Contemporary Holistic Music

Conceptualization

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PAPER ABSTRACT

The transformative power of sound has been used throughout history by spiritual guides, mystics, sages, and philosophers to heal and align people in a deep harmonious level that encompassed the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual bodies of the human body. From the Shamans of the Americas, the Yogis of India, to the Mystery Schools of Egypt, Greece and Rome, ancient cultures around the globe understood that vibration is the fundamental active force in the universe. Sound in simplest form is vibration. Ancient holy men were able to tap into the vibrations of sound through the universe for enlightenment, spiritual awakening, expanded consciousness, planetary oneness and interconnectedness with the cosmos. Modern western scientific studies and perspectives on sound healing and vibrational medicine have demonstrated the healing and transformative powers of harmonics. In this thesis I will discuss the musical elements that gave ancient songs, mantras and chants these healing qualities, and how we can integrate this spiritual and sacred aspect of sound with contemporary music in order to create Holistic music.
INTRODUCTION

Healing Music

'In the beginning was the Word.' (St. John, 1:1)

'In the beginning was Brahman with whom was the Word.' (Vedas)

Many ancient tradition understood that the source of existence, the source of the whole universe, was the primordial sound, OM. OM is the sound from which every plain of existence is said to emanate from. The universe is made of vibrations which we as people perceive in different ways, with our various senses. Ultimately, every sense is a different perception of vibration. The whole universe is just vibration, sound, music.

Everything around us is vibrating. Everything has its own resonance. “‘Resonance’ is the frequency at which an object most naturally vibrates. Everything has resonant frequency, whether or not we can audibly perceive it.” ¹ We, as human beings can perceive vibration, not only with our ears, but color, density, and even the thoughts we have are vibrations. “Our body, too, exists because every atom and cell in your organism is vibrating. Life is vibration, tone, and rhythm. In this sense, everything is alive. Music, on the other hand, is the organization of specific tones or frequencies, located at specific distances — or musical intervals — from each other. Sound is always implicit in music. But when we think of sound as vibration, we can understand that the scope of all the vibrating frequencies in the universe goes far beyond the range of what our human ears can hear.”

The universe is made of vibrations, therefore sound can be used to alter, shift and bring balance to the universe. “The idea is that music is keeping the world in balance - that somehow people are feeling these vibrations, and the positive vibrations are keeping the world from imploding. Every creature in every tree is giving out positive vibrations, as are the people who are trying to do positive things. So is the music.” ² Just like sound can be used to find balance in the planet, music can be used to find balance in a human being whose soul is not harmonious, out of balance. In fact, “the use of sound as a healing modality is nothing new. It is probably as old as the first sound ever made by a man or a woman. The first humans are believed to have used sounds in sacred and ritualistic ways to promote fertility, to aid at birth, to facilitate the growing of crops, to accept death and for many other occasions.

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Using sound, they would summon spirits and ancestors to cure sickness and rid a body of disease.”  

Around the globe, our ancestors were aware of the healing power of sound. “From Greece to Egypt to India, cultures have used music to restore health and harmony in a system out of balance.” They had “the notion that sound is God, that sound is holy, and therefore capable of restoring wholeness.”

Music and sound were used as medicine to keep the body in tune, in harmonic alignment with nature and the universe. All forms of sickness, both physical and mental, were considered musical inconsistencies. In ancient Greece, they had healing temples, where music was used to reestablish the natural harmony of the body. Musicians were the doctors because, like William Parker believes, “a musician heals others by vibrating sound through their soul”. This means that every musician has the power to heal, because all kinds of music are ultimately healing vibration.

Steve Coleman quotes John Coltrane who said, “I think that music can have some effect, some influence, on the initial thought pattern, and then those thought patterns affect the way people think.” and comments that “Coltrane wasn’t saying that music was something you used to hypnotize somebody to get up and do something, but that music is vibrations, and those vibrations can act in a certain way.”  

Any and every vibration around people have some effect on their thoughts, but “truly great art touches the depths of a person’s whole being; not just their thinking.” All music is ultimately healing, but obviously there is music whose sole purpose is healing. “The highest level of music could uplift and heal the human spirit. Taking both the musician and the listener to another level of consciousness.”

Around the world, music was used with the sacred purpose of healing. Music was not used for entertainment as it is mostly viewed and treated today, but was approached as a spiritual tool played in sacred events of the community. “The use of music in sacred ceremonies and shamanic rituals has occurred since ancient times. It has recently been verified that sound can be used to effect and change our brainwaves. The changing of these rates

creates changes in consciousness, allowing mystically altered states to be induced.”

When shamans induced this altered state of consciousness, healing would occur primarily with the recovery and reconstitution of soul energy. “Examination of these practices, from the Hindu use of mantras to shamanic use of chanting and drumming, reveals a commonality in these principles of resonance and entrainment as the basis of sonic transformation and healing.”

The role of healing music, sacred sound, and mantra is crucial to the spiritual development of the West. Contemporary healing music is about merging the ancient wisdom of music healers with modern sounds and technology into today’s lifestyle. The extraordinary advances of current music theory can and should be used for higher transcendental purposes, creating gateways to mystical perceptions and awakening powerful energies to transform today’s society. This is the future of spirituality in music.

