construction element mirrors the emotional movement of life (Langer 1953). Paul Robertson cites Manfred Clynes' work linking the movement of music with emotion through the body:

Manfred Clynes has superbly shown the exact connection between the physiology of emotional experience and its precise musical counterparts in musical gesture.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Blake, Andrew (1997) *The Land without Music: Music Culture and society in twentieth century Britain*, Manchester: Manchester University Press p7

⁵⁹ Robertson, Paul (1998) *The Case for Music*, *Yamaha Education Supplement*, Issue 28, Spring/Summer, p21

Anthony Storr uses physical factors in distinguishing feelings and emotion:

the patterns of mathematics and the patterns of music both engage our feelings, but only music affects our emotions. Herein lies the difference in our response to each. Emotions involve the body; feelings do not...Music promotes order within ourselves in a way which mathematics cannot because of music's physical effects...Music is less abstract than mathematics because it causes physiological arousal and because the sounds from which it probably originated are emotional communications. It is both intellectual and emotional, restoring links between mind and body.⁶⁰

Much of James's writing concerns emotion and its place in the spiritual experience.

As there thus seems to be no one elementary religious emotion, but only a common storehouse of emotions upon which religious objects may draw, so there might conceivably also prove to be no one specific and essential kind of religious object, and no one specific and essential kind of religious act.⁶¹

This would seem, in the West at least, the expressive character of the music is an important part of the spiritual experience. So when we contact our deepest emotions we somehow feel in touch with a powerhouse within and something beyond ourselves. Ruth Westheimer draws on many experiences as a German Jew separated permanently from her parents on the power of singing to deal with the deepest emotions:

Shortly, I would be separated from my parents through war and would be living in the children's home in Switzerland, not sure if I would ever see my family again (I would not.) It may seem that with their sentimental messages of family and loneliness these two songs would have been too much to bear. But the fact remains that I sang them again and again and, somehow, took some comfort from them. And music does have this capacity to help us address our emotions, some of them happy, some of them sad, some of them indescribable in words. It may seem an odd comparison, perhaps, but I wonder if for me, those simple German songs were not somehow the equivalent of the blues for American blacks: a way to confront my unhappiness and loneliness and, for a moment at least, overcome them.⁶²

What I do know is that the hopelessness I felt was so deep, I could admit it only in song.⁶³

⁶⁰ Storr, Anthony (1993), *Music and the Mind*, London: HarperCollins p183

⁶¹ James, William (originally published 1903, this edition 1997) *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, NY: Simon and Schuster p40

⁶² Westheimer, Dr Ruth (2003), *Musically Speaking: A Life through song*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania press pp16

⁶³ Westheimer, Dr Ruth (2003), *Musically Speaking: A Life through song*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania press pp 64

I sang that lullaby – which has a melody written by Heinrich Isaak back in 1490 – to my children. And maybe I mangled the melody, but I felt – and still feel – the sweetness of it in my bones.⁶⁴

So music is able to handle the paradoxes set up by feeling mixed and contradictory emotions which are embedded in its structure:

Music-at once so seemingly tangible and yet so mysterious in its potency, seems to stand on the cusp of the noumenal and the material world, and in so far as we can identify the emotional geometry that constitute its laws, offers us a glimpse into the true nature of our selves.⁶⁵

This is such a powerful experience it is often constructed as divine and involves the powerful coming together of the areas of Expression, Construction and Values. Joscelyn Godwin links this with spiritual ideas:

The best definition I can give of it is that music is an idealised mirror of human life. It offers a spectrum of rich emotions – not all of them pleasant – contained within elegant structures, just like the soul inhabiting the body. Foremost among these emotions are the many shades of love, from eroticism to compassion (the latter especially in Beethoven). But none of it is absolutely serious; it is all presented with the context of a game or play. Moreover, the listener or performer, however enraptured, may remain as an untouched witness of all the emotions, or structures, and dreams, like the higher self or spirit from whose point of view they are all *maya*, or illusion.⁶⁶

This is interesting because he too combines Expression and Construction and it also links with later ideas of liminality in the use of play and freedom and the release of everyday emotions.

b. Self actualisation and identity Expression, Values, Materials

We have already seen above about how Romantic views emanating from the nineteenth century came to become entwined with mid twentieth century notions of self-actualisation. This too sits in a conjunction of Expression and Values.. This is part of the Enlightenment search for happiness (enshrined in the US declaration of Independence) James includes this in his dimensions:

Religious feeling is thus an absolute addition to the Subject's range of life. It gives him a new sphere of power. When the outward battle is lost and the outer world disowns him, it redeems and vivifies an interior world which otherwise would be an empty waste.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Westheimer, Dr Ruth (2003), *Musically Speaking: A Life through song*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania press p13

⁶⁵ Robertson, Paul, Music as a model of the human Psyche, in Steer, Maxwell (ed.) (1999) *Contemporary Music Review: Music and Mysticism (I)*, Vol. 14 Parts 3-4, , pp11-31 This quote p35

⁶⁶ Godwyn, Joscelyn, *Taste, Snobbery and Spiritual Style in Music*, in Steer, Maxwell (ed.) (1999) *Contemporary Music Review: Music and Mysticism (I)*, Vol. 14 Parts 3-4, , 47-53 This quote p52

⁶⁷ James, William (originally published 1903, this edition 1997) *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, NY: Simon and Schuster pp54-5

In trying to build on this he claims a richness of emotion in religious experience beyond other sorts of happiness:

“A solemn state of mind is never crude or simple – it seems to contain a certain measure of its own opposite in solution, A solemn joy preserves a sort of bitter in its sweetness”⁶⁸

The notion of self actualisation chimes in with the privatized/individualized view of spirituality (and happiness) that we have already noted. Passages from music therapists also link healing, self-realisation and transcendental qualities. This is usually linked with improvisation. These are brought together in a passage in which Clive Robbins links the notion of transcendence with joy and self-realisation. In the fifth session with a four-year-old autistic girl, Nicole with severe learning difficulties, he writes:

Stepping rhythmically from foot to foot, she throws her body as far as she can from one side to the other. Her face shows utter joy and release matched in spirit by the joyfulness in Carol’s [the music therapist] stimulating and playing.⁶⁹

He comments:

It is important not to undervalue *joy*. Joy is more than fun, more than just having a good time. There is something transcendent about the purity of joy, something that relates to an original realisation of one’s full humanness. For a child as developmentally disabled as Nicole, joy in discovering self-expression or in achieving musical creation with a therapist can be momentous....Joy is nourishment.⁷⁰

He also extols the virtues of the capacity to ‘wonder’ which he calls ‘the root source of both scientific enquiry and creative endeavour.’⁷¹ He links this with ‘a romantic attitude’ on the part of the therapist which he sees as essential to the nurturing of ‘hope, caring, compassion and insight.’

