

Music, Inner Peace and Social Harmony:  
How music and the popular musician assist in the  
cultivation of inner peace and social harmony

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## **Introduction**

This work is the result of many years of experience as a musician and a human being committed to inner peace, general well being and happiness. In order to make a contribution towards social harmony, healthy lifestyles and environmentally friendly human activities, I intend to explore and ideally answer the following question. **How does music contribute to inner peace and social harmony?**

However, there are some other important questions to be addressed first that are directly related to the main question. These lateral questions are:

- How does the popular musician contribute to inner peace and social harmony?
- How is music used by the popular musician to express his or her experience of inner peace, and in what way does she or he inspire others to attain such states in order to contribute to social harmony?
- What can science tell us about the therapeutic use of music and its contribution to inner peace?

Regarding the first question, generally speaking, the popular musician contributes to inner peace and social harmony by:

(a) writing and singing songs that support others to become more at peace, and;

(b) performing songs to communicate a message of inner peace and social harmony, via a rapport established with his or her audience.

The second question calls for a systemic and holistic view, since the popular musician can deliver, and also embody, a message, combined with cultural symbols and values. For example, 'Don't worry, bout a thing, cause every little thing's, gonna be alright', from the Bob Marley song *Three little birds* (Marley, B., 1977, track 9), stands for a message of hope, usually sung with a relaxed-peaceful-joyous mood by both the artist and the audience. Marley's massive influence through Reggae music worldwide continues to grow, a style of music centered around The Creator - 'Jah', peace, love, harmony and social justice, where community unifies in Reggae, and positive vibrations.

As for the third question, there is a growing body of scientific research dedicated to investigating the therapeutic use of music and how music listening and making can cultivate positive emotions and wellbeing (Koelsch, 2010). This will be explored further throughout this dissertation, examining the link between the therapeutic use of music and inner peace.

### **So how does music contribute to inner peace and social harmony?**

In order to answer this question we must first explore what constitutes inner peace and then understand social harmony as a dynamical process that propagates peace and harmony in communities or larger societies (Davis, 2009). It is also necessary to explore how music and the musician may be able to contribute to the process of peace propagation. The purpose of this dissertation is to explore how and why music can assist with inner peace and social harmony, and to examine how popular musicians contribute to, and benefit from, both inner peace and social harmony.

## **1. General overview on inner peace**

Inner peace could be generally described as a mental, spiritual, and physical sense of being at ease, with enough knowledge and understanding to keep oneself stable in the face of adversity, discord or stress. Being 'at peace' is widely regarded as a healthy state and the opposite of being stressed or anxious. Peace of mind is generally associated with bliss, happiness and contentment. Inner peace, also referred to as peace of mind, is thought to be a deliberate state of psychological or spiritual calm and the consequence of a masterful stress-relaxation management process. In that sense, inner peace could be described as a level within a dynamical system that requires the harmonization of multiple aspects of life, such as work, play, spiritual practices and actions of kindness amongst others. As Sasson (2017) puts it, "Inner peace is not a state of passivity, and certainly does not make life dull. On the contrary, it makes you more conscious, alive and happy. It helps you live life more fully" ("What is inner peace?", para. 4).

Ancient texts of wisdom describe and refer to inner peace. For example, in the Bhagavad Gita we read that one who is devoted to the knowledge of the sacred and the transcendental is assured to obtain inner peace. This can be compared to "the peace that surpasses all understanding" as described in the Bible (Philippians 4:7, English standard version). As the Dalai Lama said, "Everybody wants a happy life. This goal is entirely dependent on our inner peace...we are trying to seek a joyful, happy life from the outside — that is a mistake" (YoWangdu, 2011). In *The Teaching of The Buddha* (1980), we read, that the attainment of a higher cognitive state of perception of "reality as it is", "enlightenment", is accompanied by inner peace as described in the "Relief offered by

Buddha” (chapter 5, Amida Buddha’s vows): “the music of its holy teachings fills the air and cleanses the minds of all who listen to it... [and]...those who listen to the music of the holy teaching are led into perfect peace...” Interestingly these holy teachings are associated with music, signalling that from ancient times, in different cultures, healing, enlightenment and happiness have been associated with music.