MUSIC IN THE SHAMANIC TRADITION

“The word 'shaman' comes from the Siberian 'saman', It has been utilized by anthropologists to refer to persons who were previously known by such terms as 'witchdoctor', 'witch', 'medicine man', 'sorcerer', 'wizard', 'magician', 'seer' and 'magic man'. Michael Harner, in The Way of the Shaman, defines a shaman as a man or woman who enters an altered state of consciousness to contact and utilize an ordinarily hidden reality in order to acquire knowledge, power and to heal other people. According to Jeanne Achterburg in Imagery and Healing: Shamanic practice involves the ability to move in and out of a special state of consciousness, a notion of a guardian spirit complex and has the purpose of helping others. Shamanism is thought to be the oldest form of healing known to mankind. In shamanism, the shaman communicates with the spirit world in order to do their work. Most commonly, they utilize sound as a means of achieving this and, naturally, the voice is a most common instrument for invoking spirits and travelling to the spirit realms.”

Shamans are the doctors of the community. They are not regular doctors as they know little about contemporary Western medicine and cannot perform surgery. Shamans are the doctors of the soul. Shamans believe that all our problems and all our diseases are due to disharmony in our souls. When there is harmony in our soul, there is no disease. In order to find harmony in the community, the job of these spiritual seekers is to first find harmony within themselves. In order to do this, “The shaman would enter an altered state of consciousness through...


chanting, dancing, or by ingesting hallucinogenic plants. In that state he would visit the spirit world where he encountered animal spirit-beings that gave him power, knowledge and magical abilities. Upon returning to the human world the shaman shared his journey with the community.”

Music was and will always be an important part of any spiritual path. Not only do shamans use music to connect with the spirit world, but it is also the way they would share this knowledge and experience. They would share through music and through art. “Art exists to guide us to the center of life. Art is a spiritual ceremony in the most adorning religious sense, so we may reach the art where this mysterious force called existence radiates the most.”  

Art, especially music, is the center of every ceremony in the shaman’s world. These ceremonies are their way of connecting the community with higher consciousness. This is a tradition that can be traced back to the beginning of human history. In fact, the first ‘artists’ in human history were shamans. “Cave painters were actually shamans, or holy men, who recorded their visits to a spirit world on the walls of the caves. The artist-shamans provided an important link between their societies and the spirit world.” These paintings served the same purpose of the music, to expand human’s perception of reality. So, “the journey was in service to a higher order and done with the support of his community.”

The task of the shaman, just like the yogis of India, was to find harmony within themselves, so that they could then help find harmony in the interconnected web of the whole. “The word “yogi” actually embraces any serious spiritual seeker who consciously and methodically aspires to achieve harmony, balance, and refined consciousness.” The artist, the musician, the shaman, yogi, and the doctor are all the same person. In other words; “The true use of art is, first, to cultivate the artist’s own spiritual nature, and secondly, to enter as a factor in general civilization. And the increase of these effects depends upon the purity of the artists motive in the pursuit of art.

Every artist who, without reference to external circumstances, aims truly to represent the ideas and emotions which come to him when he is in the presence of nature, is in the process of his own spiritual path.”


Shamanism teaches us that “a musician is a disciple of God. He or she plays, writes and performs music to spread a spiritual message of enlightened love, compassion, and joy to the world.” This is what artists need to strive for; to find within themselves the love, compassion, and joy, and then share it with the community. And that applies to contemporary music too, obviously. In fact Keith Jarrett, stated that “If you hear something and it changes you, it’s because what you heard was someone who became an innovator; and they became an innovator by hard work on themselves, not so much work on the instrument.” Even in highly intellectual forms of art, such as jazz, the artist-shaman, should be working hard on himself in order to connect with higher consciousness, and eventually be the bridge for the community between this world and the spirit realm.

No matter how proficient one is at the instrument, in order to deliver a heightened spiritual message to the audience, one should strive for “The awakened state that is the state of conscious innocence. The state beyond the mind, in which the creative source flows freely and innocently through the artist.”

A musician does not create music, “the musician is ultimately the vehicle through which life, as sound, is passed through.” So, musicians-artists-shamans, need to constantly work on themselves in order to get to that state where consciousness, in the form of music, flows through them. Brian Blade puts it this way:

“I guess you are always trying to get to that level, spiritually, at your instrument, where you’re so connected to it that you’re not thinking about drums or mechanics, but you’re speaking, you know, projecting something from inside. It’s always a struggle for me. I’m always trying to, you know, keep plumbing the depths of my own self jet to say something that has greater meaning. I don’t want to say a lot, but I’d love for what I am saying to have weight, and touch someone musically. I’ve never really been technically proficient. I mean, there are a million drummers who have so much more facility than I do, and have crafted the art of execution. What I lack in the department, hopefully I make up for with soul, you know, and hopefully that simple thing is what’s needed.”