Links with the body (Materials) are established by developments in neuroscience. Oliver Sacks describes the effect of both performing and listening to music on the brain:

Mercifully, what medication cannot achieve, music, action, or art can do – at least for the time that it lasts (‘You are the music/while the music lasts).But, in a way which is wonderful to see, their EEG’s – like their clinical states – become entirely normal when they are playing or listening to music; only to fall

⁶⁸ James, William (originally published 1903, this edition 1997) *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, NY: Simon and Schuster p55

⁶⁹ Robbins (1993) p15

⁷⁰ Robbins (1993) p15-6

⁷¹ Robbins (1993) p16

back into the grossest pathology when the music stops. This normalization of the EEG occurs even if the music is only played mentally.....⁷²

The development of New Age traditions emphasise often the healing aspects of music often through performance. This is often couched in terms of self development. The uniting of music and breathing (a concentration on the Materials) in simple exercises has been seen to have profound effects on very disturbed individuals:

Meditative music, long sustained sounds, gentle movements or even a single note can be appreciated and accepted for the first time, even by the most rigidly intellectual or drug-saturated 'nit-wit', if only he gives in to the task of observing his own breathing: when it comes in, when it goes out, whether it is regular or restricted. Body-awareness is certainly a capability, or rather a gift, which is diametrically opposed to our competition-orientated upbringing...Ways need to be found...that will allow man [sic] to find his own vibration....⁷³

In this discovery of the conjunction of Materials, Expression and Values for the purposes of self actualisation, there is a discovery of Hindu traditions such as the chanting of the OM syllable and a revival of an interest in Gregorian traditions and the popularity of the chants of Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) reflects their capacity to induce transcendent experiences. The practice of overtone chanting has been adapted from traditions found among Tibetan monks. The practice is one of singing one note while changing the shape of the vocal cavities so that the different harmonics are accentuated. This gives the impression that two notes are being sung simultaneously. Goldman calls it a One Voice Chord (Goldman 1992 p71).

There are groups of overtone chanters meeting regularly with spiritual and healing intentions. Jill Purce runs regular workshops helping people to develop the technique for their own healing. Her workshops include group overtone chanting as well as a range of vocal techniques to connect with oneself, with others and with the cosmos

There is a profound sense of disenchantment in Western society. I think this is because, quite literally, there is no chant in our lives anymore. All the situations in which members of traditional cultures came together to chant have been eroded away, so we fell disempowered and helpless in a desacralized world. My aim is to re-enchant the world, to make it more magical through people chanting together again. The workshop gives us a real sense of what a literally enchanted community could be like. Purce 1998

⁷²From Awakenings by Oliver Sacks Quoted in Robertson, Paul, Music as a model of the human Psyche, in Steer, Maxwell (ed.) (1999) *Contemporary Music Review: Music and Mysticism (I)*, Vol. 14 Parts 3-4, , pp11-31 This quote p31

⁷³ Hamel, Peter (1978) translated by Peter Lemusurier, *Through Music to the Self – How to appreciate and experience music anew*, Tisbury: Compton Press (first published in German in Vienna 1976) p174-5

c. Ethics, Action and Community

Construction and Values

Some philosophers of the spiritual experience recognise its validity in whether it results in a change of life or in some action. This has not been so much a feature of the individualised version of it (see Grace Jantzen below). The split with the body in western dualism has partly underpinned this. The experience has been seen as essentially mental and almost body-denying. In education, songs have traditionally been used to encourage ethical action:

They teach not only co-ordination and movement but also cooperation, how to act in unison, and how to be attentive and disciplined depending on what the words tell you to do.⁷⁴

This use of music as therapy has resulted in active life style change. The German clarinettists and psychotherapist Ernst Flackus used Zen meditation music in his treatment programmes for drug addicts in the 1970's. Here he combined music listening with methods of autogenous training:

During the exercise I played the Zen meditation music softly over a loudspeaker system, but nevertheless made it clear beforehand that the patient should not listen to the music but simply concentrate on the weight and warmth of his body... This introductory exercise was successfully carried out, and encouraged me to introduce specially chosen electronic music from the tenth session onwards. Particularly suitable were tapes on which experiences of nature, such as the pattering of rain with the sun coming out, were represented electronically.⁷⁵

In the same paper he describes trying to use the music of the Beatles both because of the strong beat and the association with drugs, alcohol and ecstatic dancing. Classical music also proved unsuccessful because it recalled bad experiences of music lessons and the training they had received in listening in the Classical tradition. Clients perceived Classical Zen music and electronic music 'virtually as abstract sounds' and then distinguishes this from the listening style of western concert:

[the subjects do] not listen to them, but merely half-perceive them in the background and in this way ..allow them, so to speak, to flow into them... The music hovers in the air as a vibration, as "tone-colour" For the young person this resistance is so soothing, and also removes distortions and excesses, be he never so at home in other familiar "noise scenes" at home, Beat-dive, café or discotheque. Of course, the participants first had to learn the other way in which it is possible, and necessary, to appreciate sounds, if these were to mean any gain in strength to them. It also dawned on them that

⁷⁴ Westheimer, Dr Ruth (2003), *Musically Speaking: A Life through song*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania press p12

⁷⁵ Flackus, Trug der Drogen 1974 quoted in Hamel, Peter (1978) translated by Peter Lemusurier, *Through Music to the Self – How to appreciate and experience music anew*, Tisbury: Compton Press (first published in German in Vienna 1976) p169

one perceives and listens to a concert differently, and more deeply, in a state of relaxation than through any activated or agitated form of participation.⁷⁶