## **2. Music and Inner Peace**

Music is an art form that has the capability to transform perception, and throughout history, has been used for a wide range of benefits. Inner peace and music seem closely related, especially music that induces a sense of relaxation or calmness. When discussing humankind's faculties for enjoying and producing music, Darwin (1955) wrote that music "must be ranked among the most mysterious with which he [humankind], is endowed" (p. 365). It appears that, to Darwin, the mystery of music, was that it wasn't involved with survival in a practical, physical sense, and that the energy and time required for its enjoyment or production seemed unproductive. However, he is later quoted as saying:

If I had to live my life again, I would have made a rule to read some poetry and listen to some music at least once every week. The loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness, and may possibly be injurious to the intellect, and more probably to the moral character, by enfeebling the emotional part of our nature. (Darwin & Carroll, 2003,p. 443)

I concur with Darwin, that enfeebling the emotional part of our nature diminishes our ability towards wholeness and balanced intelligence. I suggest that Darwin was alluding to 'sentipensante', which refers to feeling and thinking, rather than being in a singular mental state (Galeano, 1992).

As mentioned earlier, inner peace and spirituality seem to be intrinsic; the action of experiencing inner peace is an internal activity that supports people in becoming conscious of their inner life force or vitality. From a spiritual standpoint it seems that the spirit or soul that resides inside of our bodies is, in essence, always radiating with inner peace. Paramahansa Yogananda (1946) writes, "The world's great religions state that all created things originate in the cosmic vibratory energy of Aum or Amen, the Word or Holy Ghost." He relates this to the words of John 1.1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him, and without him was not anything that was made" (King James Bible, 1973). Yogananda's interpretation clearly states that the sounds of creation (Word) were in existence *'in the beginning'*, and that they were with God, and are God. So is it possible that when people attune themselves to the sound Aum or Holy Ghost, that they may gain inner peace? Can alignment with this spiritual vibration therefore become a source of inner strength and purpose for living? Though the answers to these questions are outside of the scope of this work, for a great part of the population of India, for example, they are still relevant and deserve at least being mentioned and acknowledged. The following reference to the ancient (yet still widely practiced) devotional music of the Hindu tradition provides support for this suggestion:

The sankirtana or musical gatherings are an effective form of yoga or spiritual discipline, necessitating intense concentration, absorption in the seed thought and sound. Because man himself is an expression of the Creative Word, sound exercises on him a potent and immediate effect. Great religious music of East and West bestows joy on man because it causes a temporary vibratory awakening of one of his occult spinal centres. In those blissful moments a dim memory comes to him of his divine origin. (Yogananda, 1946, p. 184)

Here we see that spiritual practices are aided by music and we must notice that expressions like “blissful moments” and “divine origin”, in the context of musical practice, clearly indicate a link between spirituality, music, and inner peace. Music is immersed within the cultural history of India as a part of daily spiritual practice. For instance, the title of the Holy Testament or Bible of the Hindu religion, the *Bhagavad Gita*, literally translates to “Song of the Spirit”. Also of note is that the Sanskrit word for musician is *bhagavathar*, ‘he who sings the praises of God’. Thus, there are numerous references to spirituality in music, and it seems plausible that music, created with a spiritual intent, is conducive to inner peace, health and wellbeing.

As the ancient stories and accounts of the nation of Israel state, “And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took a harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him” (1 Samuel, 16:23, Webster's Bible Translation). This could possibly be regarded as an ancient rendition of music therapy. Incidentally, “They say there was a secret chord, that David played and it

pleased the Lord”, from Leonard Cohen’s modern classic song, *Hallelujah* (Cohen, L.,1984, track 5), may have been inspired by similar passages of the accounts already mentioned above concerning David’s musical-spiritual healing power granted by The Creator, who is pleased with him.

The position one may assume regarding spirituality, which is a very personal choice that humanity expresses in diverse ways, will influence one's perception of the power of music in different ways. Music will be about sound as a tool for some, while a spiritual revelation or source of healing and inner peace for others.