All artist-musicians can benefit from learning the shaman’s way of purifying oneself in order to be of service to a higher purpose. There is a higher consciousness that it is always there and it is our job as artists to connect to it and express it to the community. “There is certainly this higher energy that’s been here all the time and

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Shamans believe that humans, as spirits in this world, have to follow a path, a path towards spirituality. “Within human beings is an urge, a compulsion to awaken, to become aware. As Carl Sagan suggested, the universe is seeking to become conscious of itself through humans.” Art is the path for us humans to become conscious of our own spirit. For this reason, shamanism has always been regarded as the most important role of the community, a role that in our contemporary society has been passed down to the artists. Therefore, all art should have that spiritual aspect to it. But, obviously, in order to find the spiritual art, we must follow a spiritual life ourselves. “The music we create, how we walk, how we eat, sleep, and breathe, must all be geared to a new aesthetic, a system that allows and encourages all people to follow their own vision without being penalized for it, a system that puts life ahead of profit.”

Shamans taught music and art “as a way of life. The most important point was that the only real thing was life. How we lived and how we treated each other. This was the only art form.” This was, in fact, the way art was taught throughout the whole world. In India, they believe that we, “as musicians and artists, all have to become yogis. We need to use our art to transform, not to self-destruct.” If we follow the shaman path, the yogi path, then we can be artists and share our art with the community. “The musician who is visionary teaches us the most about life, about how to live. Those who have transcended music are visionaries. A visionary is a caller of light, one who summons spirits that heal knowing there is no other reason to play music or live.”

The musician can only transmit what he has experienced himself. Art is the way to express our self, our story. “Music should mirror your intentions, your goals, your dreams, and it should propel you into the unknown so


that you can respond to it.” 29 So, it is our duty to embark and continue on this path of self discovery, of evolution. Because, “as spiritual consciousness evolves, so does the artist, and the old forms of art are no longer able to contain the new consciousness.” 30 If we evolve as human beings, so does the music-art we create, which ultimately means giving the audience, the community a more profound experience, an experience which is always closer and closer to the divine. The job of the artist-shaman is to express the divine.

“Music is art in time - that’s the wonderful thing about music, and the difficult thing for the composer is to carry the listener through time.” 31 Music is an experience in time in which reflects the musician and the audience. So, if the musician is a spiritually evolved human being, then the experience of the listener is going to be spiritually advanced. “Art reflects back to us like a mirror. It acts upon our psychic energy. If a field of energy is in a dormant-unconscious state, the image or sound may begin to awaken it.” 32 With our own spirituality and our music, we as artists are able to bring a higher consciousness to the whole. Steve Coleman said: “Music for me is a language, a tool, and the main purpose that I try to use it for is the expansion of consciousness. Sonny Rollins said that there were only two kinds of music, that which expands consciousness and that which contracts consciousness, and he said he wanted to be part of the tradition that expanded consciousness.” 33

We as musicians, like Rollins states, need to choose what kind of art we want to share with the world. We can expand or contract consciousness, through choosing to work on ourselves or not, through choosing the shaman’s way or not. The music that touches us the most, comes from musicians that have followed a spiritual path and think of music as an important part of it. Examples in the jazz world are Maria Schneider, who states: “Music is where I find my own sense of spirit.” 34 Or William Parker, who is “concerned with the enlightenment of all humans.” 35 And composer Henry Threadgill, whose “purpose is to make music for people, for it to have an effect on people.

Hopefully a positive effect, but I don’t know if it is always there.” 36 In fact, that is what all musicians should strive for, to have a positive effect on people. “All my favorite people, everyone I consider a great, great master of music, has been like that: they eat people, they eat cultures, they gobble it all and put it in themselves and it becomes part of them; they transform into another thing.” 37

Having found, through shamanism, this divine aspect of music, artists may choose to follow the shaman’s path, or what they call ‘the warrior’s path’. Music in the shamanic world is not a form of entertainment, but is sound medicine for the soul, and should be always treated as such. For “music, like gravity and green plants, is a forever - persuasive force that sleeps into our subconscious. Affecting us in ways we are not even aware of.” Music is much bigger than us; humans, in fact are vibrations. So we cannot create music, “the mother of any system is always the creative spirit,” musicians are only “the medium, the receptive creative being that is open to the creative spirit” 38 So, for musicians, the intent, before even playing, should be to heal, like the purpose of Williams Parker: “I want to give myself to a music that will optimize the senses of the listener, that will cause spiritual revolution, political revolution, that will grab those who hear the music to question why they are here on this planet Earth. I want to play music to empower people so they can love, and begin to seek understanding and compassion, and follow a road that can hopefully lead them to understand why they are here and what they can do as human beings on this planet.” 39

This music, though, cannot be created by the human, the music is already there, the only work the artist can do is to work on himself, so that he may first be able to perceive and then share it with the community. As musicians, our “ job is to figure out how to create this thing that’s in our head- this sense of beauty that we have - how to codify it into notes so that the instruments can play it and put it into vibrations that hit your ear, so that the listener can feel whatever it is that we feel. That’s the goal.” 40 Stravinsky even said he did not write The rite of Spring; he transcribed the music that he listened in his head. This shows that music is not outside of us, music and art, like God, is within us. In other words: “Artistic creativity is an expression of the same creative force that created

the universe."  

Every artist comes from the same creative source and so does every work of art. “The shaman, the artist, and the source are ultimately one.”  