This is an interesting reflection in the light of the model of Culture/Religion and Spirituality above. It would seem that the sounds chosen for listening need to be different from those of the culture of the clients in order to achieve this abstract quality. Sounds of their own culture, be they popular and classical, cannot achieve the level of abstraction for this combination of meditation and therapy. In terms of music and community creation and maintenance, Classical Greek literature is filled with stories embodying the potential ethical power of music.⁷⁷ Ficino revived these ideas in the Renaissance.⁷⁸ The link is still there in government documents in the UK where the spiritual is sometimes linked with the delivery of the citizenship agenda in particular (DFES 2002, QCA 2002), including religious, moral, cultural, personal, social and health issues.). Educationalists have often had this as an end. Heidi Westerlund states her own view that:

My intention was also to show that music could be a genuine way to *create* situations, to *construct* social relations in situations, to *communicate* in a holistic way that combines body and ethics, individual and community.⁷⁹

Many musicians working in the area of cultural fusion look towards music as way of justice making for the wider society. Paul Simon in his recording *Graceland* in the more folk/popular tradition had the explicit intention of justice within the context of apartheid in South Africa. Spiritual elements are present in the opening song *The Boy in the Bubble* contains the lines:

Medicine is magical and magical is art.

The merging of the Spiritual with the ethical is apparent in Simon's own process account:

Certain sounds are going to present certain feelings to me...If you don't come at it from an unexpected place, it's going to be a cliché. But if you come at it from the right place, it sounds like a moment in church.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Flacus quoted in Hamel, Peter (1978) translated by Peter Lemusurier, *Through Music to the Self – How to appreciate and experience music anew*, Tisbury: Compton Press (first published in German in Vienna 1976) p170

⁷⁷ There is a story from Pythagoras who encounters a violent scene on the way home and persuades a flautist to change his tune from one in the Phrygian mode to a song in a tranquilizing metre which results in the calming of the man's madness. (James 1993 p32) The sixth century theorist, Boethius revived these Platonic ideas attributing moral influence to music and recommending 'prudent and modest music'. (Godwin 1987 p45)

⁷⁸ "The ground for knowledge of and action within the wider world, whether social, material or spiritual." Lawrence 1997 p1

⁷⁹ Westerlund, Heidi (2002), *Bridging Experience, Action, and Culture in Music Education*, Studia Musica 16, Helsinki: Sibelius Academy p144

⁸⁰ Simon, Paul (1994) quoted in White, Timothy *Lasers in the jungle: the conception and maturity of a musical masterpiece* CD 9 46430-2 Warner Brothers p10

Here we see issues of ethics entering all the areas of musical experience to produce a Spiritual experience.

d. Community, connection

Expression, Values, Construction

This area of connection and community is connected with ethical notions in the spiritual experience. Grace Jantzen critiques James's privatized spiritual experience.

Thus for Schleiermacher the individual subject of the Enlightenment has private intense feelings which are seen as the core of religion. Cultural or material positioning would not at bottom affect the experiences or even the subjects who have them; only the way they would later describe the experiences would be affected. By such a gesture of privatization, religion could be removed from the political realm. The material and discursive position of religious believers and their power-relationships- whether of dominance or oppression — could be ignored.

There is nothing in Schleiermacher's writings to warrant the supposition that this was his deliberate intent. There is, however, every reason to see that his account of religion was highly congenial to the dominant classes in an age of capitalist and imperialist expansion. It became possible simultaneously to foster 'depth of inward religious feeling' and to aver that spirituality has nothing to do with politics, that it is quintessentially private: a view still often maintained in society at large, implicitly adopted by traditional philosophers of religion.When William James wrote his massively influential *Varieties of Religious Experience*, he was heavily indebted to Schleiermacher and other Romantic writers whose work he knew well... It was this which led him to characterize religious experience as brief, private, out-of-the-ordinary events in the life of the individual, where she or he felt in intense, immediate, subjective contact God or the divine. George Lindbeck has discussed how an appeal to religious experiences, understood in this way, has become a dominant feature of western thought about religion: he calls it the 'emotive—expressivist' model of religion. . . It is easy to see the attraction of such 'experiences' for late industrial society centred on consumption: here is private commodification at its spiritual Certainly it is this concept of experience which underlies the work of many contemporary philosophers of religion(Swinburne 1979; Franks Davis 1989; Alston 1991) who use it to ground belief in the existence of God. In each case they speak of experience in terms of a brief, transient, subjective state in principle open to any subjects without reference to their social positioning, and without any sense that the selfhood they speak of with confidence might be less than straightforward. Their silence about the reactionary political and social implications of their assumptions is resounding life How is it that philosophers who make religious experience central to their thinking simply feel no need to consider further the subjects of such experience or their social positioning, and how these discursive positions shape their subjectivity and their experience? This question has even more bite in the case of the relatively few philosophers of religion who do recognize the significance of context in the construction of experience. Steven Katz (1978) and Michael Stoeber (1992) have argued, against those who take for granted the possibility of pure private experience, that experience is always shaped by the perspective of the subject. Astonishingly, however, they consider only the subjects' religious perspective: whether they

are Jewish or Buddhist, for example, and how this will affect what they will count as a genuine mystical experience. But while the prior religious positioning is without doubt significant, how could it be adequately described without reference to the wider material and discursive positions of people's lives? Moreover, how can philosophers who espouse a constructivist view of religious experience retain a completely untroubled view of the subjects of such experience, as though they were simply rational, autonomous selves, given and whole? As Joan Scott makes dear,

Talking about experience in these ways leads us to take the existence of individuals for granted (experience is something people have) rather than to ask how conceptions of selves (of subjects and their identities) are produced. It operates within an ideological construction that not only makes individuals the starting point of knowledge, but that also naturalizes categories such as [Buddhist, Jewish,] man, woman, black, white, heterosexual, or homosexual by treating them as given characteristics of individuals. (Scott 1992: 27)

In the philosophy of religion, in fact, even these latter characteristics are regularly ignored. At most the religious categories alone are taken as significant in the structuring of religious experience. I have already suggested that it is not without significance that this sort of appeal to religious experience began to gain prominence in the philosophy of religion during the nineteenth century, a time of the triumph of imperialism and capitalism. Interconnected implications can be traced between such conceptions of experience and the gender-relations in the dominant white classes. Feminist historians have become alert to the ways in which women during the nineteenth century were relegated to the domestic role of 'angel of the hearth', the guardians of the morals and spiritual life of the private sphere to which men could retreat from their struggles in the public world of commerce and politics and the professions. To be sure, such angelic designations fell unevenly upon different categories of women. Black women did not qualify at all: they were more likely to be categorized as beasts than as angels. Even among white women, it was applied much more systematically to affluent women of the rising upper-middle class than to their far more numerous working-class sisters who had to struggle for their daily bread (McClintock 1995: 161). The motif of the angel of the house became, in spite of that (or partly perhaps because of it), part of the ideology of (white) womanhood. The good woman is the 'home-maker', the maker of 'ideal homes', who looks after the moral and spiritual needs of the privatized nuclear family as well as its physical and domestic routines.⁸¹

