When the Music Changes, You Change!
By Silvia Nakkach
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Vibration permeates all things!

Sound is in the basis of all existence and expresses the relationship between human and cosmic orders. Our ancestors valued sound and music as medicinal, magical, and mystical, and since times immemorial, sound has been use as a gateway to transcendence and the exploration of consciousness by shamans, mystics, healers, scientists, yogis, artists, and sacred lineages of music all over the world. It is undeniable that there is something in the experience of music that is beyond ordinary listening, as chanting have served as vehicle for expressing people’s hopes, desires, and pains, for political liberation, celebration and collective grief. Everyone has experience how music can instantly alter emotional disposition, shifting moods, and harmonize relationships.

Music has been a shaping force in the evolution of human nature, and a template from which complex behaviors such as language have been developed. There is nothing more powerful to change our emotional disposition than making music together.

Music is organized sound in time, and according to Dr. Mitchell L. Gaynor, M.D. - Director of Medical Oncology and Integrative Medicine at the Strang-Cornell Cancer Prevention Center & author of The Power of Sound, - “Sound is a uniquely potent form of energy medicine that entrains us to the vibrations of our own essence and that of the Universe. Sound is also the simplest, most direct route I know to achieve the sense of profound calm that allows us to move into that peaceful inner place, that I call our essence.”

More accurately than ever before, researchers in the field of Psychoneuroimmunology (PNI) - the study of the interaction between psychological processes and the nervous and immune systems of the human body - have come to the conclusion that music changes many the regions of the brain, and helps the brain to evolve human experience. Music makes us who we are.

“Music, much like food, has a nutritional value for our minds and bodies. It is amazing that in few minutes, music and sound can trigger responses in our heartbeat, emotions, and attentiveness. Almost instantly, you can be activated, and feel like dancing.”

-Don Campbell, from his new book The Harmony of Health.

These personal changes also affect society. One significant development in the twentieth century is the idea that music is a ‘force’ in social change, a building material of cultural preservation and paradigm shift, and it can be as powerful as a healer assisting a cure, or as a politician, at the service of collective insight and political struggle.
A clear example of the ability of music to raise social consciousness is in the American folk and country music, black music, music of the sixties, and the formation of new collective identities through the music of activism (rap, be-bop, etc). In 1991, we have the peaceful example of the Estonian Singing Revolution that ended with a century of dictatorial oppression.

Another powerful illustration of the strength of music in cultural endurance is the continuous evolution of the African Yoruba religion and ritual music in Brazil from the XIX century up to these days. The name adopted for Yoruba tradition in Brazil is Candomblé. While it was certainly shaped and altered by its historical placement within the nation-state of Brazil and the religious context of Christianity, Candomblé has been a site for Blacks to honor and practice their heritage. For women, especially, it has been argued that Candomble allows access to more power, status, and authority than anywhere else in society.

The devotional magnetism of improvisational group chanting is quickly spreading through the West, the South, and the North, through various crossbreeds of spiritual inspired Indian chanting labeled as Kirtan. The ecstatic quality of the group improvisation (repeatedly calling the Divine Names) seems to have a calming effect on the thirst for warmth and transcendence of a cross-cultural community of spiritual seekers.

Sound and music therapies continue to be a growing occupation. In the realm of health, stress has become, in modern society, the subject of research and alternative treatments, non-invasive and easily accessible ways to deal with stress have now become critical issues. People are attending more to the remedial effects of music as therapy. There are more than 6,000 certified and licensed music therapists in the United States working in hospitals, rehabilitation units, health-care and educational settings.

Music in Education is the key

In view of the fast emerging field of sound, voice and music healing, the access to contemporary shamanism, and the proficiency of sound science, it becomes increasingly important to assess innovative music centered modalities and technologies, searching for new meanings that may change the course of history. The key lays in enriching education with more music and the power of people playing music together. The art of improvisation integrates the mystic, the artistic, cultural, and scientific dimensions of sound. This multimodal and interdisciplinary approach to education will strengthen the understanding of how music can support growth processes and social change. As disarmament starts at the individual level, a healing and devotional practice that involves meditation, making music together and community building is highly beneficial to foster world peace in a collective level.

Cross-cultural music has been always an essential part of community healing, ritual, and to accompany life's passages. As Sound has been used as a gateway for the exploration of consciousness by shamans, yogis, mystics, composers, and scientists. The ancients in China and Tibet imparted a
sophisticated knowledge of how to tune and combine the metal "singing bowls", bells and gongs together with chanting sacred syllables to generate a sonic vibration that could influence pulse rates and brain function. In India, and other ancient musical traditions, the music is based on the "tonic", a sustained tone or drone that gives a ground to the melody, and in the spiritual level – according to the Indian Vedic tradition - becomes a reminder of being embraced by the "breath of God". Improvisational singing with a drone leads the musician and the listener into a state of awakening contemplation, slowly clearing the mind to a state beyond thoughts and emotions.