HOLISTIC CONTEMPORARY MUSIC

All art, including music, needs to reflect the era in which the artist lives. Therefore, artists need to neglect the music that has been already created when creating something new. The greatest artists after all are innovators, musicians who created new types and/or genres of music. So, in order to create contemporary healing music, new songs that use all the elements found in ancient music used for this purpose, need to be composed.

Contemporary healing music needs to incorporate both, elements from ancient music, as well as element from contemporary music from all around the world. This kind of music that is drawing from different eras, traditions, and cultures from around the globe cannot fit into any genre or category. This is the reason for the term Holistic, which means that the concept, the whole, is more important than its parts. Music is often categorized by genre, but when creating music with the ultimate purpose of healing, there is a necessity to draw elements from many genres of music, making it difficult to categorize this music by genre and therefore it can be called Holistic, music that contains different kinds of music and is categorized by its purpose: healing. The term holistic is also related to medicine, referring to the treatment of a person as a whole, both in mind and body. Holistic music, by merging all the healing musical elements of different traditions, attempts to heal in all the layers of being: body, breath, mind, intellect, memory, ego, and Self.

This kind of music attempts to bring musicians back to the original source and purpose of music. Music, says William Parker, is Magic. “I use the word magic because at anytime you can start speaking in tongues and drop your instruments and start dancing and become possessed. A lot of people stay away from that because they want to be musicians. It is not really about being musical, it is about being a healer. It is about letting yourself go into the spirit world.”  

The Sufis say that some music grants us a faint experience of God, an echo of divine reality and presence. The Hindu tradition, in its practical understanding of sound in the mystical life, tells us that music is God when it reaches its ultimate purity, focus, and effectiveness in opening the heart, mind, and spirit. Music and sound

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permeate the cosmos, perhaps all universes and realms. The scope of Holistic music is to awaken deep states of mystical consciousness that lead to healing and spiritual transformation of the body, heart, mind, and soul. Through the constant evolution of musical elements that give music this divine, healing energy, unique capabilities for mystical union and self-realization can be achieved.

HEALING MUSIC ELEMENTS

VOICE

In almost every tradition around the world, it is understood that the most important instrument is the voice. It is human nature to sing, so every other instrument was ultimately created to accompany the voice. “For all the instruments available on this planet, the most powerful is the human voice. This is especially true when the voice is used for healing.”  

The human voice has amazing healing power. According to Paul, voice helps humans “reconnect one with one’s body, and helps clear creative blocks. Singers can add power to their art by widening the scope of their vocal and chanting abilities; they can enjoy improved vocal texture, control, depth, and resonance. Indeed, any musician who discovers the language, cosmology, and spiritual technology behind the voice will channel greater transformational energy into the world through their art and person.”  

The human voice is the most accessible of instruments to humans. “First, we do not have to go out and buy a piece of scientific machinery or a musical instrument in order to experience harmonics. Second, the easiest instrument through which intention can be focused and channelled is the human voice.”  

Through conscious development of the voice, we can affect our body’s chemical, psychological, and spiritual experiences.

The concept that constant use and development of the voice expands the mind/body was very well understood by the Hindu tradition. For this reason, mantras are of extreme importance in their spiritual practice. “Mantras expand the mind/body. Each syllable travels through all seven layers of being and infuses the physical and subtle physiology body with life-bestowing prana.”  

In fact, each Sanskrit syllable is a mantra consisting of two parts: man (“mind”) and tra (“to expand”), therefore singing is a technique to expand the mind/body.


In the various esoteric and occult traditions, harmonics and vowel sounds are utilized for ceremonial and magical work. They are 'God names' and 'chakra sound' and contain within them some inherent energy that has mystified mankind since the first sound. “There are legends that before there was a spoken language of words, there was a harmonic language. This language allowed humankind to communicate with all the creations of nature. It was different from telepathy in that it used sound but it was similar to telepathy for the thoughts and information were sent on the sound wave and were received by the listener. Eventually this harmonic language separated. The consonants combined with the tones to create words. The tones combined with other sounds to make music.” 49

When singing, the sound generated penetrates all seven layers of the human being: body, breath, mind, intellect, memory, ego, and Self. First, the mechanical mind processes the sound by repeating it over and over again. The body then reacts, becoming aware of sensations that weren’t present before. The breath may also align rhythmically with the song or mantra. The mind also starts to “think” about the music, having positive or negative thoughts, just like when meditating. “These thoughts arise simply so you can realize that you are not your thoughts. There’s something deeper in you that can even realize the separation between the mind and the Self, which is why the thoughts disturb you.”50 But, the pure sound is actually purifying memory and releasing from its bondage. When the mind has been purified, then we reach a state of pure Being, Purusha, where there is only presence.

WORD

The importance of the voice is due not only to the healing power of sound and vibration, but additionally to the power of word. In the shamanic world, word and thought are very powerful tools that need to be used consciously. Everything we think, say and, therefore, sing about, has the potential to manifest as “real”. Goldman uses a very simple formula to show this phenomena: VISUALIZATION + VOCALIZATION = MANIFESTATION, and explains that “everything that exists in the universe was first a thought, that thought then manifesting as a word, a sound, which built all forms and itself manifested as the life within those forms . . . . The overtones of all musical sounds progress from the physical world into the spiritual world. That is why music is practically always part of religious services. Whether it be a Hindu mantra, the chant of a Jewish cantor, the call to prayer of a Moslem muezzin, a simple Christian hymn or a Bach Cantata, the purpose of music in a religious service is to raise the vibratory rate of a congregation upward through a series of overtones, to a spiritual level.”51 That is also why

shamans in every culture used singing and music: because of the healing power of vibration and because of the healing power of word, thought and, ultimately, intention. The words, lyrics to a melody have equal or even more importance than the notes that are being sung and the instruments accompanying. Every song, chant and mantra is healing because the words are attracting positive, healing vibrations.