Even in the privatized experience of many of the philosophers there is a sense of unity within it, indeed, the experience is often designated unitive. This experience is seen by some writers as an antidote to the materialism of contemporary society.⁸² This union is often described as cosmic and including the natural world.⁸³

⁸¹ Jantzen, Grace M. (1998), *Becoming Divine: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion*, Manchester: Manchester University Press pp118-9

⁸² Harvey, Jonathan (1996) Introduction in Steer, Maxwell (ed.) (1999) *Contemporary Music Review: Music and Mysticism (I), Vol. 14 Parts 3-4*, pp7-9 p7

⁸³ Harvey, Jonathan (1999) *Music and Inspiration*, London: Faber and Faber p161

Anthony Storr in his book *Music and the Mind* sees the creation of community as the main reason for the presence of music in world cultures. This experience of being united with others and the wider cosmos is a feature of the spiritual experience and central to the musical experience. Music makes people physically more like one another because of the effect of music on the body.⁸⁴ He sees parallels between religious and warfare rituals and Western Coronations and state funerals⁸⁵. As we have already seen the act of singing together therefore gives a unitive spiritual dimension as in the school assembly in the UK.⁸⁶ And within religious rituals this has been its prime function.

Spirit possession ceremonies traditionally fulfilled a range of important social functions:

Spirit possession is obviously a multi-faceted phenomenon which plays a major individual therapy and healing, which provides entertainment...and even employment.⁸⁷

Also through the act of listening we can achieve an experience a unitive experience. It involves the imagination which can function like a religious ritual in its contact with Otherness and its transcendence of the limitations of time.⁸⁸

j. Ecstasy and trance

Values and Materials

Such descriptions of a unitive experience as part of the musical experience do resemble that of the ecstasy of religious mystics. This often takes the form of a feeling of being united with the universe, other beings and the natural world. It is often associated with states of trance or ecstasy. The state of trance is a state of consciousness distinguishable from that used in every day living. Rouget (1985) lists the following characteristics. It is a temporary state and regarded as unusual. There is a change in the relationship of the person in trance to the surrounding world. There may be neurophysiological disturbances. The abilities of the subject may be increased either in imagination or in reality. This increased ability can be seen in behavioural symptoms by others. The word is also used in the West and some would see it as a continuum that runs from daydreaming to the full trance practised in shamanic cultures (Topp Fargeon 1992). Charles Tart (1986) in *Waking up* sees trance as a condition that human beings never leave and links it with the popularity of such phenomena as hypnosis in performance artists and the ability of

⁸⁴ This is developed in Boyce-Tillman (2000) op.cit.

⁸⁵ Storr, Anthony (1993), *Music and the Mind*, London: HarperCollins p23

⁸⁶ The nature of the song here may have changed. Initially in the 1944's it was a Christian hymn like Praise God from whom all blessings flow. This moved towards more secular traditions, as topic work became the basis of the assembly so songs like Waltzing Matilda found a place. As schools addressed intercultural issues, songs from other traditions like short chants from African traditions found a place and the Educational reform Act as resulted in a return to the Christian hymn. But the importance of the song lies in its capacity to bring a group of people together in a unique way.

⁸⁷ Wilson, Peter J. (1967), Status Ambiguity and Spirit Possession, *Man*, Vol. 2., The Royal Anthropological Society of Great Britain and Ireland pp 366-378

⁸⁸ <http://www.creativeresistance.ca/communitas/defining-liminality-and-communitas-with-excerpts-by-victor-turner.htm> Contacted June 25th 2004

politicians and cult leaders to manipulate groups of people with ease.⁸⁹ Brian Inglis describes trance as a continuum:

At one extreme it is applied to what can loosely be described as possession, in which the individual's normal self seems to be displaced, leaving him [sic] rapt, or [paralysed, or hysterical, or psychotic, or taken over by another personality. At the other extreme is sleep. Between the two are conditions in which consciousness is maintained, but the subliminal mind makes itself, as in light hypnosis or the kind of reverie in which fancy, or fantasy breaks lose, as in Robert Graves's poem about communing with a lost loved one:

...taken in trance, would she still deny
That you are hers, she yours till both shall die?⁹⁰

In American literature in particular the term 'altered states of consciousness' has become popular in which trance is one amongst many. It occurs in writings from the Human potential movement where there is no clear relation to music and is used in relation to hypnosis, and sometimes in relation to epilepsy, hysteria, sleep walking and brain washing. Ethnologists are concerned about defining it clearly in societies other than those dominated by western value systems and would limit its use to those societies. In a religious context it is sometimes allied with the word ecstasy. Rouget (1985 p.10-11) makes distinguishes between the two, associating ecstasy with immobility, silence, solitude, the absence of crisis, sensory deprivation, recollection and hallucination. Trance, on the other hand is characterised by movement, noise, the presence of others, crisis, sensory overstimulation, amnesia and no hallucinations. But he has to admit that the two are at opposite ends of a continuum and that any particular example of it may include a configuration of features from either list.⁹¹ This clarifies what is actually quite a muddled situation in the way in which the terms are used. The more popular traditions with their multimedia presentations edge more towards trance.

When we apply the list to Western Classical music we find that because movement is restricted in the classical concert and there is a concentration on the music only with no dance and visual symbols the altered states in the classical concert might be closer to the ecstasy states. Concert halls and CD's playing on a personal stereo are seen by some to be the holy spaces of the contemporary world (Boyce-Tillman 2000).