### **3. Therapeutic uses of music**

Therapeutically music has far reaching benefits. I contend that as a medium for inducing a state of being conducive towards the cultivation of inner calm and poise, music allows people who are experiencing discomfort or inner turmoil to move away from ‘disease’ into a state of ‘ease’, or in other words, a state of inner peace. There is a continuum of different modalities belonging to this topic, it is important, in my view to make some distinctions between them. What follows is a brief description, via some examples, representing five different kinds of therapy associated with music.

#### **3.1 Music listening**

Listening to music as a way to relax, or to create an atmosphere or mood is extremely common; it is probably the most widely practiced form of the therapeutic use of music.

Research on the therapeutic effects of music listening is abundant, a few examples include:

alleviating depressive symptoms (Eckhardt & Dinsmore, 2012), reducing agitation, behavioural problems, and the need for medication among Dementia patients (Pedersen et al., 2017), and the crucial role of music in adolescent development (Miranda, 2013).

### **3.2 Singing as therapy**

The human voice is perhaps the most intimate, expressive, and direct musical instrument. Therapeutically, as a way of emotional release, singing appears to be extremely beneficial. Because the voice conveys sounds and words, which give rise to concepts or ideas, there is an “alchemy” of thought and feeling. As the famous lyricist Yip Harburg said: “words make you think thoughts, music makes you feel a particular feeling but a song makes you feel a thought” (Rosenthal & Flacks, 2010). Whether in a group situation, such as a choir, informal sing along or singing alone, there are studies showing the therapeutic effects of singing on neurological disorders (Wan, Rüber, Hohmann & Schlaug, 2010), and “that group singing is a joyful activity that promotes wellbeing and is life enhancing for those involved” (Judd & Pooley, 2013). For seven years I worked with mentally and physically disabled adults, leading a day long music session involving group singing, percussion, dance, songwriting and recording. This weekly session brought happiness and purpose into their lives as well as creating a sense of calm for both participants and support staff. A short documentary has been made, featuring one of the main songwriters in the group, in which we are shown recording one of his songs (Griffin.K & Kernick.V, 2016).

### 3.3 Music therapy

Internationally recognised as an established healthcare profession, music is used by qualified music therapists to address physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs of individuals. Other unofficial forms of music therapy also occur in a number of ways.

Freeman (2000) has put forward a case where music together with dancing have co-evolved biologically and culturally to aid the human species in social bonding as a means for our brains to create shared knowledge and meaning. Could it be, through dancing and listening to music, similar mechanisms also aid in overcoming illness and boosting the immune system?

The use of songs in music therapy with cancer patients and their families has also been reported, Bailey states:

Encouraging them [families], to be at the helm of the music therapy process, the music therapist can creatively support and guide them through the three stages of music therapy: contact, awareness, and resolution. Patients and family members can then experience feelings of inner peace, well-being, and relief-feelings...songs can reawaken vitality and creative life-expanding energies...[and] thus build intimate relationships between human beings and life. (1984, p.16)

Additionally, “songwriting is a worthwhile technique for some palliative care patients because the lyrical themes suggest that the process may aid in meeting their physical, psychosocial, and spiritual needs” (O’callaghan, 1996).

### **3.4 The therapy of mantra chanting**

Since ancient times, mantra practice and chanting, individually or in a group, has made a unique contribution for the “purification of the mind” from negative thoughts, as in Buddhist, Hindu or Greek orthodox practices. The benefits associated to this practice have been translated in modern day societies for the management of psychological distress and have been reported to enhance existential spiritual wellbeing, as for example in adults living with the condition of HIV/AIDS (Bormann et al., 2006). In a time-frequency analysis of chanting the Sanskrit divine sound ‘OM’ mantra, “the authors conclude that chanting affords steadiness in the mind, providing calmness and inner peace, confirming scientifically the accomplishments of chanting in reducing stress from the human mind” (Gurjar & Ladhake, 2008). Further research states, “The neurohemodynamic correlates of 'OM' chanting indicate limbic deactivation. As similar observations have been recorded with vagus nerve stimulation treatment used in depression and epilepsy, the study findings argue...a potential role [for] ...'OM' chanting in clinical practice” (Gangadhar et al, 2011).