MELODY

In the shamanic world there are specific songs, passed down from generation to generation, which shamans of different traditions use. These chants and songs are usually referred to as “Icaros.” However, just as frequently, various spirits will direct the shamans in new and original songs. Often, these songs have words, but some of them may sound like a series of meaningless phonemes, but they are far from being meaningless; a shaman states that “most of them come from the medicine which teaches me as I sing them.” 52 This represents the process of writing songs not only for shamans, but for musicians in general. The musician does not necessarily need to travel to the spirit realm in order to channel a new song or piece of music; it is about approaching music as if it were for the first time, as if it had nothing to do with sound or hearing. It is not about musical form, past, present, or future. It is about living the now. Music is not about reshaped molds; it is about the second-by-second discovery of sound. When living in the present moment, then the musician may channel new songs from the infinite creative source.

“Creative music is any music that procreates itself during its performance to create a living entity that is bigger than its seed.” 53 Chants, songs and mantras should never be written with preconceived thoughts and ideas. Musical composition is “about reading energies and feeling the vibrations of the moment.” 54 Only when composition is approached this way, the music can be truly original and unique. After all, “originality requires that we are comfortable with the unknown.” 55 Each human has a particular frequency that when heard, whether it’s only in the head, played on an instrument, the hum of a generator, or the prolonged tone of a singer, vibrates in unison with the tone of the body. When the wavelength of that particular sound is moving through the medium of air affects the body, causing the cells and tissues to resonates with that particular tone, which is known as the “fundamental tone” or, interestingly, “the tonic.” The tonic can be any frequency and varies for every person.

“The fundamental is a physical sound which is a projection of the Holy Spirit. Harmonic octaves of this fundamental also align to this energy.” 56 For this reason, melodies arise from this fundamental tone and most sacred chants are contained within one octave. When you begin with this tonic frequency and keep raising its pitch, the original frequency will eventually double. This new pitch sounds similar to the fundamental tone even though it is vibrating at a different rate. The distance between these two frequencies is called an “octave.” Between these two frequencies that make up the octave, there is an infinite amount of pitches. “In western culture there are eleven other frequencies in between an octave, for a total of twelve distances or intervals. These are the tempered intervals — equal divisions of the octave. Seven of these combinations (the fundamental plus one of the eleven frequencies) are considered consonant, while five are considered dissonant.” 57 Human beings experience some intervals as pleasant and enjoyable; thats why they are called “consonant intervals. Those that feel uncomfortable and jarring are called “dissonant.”

The Indian octave, on the other hand, is divided into twenty-two srutis, or tones, offering the musician and the listener a subtle tonal system. Both the western and eastern music though, are based on seven note scales, or ragas as known in the Hindu tradition. Ancient Hindu sages declared that “ragas are a coloring of the spirit. All music is, in a sense, composed of ragas. What is more, ragas are worshipped as spiritual presences with distinctive personalities that come alive.”55 Scales or ragas emphasize the relationship between successive notes, they are essentially melodic music; ethnomusicologists consider them to be one of the world’s most sophisticated musical expressions. Furthermore, ragas help create “vertical” music. Melodic music is internal, drawing one inward. Eastern religions advocate looking within to discover the inner reality and mystery of one’s being and Eastern music facilitates this process. “Western music, on the other hand, is essentially “horizontal” in character. It has an intrinsic expansive harmonic quality that, by its very nature, causes it to move outward. This is typical of the Western culture, which is basically extroverted. Western religion, particularly Christianity, primarily advocates going outside oneself, toward one’s fellow human beings.” 59


The notes of the musical scale/raga are related to the chakras: Do (SA) to the root, Re (RI) to the second chakra, Mi (GA) to the abdomen, Fa (MA) to the heart, Sol (PA) to the throat (the creative, expressive center), La (DA) to the third eye, and Si (NI) to the crown. The techniques of Indian music, which use these syllables in performance and composition, awaken energy in the chakras, channeling energy toward its highest fulfillment in the Divine and transforming negative energy into a positive force. “Ascending and descending the musical scale simultaneously causes our awareness to ascend and descend the spine, vibrating every cell along its path and activating groups of nerves that send healing impulses to the brain and the rest of the body.” In these ways, “melodies can be used for a wide variety of purposes. They can help a person deal with anger, pain, jealousy, depression, frustration, or emptiness.” These melodies can be very simple and contained within only one octave, because within this octave there can be movement that may act upon the whole soul, the whole body. These intervalic movements, choices of intervals, “allow music to convey a variety of emotions, awakening us to joy, sadness, melancholy, discomfort, strength, or comfort, and allowing us to create heal our souls and our bodies with music.” Here’s an example of a sacred song that is simple, yet has great healing power.