Nicholas Cook (1990) develops the idea through the area of construction by seeing the formal structure of the music as a container in which the imagination of the listener can flow free, emphasising the links with the cultural presuppositions of the listener. (Cook 1990 p242) Although such a definition presents a problem for rapid movements of music across cultures, the linking of the

⁸⁹ Tart, Charles (1986), *Waking Up*, London pp83-106 quoted in Inglis, Brian, (1990), *Trance: A Natural History of Altered States of Mind*, London: Paladin, Grafton Books p272

⁹⁰ Inglis, Brian, (1990), *Trance: A Natural History of Altered States of Mind*, London: Paladin, Grafton Books p267

⁹¹ It is interesting to compare Hildegard's visions with this model as an example of a particular configuration of these elements. For her they were often moments of crisis and had a musical component to them. Most of her music was received in visionary experiences.

meaning of music to myth which can be reinterpreted by each listener is one that links music closely with traditional rituals. A musical piece, especially one that is familiar to us can act as a container for our own thoughts and ideas. It can be a place of reflection and meditation. It can feel safer than the silence that is becoming increasingly unfamiliar in contemporary society. It can be a safe way into a time of silence.

ASC's (Altered States of Consciousness) have been part of New Age thinking especially in the rediscovery of shamanic traditions. Gareth Frowen-Williams (1997) describes how the initial encounter of Western anthropologists with shamanism led to the assumption that shamans were psychotic. He charts how developments from the 1960's onward saw the meeting of notions from the Human Potential Movement and Transpersonal Psychology with the developing New Age ideology to assure a revered place for shamans in New Age communities as 'one of the most integrated members of his or her community' (Frowen-Williams 1997 p8).

The shamanic trance is often attributed to a combination of the shaman's psychic state and the effect of the drumming which is linked with delta brain waves, neurological activity associated with dreaming. Frowen-Williams cites scientific research which says that drumming at a speed between 180 and 220 beats per minute can elicit states often deemed shamanic including such features as:

- Sensations of flying and energy waves in the body
- A sense of energy
- Out-of-body experiences
- Imagery like journeying and meeting animals⁹²

Here the ecological value systems underpinning the tradition enable the drum to be seen as a symbol derived from the World Tree connecting the world of the spirit with the physical world. The New Age shaman will still sometimes make his own drum under spirit guidance, having reverence for the tree that provides the wood, acknowledging the animal whose skin makes the head and making offerings of food and song to the instrument.

The need of human beings for the trance experience is explored by Brian Inglis in his book *Trance*. Here he shows that many trance conditions appear to have served an evolutionary purpose. He sees hallucinations as warnings or sources of inspiration, hypnotism and hypnotherapy as effective pain relief, hysterical laughter as a form of emotional relief and trance induction as a way of symptom removal. He sees the danger of the reduction of the importance of this area induced by scientism (p268-9):

The apparent diversity ceases to be puzzling when trance is set in its evolutionary context. Animal life in general is spent in trance; but there are intimations of mind in termitaries, and in birds in flocks, which suggest the development of something more purposeful than simple natural selection could have been selection could have been expected to provide. It is as if evolution had found a way to introduce a 'pull', enabling species to perform in

⁹² Frowen-Williams, Gareth (1997) *Between Earth and sky: Explorations on the Shamanic Path* Unpublished Dissertation for MA in Ethnomusicology, University of Central England p53

more sophisticated ways than, examining their limitations, we would think possible.⁹³

So the Classical traditions concentrate on the listening experience and particularly the interaction of Construction and Expression to reach states similar to religious ecstasy. Traditional societies and the New Age traditions approach trance through performing and therefore have a greater concentration on Materials and Values. The difference is clearly one in the area of culture with some element of religion

e. Drugs

Expression and Materials

The embodied nature of trance (including the Materials as a significant part of the experience), in western culture (as in traditional societies) sometimes includes hallucinogens. Peter Hamel sees the increasing use of drugs in the twentieth century as a fulfilment of the human need for a widening of awareness. He offers the possibility of music fulfilling the same role:

What drugs failed to achieve – the creation of a lasting intensification of awareness – becomes possible through this new experience and appreciation of music.⁹⁴

He links this with a call to experience the magical mystical powers of music not in the unconscious way of the 'far-Eastern culture, the magic rituals of Africa, Asia and South America' but in a conscious way,

So that they might become familiar to us, stand at our service, help us to become complete people, in the sense of having achieved an integrated Wholeness.⁹⁵

Altered states of consciousness associated with the phenomena of Ecstasy Culture and Acid House are the subject of Matthew Collin's book entitled *Altered State*. His summary of detailed description of culture that brought music, dance and drugs into an exciting and risky culture draws attention to the relationship of this culture to the dominant culture:

The eighties were a long way away now, almost innocent in hindsight. For the children of ecstasy, gulping down their first pill in pleasure domes of the late nineties, the euphoric frontiership of acid house must have seemed like ancient history, its roots in black gay culture all but forgotten. Many weren't even ten years old during 1988's Summer of love. But for all that had changed, old uncertainties and contradictions remained – between a commodified culture and the illicit drugs that fuelled it, between rhetoric and

⁹³ Inglis, Brian, (1990), *Trance: A Natural History of Altered States of Mind*, London: Paladin, Grafton Books p267

⁹⁴ Hamel, Peter (1978) translated by Peter Lemusurier, *Through Music to the Self – How to appreciate and experience music anew*, Tisbury: Compton Press (first published in German in Vienna 1976) p3

⁹⁵ Hamel, Peter (1978) translated by Peter Lemusurier, *Through Music to the Self – How to appreciate and experience music anew*, Tisbury: Compton Press (first published in German in Vienna 1976) p7

reality, between knowledge and ignorance. And underpinning it all, still, was the restless search for bliss.⁹⁶

Here he underlines that the fundamental search in ASC's (Altered States of Consciousness) was for transcendence/spirituality. This is not a new phenomenon. It is a well established feature of the spirituality of indigenous peoples. But there are profound differences when it is moved into Western culture. In these societies the use of the hallucinogens was under the control of experienced elders. The commodification of Western society has produced a situation where money is the only value system. This has opened the way for the exploitation of what is a fundamental need in human beings – the experience of transcendence. The alliance of drugs, music and dance to produce this is not a new phenomenon. What is new, however, is its alliance with a capitalist economy and its associated value systems, which allow for the exploitation of human need.

The use of drugs is associated with engagement with music through dancing (an active form of listening in audience).

f. Role of the body

Expression and Materials

With ideas like that of the chakras – spinning centres of energy in the body which can be influenced by music, we come to the problem of the role of the body in 'the spiritual experience.'⁹⁷ How far can we include the Materials of the body as an important part of the experience rather than the Construction aspects centred in the mind.