Methods and rituals to access deep states of healing and to control outer forces of nature have been employed for thousands of years using the "low-tech" approach of what is today, a rapidly expanding science of high-tech applications of sound to expand consciousness and support therapeutic processes. As sound therapist Jeffrey Thompson states: "With far more sophisticated tools for measuring what happens in the brain during expanded states of consciousness, combined with more advanced tools for influencing the brain to travel to these states, we now have the ability to use our technological know-how to accelerate our own biological abilities and perhaps, our own evolution."

The interdisciplinary dialogue and research between music and neuroscience is teeming and ongoing. Dr Tomatis ground-breaking work shows how sound through the ear and the skin can stimulate the brain functions, and heal all kind of attention disorders. The definite research and application the phenomenon of acoustic brainwave entrainment – the ability to change brainwaves and states of consciousness and emotions with sound and music – and its effect on hemisphere synchronicity, that is making possible profound changes in the body that are measurable with mapping equipment (EEG), blood tests, and biofeedback procedures. These methods involve digital technology, advanced sound instruments, as well as sound tables, and sound tracks in recordings. All these sound therapies trigger the brainwave entrainment response, affecting directly physiological systems and our vital pulses (i.e.: pulse rate, brainwaves, heart rate, respiration, EMG papillary dilation, EEG, body temperature, endocrinial functions, etc).

Integrating these interdisciplinary research and the insights on the use of sound in cognitive psychology, have important implications on musicology, music cognition, music therapy, and the influence of music on the brain functions. These advances may suggest widespread implications as new and more accessible methods to treat conditions like: ADD, chronic fatigue, immune system diseases, brain dysfunctions, depression, anxiety, insomnia, and chronic pain, ways to cope with chemical intoxication, addictions, lessen pain, grief, anger, fear, stress, and ease psychic and physical tension.

Rhythmically hypnotic, and repetitive pulses and vocal sounds are crucial for the healing processes. A single beat of a drum contains many frequencies and overtones which stimulates larger areas of the brain, more than a single frequency. Particularly, low frequencies pitches can be tolerated for a longer time. As a result of time and the duration of the stimulus, more energy can be transmitted to the brain with a drumbeat. The typical tempo of tribal drumming in
an EEG measurements is close to a basic rhythm of an Alpha wave production (8-13 cycles per second), the repetitive drumming produce an auditory driving of the Alpha waves leading to a trance like state that also can produce unusual perceptions.

As the fabric of breath, vibration and emotion, the singing voice can affect the body and mind more efficiently than any other form of sound. Vocal sounds are a primary source of energy, both balancing and stimulating to the brain. Chanting releases harmonic energy and triggers a spontaneous identification with the sacred; a dimension of consciousness characterized by a healing release of boundless radiance, openness, and love.

Thus, singing is a good medicine In the course of illness the healthy flow of energy is constricted and creativity is diminished. Singing functions as a great barrier breaker. As the sound is made by the voice, it relaxes the mind, it harmonizes the perceptions, and unnecessary tensions find a release. Even one long note, or one sung syllable is enough to bring that “freedom” effect.

The experience of singing and music is multi-dimensional. We experience music with our skin, with our bones, with our body temperature, with our pulse rates. Through singing we aim towards the phenomenon of musical embodiment. Music cognition (music as data) recognizes music as symbols affecting memory and the brain, while musical meaning stimulates psychological process.

Music making have the capacity to align auditory awareness, inducing different kinds of attention and trance-states that stimulate deep inner healing and a sense of spiritual liberation, devotion, reaffirming the belong-ness and preservation of the community.

In ritual and shamanic music healing the embodiment of Divine presence is welcome. Sacred chant stimulates meditative states that aim to bypass and transcends vigorous emotions promoting serenity, relaxation, and wellbeing. “Trancing is strenuously emotional while meditation aims to transcending emotions.” (Rouget)

Sacred chant is rooted in ancient melodic movements. In Indian music, those scales systems are called ragas, “that which colors the mind”. These vivid tonal arrangements evoke specific spiritual qualities or states of being. The experience of breathing deeply, dwelling in one note, feeling the musical vibrations that revitalize the body, and blending one's own voice with other voices in essential harmonies, is deeply inspiring, offering rare glimpses of the sacred source

“The time is fast approaching when people will select their music with the same intelligent care and knowledge that they use to select their food. When that times comes, music will become the principal source of healing for many individuals and social ills, and human evolution will be tremendously accelerated.”

-Corrine Heline.
Silvia Nakkach, MA, MMT, Grammy Nominated composer, author, former psychologist, and a pioneer in the field of sound and transformation of consciousness. Her innovative work is integrated in the comprehensive training; Yoga of the Voice. Nakkach is in the faculty of the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS), where she has created and is the academic coordinator of the Sound, Voice, and Music Healing Certificate program. She is the founder/director of the International Vox Mundi Project and School of the Voice with centers around the world. She has released 13 CDs and is the author of Free Your Voice, published by Sounds True.