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While vertical, melodic music has dominated Eastern music, “harmony, or the relationship of notes played simultaneously, has dominated Western music.” Harmony is horizontal, meaning that when three or more notes are played at the same time, they create “harmony.” The word for “note” in Indian music is “swara,” meaning “that which makes its own sweetness.” In music, sweetness is harmony or consonance, and each note (in relationship to the fundamental) has intrinsic properties that generate healing, wholeness, and love. “The fundamental note on either end of the octave is the maternal syllable SA. The fifth note, PA — a note of great stability located in the middle of the octave — is the father. The other notes are the progeny of these two. In India, there is a well-known saying: “Mata, Pita, Guru, Deivam,” or “The Divine is mother, father, and teacher.” This trinity parallels the musical octave. This trinity represents the basis of Western harmony and music: The Triad.

Goldman explains the triad with harmonics and mathematics. The three notes that form the major triad, are the first three harmonics created from the fundamental tone or “tonic” mentioned before. In the following table, the order in which harmonics appear from the fundamental tone is shown. In this case the fundamental is C vibrating at 256 hz. 

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The triad is the most consonant three-note sound derived from the major scale, and therefore the most consonant chord. For this reason, Western music is based on triads. There are seven triads in the major scale and any seven note scale. Three of them are major triads (Root, major third and perfect fifth), three are minor (Root, minor third and perfect fifth) and the last one is diminished (Root, minor third and diminished fifth). Most popular western music is based only on minor and major triads, this is especially true for Icaros (shamanic songs and chants). Harmonic progressions are usually very simple and may have as few as two triads for one entire song, like the harmony to the melody of “Canto Enamorado”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Aug Fourth</th>
<th>Fa#</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F#</td>
<td>Aug Fourth</td>
<td>Fa#</td>
<td>2816</td>
<td>hz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Perfect Fifth</td>
<td>Sol</td>
<td>3072</td>
<td>hz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ab</td>
<td>Minor Sixth</td>
<td>Lab</td>
<td>3328</td>
<td>hz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bb</td>
<td>Minor Seventh</td>
<td>Sib</td>
<td>3584</td>
<td>hz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Major Seventh</td>
<td>Si</td>
<td>3840</td>
<td>hz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Octave</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>4096</td>
<td>hz</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In contemporary music, though, there has been a lot of progress in theory concerning triadic harmony. With the use of upper structure triads, musicians are able to bring different colors and emotions to the music, without altering the original diatonic triad that accompanies the melody. The following is a list of all the different sounds that can be played on top of only one triad. Here there are examples for both, minor and major triads.
Using this table, very simple triadic professions can be re-harmonized with a vast possibility of different sounds, colors, emotions. This example is a re-harmonization of “Canto Enamorado” using Upper-Structure Triads.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Upper Structure Triads</th>
<th>C Major Triad</th>
<th>A minor Triad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major 7</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fmaj9</td>
<td>Fmaj7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bbmaj13,#11,9</td>
<td>Bbmaj7(#11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dbmaj7(#11,#9)</td>
<td>Db+maj7(#9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ab+maj7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minor 7</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-7</td>
<td>A-7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-11,9</td>
<td>D-9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G-13,11</td>
<td>G-13,11,9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bb-13,#11,9</td>
<td>F#-7b5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dominant 7</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C7</td>
<td>C13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A7(#9)</td>
<td>A7(#9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F#7(#11,b9)</td>
<td>F#7(#11,#9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eb13, b9</td>
<td>Eb13,#11,b9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bb13,#11,9</td>
<td>D9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E7(b13,#9)</td>
<td>G#7(b13,b9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using this table, very simple triadic professions can be re-harmonized with a vast possibility of different sounds, colors, emotions. This example is a re-harmonization of “Canto Enamorado” using Upper-Structure Triads.

RHYTHM

Music is essentially comprised of two elements: Pitch (melody and harmony) and rhythm. Rhythm is really important when dealing with healing music. Just like notes are connected to the centers of the physical and energy body, rhythm is connected to the different rhythms of the body. In fact, “through sound, it is possible to change the
rhythms of brainwaves, as well as the rhythm of the heart beat and respiration.”

The rhythms of all the layers of being may be changed, controlled and balanced with music. The powerful rhythmic vibrations of sound may affect the rhythm of the mind, the rhythm of the energy flowing through our body and even the rhythm of our organic functions. “This is known as 'entrainment' and involves the ability of the more powerful rhythmic vibrations of one object to change the less powerful rhythmic vibrations of another object and cause them to synchronize their rhythms with the first object.”

Entrainment is a very important aspect of shamanic healing music. Through entrainment, the listener is not only connected with the music and the musician, but listeners get connected with each other, allowing energy to flow freely within the body and in between humans. Therefore, after connecting his own energy and music with the spirit world, the musician-healer is able to transmit healing energy through out the space in which the music is being played and everyone in it. When entrainment happens, so does healing, bringing the listener to a heightened state of awareness, harmonizing the flow of his thought patterns and creating spaciousness in the mind, which gives the listener a new perspective on the thought processes.