⁹⁶ Collin, Matthew, (1997), *Altered State: The Story of Ecstasy Culture and Acid House*, London: Serpent's Tail p316

⁹⁷ A common system underpinning much New Age Thought is the notion of chakras. The word comes from the Sanskrit word for wheel and traditionally gifted individuals, including yogis and clairvoyants have seen whirling vortices of light in the aura around a person's body. The aura is usually defined as an electro-magnetic field which is being validated by such techniques as Kirlian photography. This was a technique devised in 1939 by the Soviet electrician, Semyoin Kirlian for capturing the aura on film. It involved passing a high-frequency energy field through an object and a piece of unexposed photographic paper. The result was an image of the "bioluminescence" of the object on the paper. It is claimed that disease can be detected in this light field before it manifests in the body. The field is seen to be constructed of seven layers. These auric layers correspond with seven energy centres within the body.

Links are often between the chakras and the endocrine glands. These are linked with the production of hormones and links back to the 'humours' of medieval medicine can be made. Certainly notions of balance are very much around in this New Age system as they were in the humoral system which saw human beings inextricably linked with natural world (Helman 1998 pp 21-3). As such the rediscovery of the chakra system may be seen as much as a rediscovery of lost elements of European culture as an importation from the East. There is often an attempt to link the ideas with those of ancient European figures like Pythagoras:

The mathematician Barbara Hero, working at M.I.T. [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] as found that the colours Pythagoras (Greek philosopher, geometrician, and musician, 600B.C.) is said to have ascribed to the musical tones, when generated by computers, actually produce their complementary colours (opposites). Hero's interpretation, one with which I would agree, is that chakras absorb the seven spectrum colours in sequence and emit their complements. Gardner (1990) p13

James in his chapter on Religion and Neurology wrestles with the relationship of mind and body.⁹⁸ Saint Teresa in her autobiography writes:

A genuine heavenly vision yields to her harvest of ineffable spiritual riches, and an admirable renewal of bodily strength.⁹⁹

Western culture has inherited from Graeco-Roman ideas and Christianity dualistic notions of the mind and body. In the pursuit of the transcendent Western Christianity has often lost its sense of the body; indeed in its most extreme ascetic forms it denied the body, encouraging excesses that resemble those of anorexics today. Hildegard attempts the duality that had developed in Christianity between spirit and body by means of music:

The words of a hymn represent the body, while the melody represents the soul. Words represent humanity, and melody represents divinity. Thus in a beautiful hymn, in which words and melody are perfectly matched, body and soul, humanity and divinity, are brought into unity. (Scivias 3.13.12) Van der Weyer 1997 p79

Accounts of transcendence are still found in the classical tradition but now dissociated from a religious tradition or a spiritual frame. However, the concept is still one associated with the mind. Concert halls have fixed seats and audiences are expected to sit silent and still as we saw in the concert experience above. There is little notion that the experience will have any effect on the body. In other societies the close relationship of dance to music making and has meant that the bodily aspects of music making are more self-evident.

Feminist theorists and the advent of the inclusion of different musical styles within the scope of musicological enterprise has also brought notions of the body back into critical discourse (Middleton 1990, p. 264) The link between Spirituality and Materials is clear in many cultures where bodily movements and gestures are endowed with spiritual significance and regarded as efficacious in some way. (Li 1993 p.113-4) These ceremonies take place in cultures where the distinction between the animate and the inanimate is very unclear. Human beings are in close contact always with the natural world and the gods are to be found within places, natural objects and humans; the invisible world is filled with the souls of the dead.

The notion of the body and spirituality are inextricable intertwined in cultures that use music and dance regularly in rituals involving trance. Instruments have musical functions and spiritual significance. Bodily sickness is thought to have a spiritual component and even in societies where Western values are also established, a sickness thought to have a spiritual element will provoke a return to traditional healers. This is founded on a strong belief of the relationship between sounds and the very essence of the material world:

Sound reaches down to the cellular level. It is most likely that sound patterns are really the dance of molecules and atoms.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ James, William (originally published 1903, this edition 1997) *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, NY: Simon and Schuster pp 21-38

⁹⁹ Quoted in James, William (originally published 1903, this edition 1997) *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, NY: Simon and Schuster p35

The link between Materials and Spirituality is taken over in many New Age traditions that link dance and movement with music. Gabrielle Roth's development of the 'wave' and the five rhythms described above is one of the most worked out of the systems using dancing and drumming in combination:

I'd go off on these trance dance dreams. I wasn't controlling the dance – I was being danced... The dancer disappeared inside the dance and I'd find that divine part, divine spirit, the spark of infinite beat... Every time I was letting go of more and more, I was getting high and suddenly that released me from all drugs, from everything... I'd found the part of myself I had a desperate hunger for... This was my prayer. I was sweating my prayer.¹⁰¹

So, for her, the experience of transcendence is an embodied experience. She praises the adolescent dance culture in this respect:

I have great hope for the next generation, the dance culture generation. They have the weight of the result of planetary unconsciousness on their shoulders. They can't hold all this in their bodies, so they dance because they have to. The dance gives them something to fall back on when it all falls apart... The traditional Church combined with the 'powers that be', were obviously threatened by people reaching ecstatic states of consciousness ON THEIR OWN so they tried to wipe it out.¹⁰²

The New Age has retained rituals around the music making. Grimes (1982) suggests that ritual is not a discursive reflexive activity but a bodily way of knowing designed to move consciousness from the head to the body. He sees its efficacy being rooted in the total bodily attitude, which is a combination of inner movement and external manifestation.

Liminality and Communitas Spirituality

This paper is gradually edging towards a definition of the characteristics of the spiritual experience in music and how it is achieved. The thesis I have set out is that it relies on the bringing together effectively of the other four areas of the musical experience. This will happen differently in the activities of composing, performing/improvising and listening in audience. So can we put these strands together to create a topography of a spiritual experience associated with music^{103?}

- In listening in Western Classical traditions the area of expression is significant and this is mirrored in the construction. The composer concentrates on that union. This is a cultural development in a Christian society.

¹⁰⁰ Dodd, (1989) p 25

¹⁰¹ Roth, p 2

¹⁰² Roth pp 3-4

¹⁰³ I have only dealt in this paper with experiences involving the clear presence of music. I have not dealt with visionary/spiritual experiences including music in them. This is another research project.

