

## Is singing and music good for the soul?

or is it just a part of the entertainment industry - giving the consumer a quick buzz for as much money as possible

Well, I think I will keep myself out of trouble by not answering this question directly.

Rather, I will invite you into a kind of dialogue with me, seeing if we can answer this in a way that might be more powerful for the both of us.

So ... if you are still with me ... here we go!

Do you like singing?

I mean, your own singing, whether it is in the shower, the car, together with the stereo, in groups, with your child(ren), in church.

If the answer is no to **all** of these, please keep in mind, that I am not asking whether you think you are a good singer or whether you like your voice. I am simply asking if you enjoy singing in any **one** of the above places/situations.

If the answer is yes - which it would be for almost everyone - I would like us to have a closer look at why that is. What is it that singing does to you? Pause for a moment! I will ask that same question: What is it that singing does to you? Keep asking the same question until you have run out of different answers.

It would be valuable at this point to define what we mean by singing. What is singing? To me it is any sound made with our voice that has either rhythm, melody or a sustained sound. This means that chanting (including the chanting of mantras) and rapping are forms of singing.

Now, let us turn our attention in a different direction and take a look at all the religions you know of. Can you name any that does not have singing as a minor or major part of their practice. You may be able to find the odd one that does not use singing in any form, but it is unlikely. Why is it that the voice is being used for singing, chanting, mantras, calling and responding in all of our main religions, rituals and ceremonies throughout the world?

Is it a coincidence that cultures, who didn't even know of each others existence before the time of aeroplanes and television, have been using singing for thousands of years? Or is it that it has some kind of connection to the spiritual world, regardless of what ones religious belief is? Something outside of us and at the same time deep inside?

Well, I will leave that aspect of it for now, and return to the music that is living around us. Do you know anybody - including yourself - who does not like to listen to music of their own choice? Highly unlikely I would think. The joy of listening to music is one of those few things we humans have in common, throughout the world - whether it is on the radio, a CD, in a concert hall, a church, around the fire, etc.

If we take a rock concert as an example, we see thousands of people getting hyped up and looking as if they have entered a different space (I am not talking about those on drugs). Just a handful of musicians on a stage can make a huge crowd forget about their inhibitions, fears, problems and get ecstatic over music. Why?

Where does music appear in our daily life? Have you ever seen a movie without music? It would be one in a thousand, if any. How many television ads can you spot without music? Why is the music there? You go for a workout at the gym and there is music. You go shopping at the supermarket or shopping mall and there is music. Why?

The listening and appreciation of music is universal, regardless of country, culture, belief, religion and age. What other "things" do we find that are universal for the individual human being? Here are some suggestions: Breathing, Eating/Drinking, Toilet going, Shelter (clothes, huts, houses). You may suggest sex, however, some monks, nuns and others live without, but music is still a part of their life. I think you will find, that there are more people living without sex than without music.

I am not saying that music is as widely used as our fundamental needs like food and toilet going, but it comes extremely close. Why is that? Yes I know, I have already asked that question before, but here we go again: Why?

Well, well! I think that should be enough questions for now. It is by no means the end of the inquiry, but I trust that you by now have gained more understanding - on a conscious level - of the power of music and singing. You of course know it all on a deeper level. However, it can be very valuable to remind ourselves of the obvious when we forget.

I will finish by bringing our attention back to where we started - the headline of this inquiry: Is singing and music good for the soul? Well! As in the beginning, I will leave you to answer that.

Happy singing.

Mikal Nielsen

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