Ultimately, “the cessation of the modification and movements of the mind stuff is the primary prerequisite to perceiving pure consciousness. It clears the mirror. A parallel statement in Christianity is that of St. Paul: Now we see clouded, as though in a mirror, but then, in the mystical state, we shall see face to face.” Shamans understand that entrainment is the way to reach that mystical state and they know that the way to reach that state is through rhythm. For this reason drumming plays a very important role in ceremonies and drumming and percussion should be present in every kind of healing music if possible.

IMPROVISATION

Improvisation plays a major role in healing music. “Improvisation is not the art of making up, it is the art of emptying oneself of all preset ideas, not making up music but just praying and attempting to live a life in the spirit to eventually transcend all preset form but as a prayer, let it be spontaneous, its order being inside you.”

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contemporary music, the musicians that are the closest to this definition of improvisers are jazz musicians. Dafnis Prieto, a renowned jazz drummer, believes that “whoever reaches the point of spirituality, whoever asks themselves what music is, is going to go to jazz. He is going to listen to jazz, whether he likes it or not.” In fact, the most important element of jazz music is improvisation. Shamans are improvisers in their own right. They believe, just like jazz musician Dave Douglas, that they “don’t make a final decision of what will happen in the performance, but you push the wall of what the material is and then allow the music what it can be in the performance.” Clearly, for shamans the performance means the ceremony. When shamans are making music during the ceremony, just like when jazz musicians are performing, they have to allow music to flow free of any preconceived form or structure. Healing music, like jazz, is about “freedom, freedom within song. That freedom to say what we want to say.”

Creative music is any music that procreates itself during its performance to create a living entity that is bigger than its seed. In holistic music, there should always be, just like in jazz, freedom for the musicians to express themselves. In most popular music, musicians need to perform the music almost exactly the same way every time they perform, but jazz musicians thrive on freedom. Just like drummer Brian Blade who states: “I don’t want to control the thing, I just don’t. I want to be surprised by it too. I want to be in the moment too, when it’s unfolding.” Greg Osby also believes “there has to be a heavy degree of improvisation at the root source. A composition without improvisation isn’t worth the time, which is why I didn’t become a classical musician or something like that. I mean there have to be sections of the music that are specifically set aside for people to express themselves within the characterization of deliberate pulses that have been set up. Without that, I don’t have time for it.” The same works for holistic, healing music.

Jazz music’s purpose though, is not healing. The original purpose of this music was entertaining. Osby believes that, since jazz is African-american music, “white writers always want somebody black to perform for them, and make them feel good- do the jig, do the dance, play the blues - make them feel happy, as opposed to accessing the deeper parts of our psyche. As though we are born entertainers.” But, even though the main purpose

might not be healing, through improvisation, jazz music has been healing both, performers and entertainers.

Recently, many jazz musicians including Wayne Shorter, Charles Lloyd, among others, have started creating spiritual, and therefore healing music. They followed John Coltrane’s path, who arguably brought spirituality to jazz music with one of the most important albums in jazz history: “A Love Supreme.”

In his last years, between this recording and his sudden death, Coltrane merged himself in spirituality and started creating what could also be categorized as holistic music. He started experimenting with music and rhythms from Africa, India and all over the globe. Mark Turner, a contemporary saxophone player who has high regards for Coltrane states: “That is what jazz is to me - elements from different traditions that come together. I think that jazz by definition, let’s say the music of the Americas, is that; all the music that happens in the new world- in North and South America and the Caribbean- is a combination of different music that then becomes its own thing, In fact, that is probably what everything is anyway. But, since we are talking about music, jazz is an obvious form where we have actually seen that.”

Currently there are jazz musicians who are creating really powerful spiritual music. “There’s something lasting about their music. Spiritual urgency, especially with John Coltrane. He has to do what he’s doing. It’s not like, oh, I think I’ll play. No, he has to.”

INSTRUMENTATION

There is obviously an infinite number of possibilities for the combination of instruments when getting together a group of musicians to interpret holistic music. What is important though is the role each instrumentalist plays. “When you have an orchestra you are painting with twelve colors; when you have a quartet you are painting with maybe your primary colors.” So, just like there’s an infinite palette of color shades to chose from, what is important when panting is that ultimately, there is balance between all the colors that are being used.

In holistic music, there is a lot of space for improvisation, but unlike jazz, improvisation needs to be collective so that there is not one featured musician. Maria Schneider, a renowned jazz orchestra composer and director says that “Sometimes, when you go hear jazz, the solos feel like separate performances. You get the feeling that the person is playing for himself or herself rather than playing for you.” The idea of holistic music is that musicians can tap into the creative source and play the music that is already there. So, ultimately, improvisation is not so much about creating music, but listening to the music that wants to be played. Listening is the most important

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thing a musician should be doing when playing jazz. Parker realized that “listening to music helped me to force myself, to see the beauty and listen to your life, to see that there is value in it all.” 78 So, listening is what ultimately connects the musician with the spirit world.