- All the activities of music can be used for self-actualisation, which operates in the areas of expression and in performance has important Material (bodily) components. Self actualisation has developed the status of a religion in western culture.
- In more communal experiences of the spiritual Value systems are significant in all three areas. It can result in social action. The ability of ensemble performing to make people bodily like one another is significant in this experience, as choral societies show well. Communal experiences have been central to most religions.
- The unitive experience can be experienced in all three activities and seems to be present in many cultures although achieved by different means.
- In the Classical traditions it is closer to religious ecstasy concentrating on bringing together Construction and Expression and coloured by Christian traditions. In traditional societies and new age environments edge towards trance with a greater concentration on Materials and Expression and Values. Here culture and religion impinge on the experience.
- The use of hallucinogens is sometimes included in the area of Materials often combined danced responses to music. These are part of some cultural and religious traditions.
- The role of the body (Materials) is more emphasized in the New Age and more traditional societies than in the Classical traditions, which has coloured by Christian attitudes to the body.

I have used the term spiritual experience. Spirituality or spiritual experience is commoner in older musical literature but also found in New Age literature and some psychologists trying to work with spiritual images in psychosis. I have subsumed within it

- flow (coming in from psychologists of creativity like Csikszentmihalyi,)
- ecstasy often associated with idea of 'the holy' coming from the religious/spiritual literature
- trance coming from anthropological, New Age and psychotherapeutic literature
- mysticism, coming from religious traditions, especially Christianity

For me the term liminality coming in from the performing arts and cultural studies area is perhaps useful. Victor Turner develops a notion of liminality drawn on an analysis of ritual. This is a break from conventional reality, similar to writings we have seen in the area of trance and ecstasy.¹⁰⁴ Some writers link it with a freedom that we associate with play.¹⁰⁵ There is certainly a change in the time dimension.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Turner (1982) p44

¹⁰⁵ Hachmanovitch, Stephen (1990), *Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art*, NY: Penguin Putnam Inc p51

¹⁰⁶ Moody, Ivan, *The Mind and the Heart*, in Steer, Maxwell (ed.) (1999) *Contemporary Music Review: Music and Mysticism (I)*, Vol. 14 Parts 3-4, , pp65-79 p69

Tom Driver sees commonalities and brings together a number of our themes explored above:

One of the ways in which ritual, religion, and liberative action are alike is that they all construct alternative worlds, nourishing themselves with imaginative visions. Different from ordinary life, they move in a kind of liminal space, at the edge of, or in the cracks between, the mapped regions of what we like to call “the real world”.¹⁰⁷

In a religious ritual there are leaders and participants including musical activities alongside other parts of the ritual like gesture, drama and dance. The leaders are in control of the structures of the music which is constructed orally within various culturally constructed conventions. The ‘congregation’ are actively involved in performance although sometimes they may listen, sometimes with associated dance. The purpose of a ritual is transformation. There is an entrance across a ‘limen’ – a threshold- into a different time/space dimension. In this the transformation happens. There is then an exit from the ritual. The whole is conducted within a religious and cultural frame.

The notion of transformation is central to religious ritual whether it is a Christian Eucharist or a shamanic healing rite. It can be personal or communal or both. Van Gennep¹⁰⁸ saw parallel stages in any ritual. This he entitled: ‘severance, transition and return’. Severance he associated with leaving everyday life by means of ritual gestures like holding hands or lighting candles. In the transitional or liminal phase contact was made with the transpersonal; and this might take the form of change of consciousness. The Return phase signalled a coming back to earth and the beginning of a new life. It is possible to identify these moments in a musical piece even when not associated with ritual. Turner focused his attention on the second stage of rites of passage – the stage of liminality, the stage when pilgrims separate from ordinary everyday life. This he described, as we have already seen, as a character of being or dwelling for extended periods of time in a spatial, social and spiritual threshold, as pilgrims often do. In his article “Pilgrimages as Social Processes” he writes:

A limen is, of course, literally a “threshold.” A pilgrimage centre, from the standpoint of the believing actor, also represents a threshold, a place and moment “in and out of time,” and such an actor - as the evidence of many pilgrims of many religions attests - hopes to have there direct experience of the sacred, invisible or supernatural order, either in the material aspect of miraculous healing or in the immaterial aspect of inward transformation of spirit or personality.¹⁰⁹

Turner developed the notion of *communitas* that we saw above from the bond that

¹⁰⁷ Driver Tom F. (1998), *Liberating Rites: Understanding the Transformative Power of Ritual*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview p 82

¹⁰⁸ 1908 quoted in Roose-Evans, James (1994), *Passages of the Soul*, Shaftesbury: Element Books p6

¹⁰⁹ <http://www.creativeresistance.ca/communitas/defining-liminality-and-communitas-with-excerpts-by-victor-turner.htm> Contacted June 25th 2004

develops between pilgrims in the liminal stages. He concentrates on a sense of intimacy and I-Thou awareness.¹¹⁰

Classical traditions have developed rituals around them, most notably the concert. There are designated spaces with entrance rituals like ticket buying and drinking and silence. The music creates the different time/space dimension. The applause constitutes the exit ritual. The performers and composers act as leaders. There is little interdisciplinarity and the congregation is in general engaging with the experience only with their mind and emotions. In the centre of it people can effect a personal transformation in line with contemporary beliefs in the area of self-actualisation.

Similarly the rock concert has different rituals associated with it, most notably that the audience responds with their bodies to the sounds. It is similarly transformative.

The individualised experience of the walkman is different. This is the essential individualised private spiritual experience. Here the ritual is associated with the operation of the technology and people spend large sums on this in the same way as churches spend money on the beautification of their buildings. Here the music itself may be seen to contain ritual elements with introduction and exit gesture within the music itself. But what are the ritualistic characteristics of music? The recorded work becomes like a sacred space which can be entered when the headphones of the walkman are put on. It is a place where

- we appear to be in touch with something or someone beyond ourselves;
- we can learn to respect difference
- change can take place
- Our thoughts can flow freely and we can reflect on our lives.
- We share our experience with other people who have had the same experience¹¹¹

How does this work? Here Mary Warnock's notion of imagination is helpful:

It is my view that it requires imagination to perform the trick of connecting the momentary and ephemeral with the permanent, the particular with the universal...¹¹²

This is clearly a function of the music experience which enables us to contact other cultures separate from us historically and geographically and also has built into its nature the notion of the relationship between past and future in the evanescent present. It is clearly a notion that is linked with the religious experience in line with Nicholas Cook's ideas discussed earlier.