“The ear, in ancient cultures, was associated with the conch shell, which also resembles the gateway to the female reproductive organs. The ear is feminine and soul-like because of its receptive, deep, interior, mysterious qualities. This is why the quality of our hearing and the kinds of sounds we hear are important; we derive healing and nourishment for our soul from the process. In other words, to neglect our ears is to neglect our soul. It is estimated that the ear is about ten times more accurate in its perceptions than the eye.” 79 The more connected the musician is to his auditory capability, the closer he will get to the spirit world. This is true not only because the musician is able to hear the music that needs to be played, but because he can listen and interact with the rest of musicians. When all the musicians playing are listening to each other, then they are communicating and healing energy can freely flow between them and the audience.

INTENTION

Mark Turner states that “one negative aspect, and it comes from the same thing that is inspiring about it all, is that because there is so much information, so much to assimilate, that sometimes there can be a tendency for jazz to be very proficient, but lack some emotional things, maybe some spiritual things. There is a tendency for that.” 80 There is a tendency for jazz musicians to create highly technical music, without even thinking about the purpose or intention they have when creating music. Intention though, is arguably the most important aspect when performing healing music. Music has special effects on people and musicians, music can heal the soul and the body. This is not true when played by everyone though, music has special healing power when played by the musicians who have followed the shaman path, meaning that they have worked on themselves, have healed themselves, so that they are able to heal others.

“The people who changed the shape of music were the ones who broke existing rules, expanded them to fit their needs as guided by aesthetic.” 81 The creative impulse is always present and those who are open to it, so to


speak, are moved and inspired to create. The urge to create is natural, inspiration is what happens when musicians are fully present and their hearts and minds are still and open when the creative flow of life’s greater intelligence shows up, which is the infinite creativity that is beyond human reality. So, before playing music musicians need to work on themselves constantly and when playing they’ve “got to put all of their energy into the music, all of their being into the music, because that is what healers are thinking about every time they play music. They are thinking about the upliftment of all humanity.”

Goldman has another formula to explain this: FREQUENCY + INTENTION = HEALING. “It means that the intention of the person working with the sound is as important as the frequency which is being projected at a person to create resonant frequency healing.” Sound is a carrier wave of consciousness. This means that depending upon where an individual's awareness is placed when he creates a certain sound, the sound will carry information on that state to the person receiving it. “If, for example, you are angry and you create a sound, even though it may be a pleasant sound, you will be sending anger that is incorporated into that sound. This will be perceived on some subtle level by those receiving the sound. I like to think of this as the intent or purpose behind the sound. With this word 'intent', we are really talking about the consciousness of the sound being created.” This encompasses the overall state of the person making the sound and involves the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of that person. The initial understanding of intention involves our conscious mind, the conscious intent of the sound to heal. Guitarist Ben Monder believes that “there is a certain depth, and it is not about someone’s vocabulary really, it’s more about their sound. It is a certain relationship with one’s own self that comes across, which sort of illustrates the depth to which they are experiencing that sound, and that might be what I hear in the older players that I am not hearing that much now.” There is so much that may be transmitted with only one note when the intention of the musician is healing.

CONCLUSION

Music is the most sacred form of art, the Divine art. Music has amazing healing power and shamans from the entire planet understood this and always used it as such. For shamans, art has to portray human harmony with nature, with Mother Earth. Therefore, music was part of rituals that portrayed the beauty of the world around them.

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and their simple way of life. Life, in fact, is a ritual for shamans, so everything around them is thought of as sacred and every activity in life is in the service of a higher purpose. Music is a form of prayer. Music is a way for shamans, for artists, for humans, to connect with the spiritual world. Historically, images relating to something mysterious and beyond normal human awareness have always been perceived to be religious, but shamanism is far from being a religion. Shamanism is a way of life. For shamans, there is ultimately only one art form, the art of living.

The key to the art of living is art. If art is not taken seriously, then life is not taken seriously. The word ‘artist’ should be synonymous with the term human being. Art, music, can be the center, the balance in life. Music connects humans to something bigger. Leaving religion aside, the state of mind where humans can be creative puts them in touch with God, the eternal center, the infinite creative source, or whatever name can be given to that space where one just feels peace. Peace and love is what humans ultimately desire, so that is what musicians need to look for within their own self, life, world, so that they may share their sacred sounds with the world.

All humans are healers, born in this planet Earth to heal and love each other. Shamans know that love is the ultimate medicine. There are other very powerful medicines like music or plants, but in reality all disease is lack of love. Therefore, the best medicine is love. Human beings are here to love one another. That is the art, the key to life, the art of loving one another. The shaman’s job in is community, just like the modern artist’s job in society, is to bring this enlightened message of love, joy, peace and happiness. This is what the goal of every musician should be, to create loving, and therefore healing music. Music is love at its highest form, music is peace. When listening to music, the listener should feel love should feel at peace. If he doesn’t, the music is not working.

The wonderful thing about music is that even on its lowest, most popular level, it’s healing. Because of the healing power of music, every kind of music in the world can be uplifting. The one reason artists should be involved in art is to uplift the receiver in someway, and to help him or her see the best way of living here on earth as a human being. Art should inspire the receiver of that art to seek a greater understanding of life, to be more interested in the spirit than in the mind. The kind of art is not important, the most important thing is the purpose, the intention when creating. One play music and call it whatever he likes, the most important thing is that music, the music he plays, brings out the divine in all who listen to it and all who play it. That is what Holistic music ultimately is. Music that incorporates elements from any and every genre, tradition and era with the sole purpose of healing.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