¹¹⁰ <http://www.creativeresistance.ca/communitas/defining-liminality-and-communitas-with-excerpts-by-victor-turner.htm> Contacted June 25th 2004

¹¹¹ In a programme on walkman's there was an interesting interview with a man who runs every morning with angry music on his walkman as a way of dealing with his anger BBC Radi4 The Walkman May 2004

¹¹² Warnock, Mary (1999) *Music and Imagination*, Lecture given to the Bernarr Rainbow Society, Institute of education p2

The person who creates the music (either written or orally) clearly has a significant role here. The call/training of the Western composer and the shaman both have elements of entering into crisis and finding a route out:

The shaman not only survives the ordeal...but also is healed in the process...and as a healed healer; only he or she can truly know the territory of disease and death.¹¹³

The creative process in Western music is seen by many theorists an act of re-shaping the personality by undertaking an inner journey. Composers like Beethoven and Smetana used their pieces as a way expressing and resolving their problems.¹¹⁴ The composer descends into his or her personal underworld or unconscious to refashion the elements in it.¹¹⁵ This has parallels with shaman and possession cultures. The difference lies in where the other world is created – outside or inside. Erlmann¹¹⁶ in his work with Hausa Trance and Music in Nigeria identifies how the each spirit has a praise-song of its own and that its adepts (people chosen to represent that spirit) must learn these small melodic and rhythmic fragments. (It is interesting to compare these with small motifs for example used by Beethoven for composition.) Just as in spirit possession cultures, listening to the music transforms the listeners. The music takes the listener on the same journey as the composer. Anthony Rooley, for example, gives an account of the cathartic effect of performances of John Dowland's *The Songs of Mourning*.¹¹⁷

So there are similarities between the role of the shaman and that of the western composer. It is, therefore, likely that those enculturated in western culture will read music from shamanic traditions in a similar way.

However, even if here the music itself is seen as containing the ritual, whether a spiritual experience as achieved lies in factors not only in the music but in the surrounds as well – the context (the sonic landscape), the company, the previous experiences of the listener. This means that the experience is unpredictable and evanescent.

Other musical experiences of performing can be seen as rituals. Anthi Agrotou (1993) links religion with her music therapy work in using a theoretical frame drawn from this are to examine the link between ‘religious rituals, certain ritualisms, certain kinds of ritualisation and ritualised play’.¹¹⁸ She ends her chapter with a passage untypical of therapeutic literature:

This, then, is the connecting link – or rather the biggest contrast between ritualism and religious rituals of mourning such as those of Christ’s or Adonis’ death and resurrection. Those rites give the space, under the strength and shelter of the united community, to mourn for all the losses and abandonments, even for the ultimate on of death; and when the community is

¹¹³ Halifax, Joan (1979), *Shamanic Voices*, Arkana pp10-11

¹¹⁴ Boyce-Tillman (2000), *Constructing Musical healing :The Wounds that sing*, London: Jessica Kingsley

¹¹⁵ Kemp, Anthony E. (1996) *The Musical Temperament*, Oxford: Oxford University press p216

¹¹⁶ Erlmann, Veit (1982), Trance and Music in the Hausa Boorii Spirit Possession Cult in Niger, *Ethnomusicology*, January pp49-58

¹¹⁷ Rooley, Anthony, (1990) *Performance: Revealing the Orpheus Within*, Shaftesbury: Element Books

¹¹⁸ Agrotou, Anthi (1993), Spontaneous Ritualised Play in Music therapy: A Technical and Theoretical Analysis. In Heal, Margaret and Wigram, Tony (1993), *Music therapy in Health and Education*, London: Jessica Kingsley pp 175-191

satiated to its fill with grief – to use a Homeric phrase – it rejoices over its resolution that death had actually been conquered.¹¹⁹

So music may be seen as an important ubiquitous spirituality lacking the limitations imposed on the spiritual experience by conventional religion and in the contemporary nomadic world able to cross cultural boundaries.¹²⁰

So let us return to the opening questions:

- Does this mean that all music is a sacred experience? All music is potentially a spiritual experience, depending on the right relationship set up between the areas of musical experience
- Is there a secular music? There is a music that is for secular purposes but this is an antithesis to the religious experience and not the spiritual. Secular music can give a spiritual experience, given the right relationship described above.
- Is the aesthetic a contemporary version of spirituality? Contemporary Music of all kinds has potentially spiritual qualities. The aesthetic has tended to concentrate on constructional elements. It is significant for western composers
- Can music be extracted from its spiritual context and still retain something of its spirituality? What has spirituality to do with culture? There are cultural elements in the spiritual experience but these are unpredictable and interface with the individual's own psychology
- What is the role of words in this process? This conditions how plasters will view the Value systems.
- Can spirituality be freed from a particular religious tradition? Music can set up spiritual experiences that are separate from religion.
- Is there a universal spiritual music? There is no music that can be guaranteed to produce a spiritual experience.

We make no claims, realising that we have only some control over the 'liminal' nature of the experience.

5. Summary

I have suggested that there is a spirituality that can be appropriately constructed as an interaction between the various areas of music.

- All three areas of approaching the musical experience have a spiritual component
- It can be related to a universal spiritual frames but is often linked with a particular traditions
- The aesthetic experience may be regarded as containing spiritual elements which might be regarded as a secular approach to spirituality

¹¹⁹ Agrotou (1993) p191

¹²⁰ In Carrette, Jeremy (2000) *Foucault and Religion: Spiritual Corporality and Political Spirituality* London: Routledge p152. Last metaphor is from Foucault (1966) *The Order of Things: The Archaeology of the Human sciences* Published by London: Routledge 1991 translated by Alan Sheridan p387

- Its social nature causes it to be identified as closely linked to spirituality like ethics, identity, personal and social development including citizenship.
- The unitive nature of the experience leads to feeling connected with something beyond and outside the self - the wider community of human beings and/or the natural world and/or spiritual beings.
- The spiritual experience is a shared one negotiated between all involved in the experience.

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