### **3.5 The therapeutic benefits of making music**

In recent years, research has shown how musicians’ brains are affected by music practice (Hyde et al., 2009). Studies involving brain scans of professional musicians show that their brains are observably more symmetrical than non-musicians, and that areas of the brain responsible for motor control, auditory processing, and spatial coordination are larger. They also have a larger corpus callosum, the band of nerve fibres that enables the two

hemispheres of the brain to communicate with each other (Schlaug, 1995; Stewart, 2008). Importantly, there is a growing body of evidence suggesting music-induced changes in brain structure and function improve various aspects of mental functioning, including language, memory, and attention (Moreno & Bidelman, 2014; Wan & Schlaug, 2010).

#### **4. What can science tell us about inner peace and the therapeutic use of music?**

There is an increasing amount of scientific research regarding music and sound healing, particularly at certain frequencies, that reinforce what the ancient sciences of yoga and shamanism have practiced for centuries.

Thompson reports that:

Now we have sophisticated monitoring systems that can show us precisely how these ancient techniques for self transformation work on the brain, body and nervous system. Shaman drumming techniques use a drumming speed that centres in the low theta brainwave range (4.5 Hz or so), and brings consciousness to a dream state without going to sleep first. This process is known as the 'Brainwave Entrainment' response. The combination of various tones played together in harmonic mathematical ratios form chords that can be pleasing to the ear. This is because the mathematical ratios that make a pleasing chord follow the same rules we see in how nature is designed. The proportionate ratios of quantum fields, the structure of atoms, how they are arranged in the periodic table, the proportions of our bodies, the designs

found in nature and the organisation of galactic nebulae all follow similar patterns or rules of harmonics that we see in a pleasing musical composition. This has the possibility of awakening a 'Primal Memory' at an unconscious level of the connectedness of ourselves with the universe as a whole. (Vincent, 2009. p.150)

This reinforces the previous statement from Yogananda. Based on these theories that suggest that music can positively align our brain, body and nervous system with nature and life itself, it seems plausible that music can yield certain health benefits.

There is accruing evidence that indicates that music can positively impact health and wellbeing. Dr. Victoria Williamson (2014), however, suggests a cautious approach is necessary when discussing music-related health benefits. Williamson argues that music is clearly not a universal cure for any ailment, and warns against the 'vitamin' model for music whereby falsely assuming that certain music will have the same effect on everyone. She does, however, mention a range of health benefits received through music, clearly distinguishing between music therapy, which involves a qualified music therapist assisting a client to become healthier via music experiences, active participation, and music listening, and music medicine, which is the term used when a researcher utilises music treatments for health outcomes in the absence of a music therapist. These two different yet complementary approaches are gaining support from various scientific fields.

Research indicates that music can trigger emotion and mood changes through the stimulation of the central and autonomic nervous systems. For example, oxytocin, a

bonding hormone released during interactions with loved ones, is released when singing together (Keeler et al., 2015). Group singing also encourages social participation and has been found to reduce anxiety and depression (Lally, 2009; Sandgren, 2009, as cited in Hallam, 2015). There are a wide range of positive benefits relating to singing and group music making. These changes affect our health and wellbeing and thus are conducive to inner peace (Kreutz, Bongard, Rohrman, Hodapp, & Grebe, 2004).

Apart from the emotion based changes, there are a number of proven physiological effects on the human body, these include changes in heart rate, respiration, blood pressure, biochemical responses and the stimulation of brain dynamics that may modulate hormonal expressions, which in turn, positively influence the nervous and immune system (Kreutz & Lotze, 2008, as cited in Hallam, 2015; Kuhn, D. 2002 ).

In addition to music therapy and music medicine, music education, community music and music in everyday life are other areas where beneficial outcomes such as health, wellbeing, inner peace and social harmony are reported to be experienced (MacDonald, 2013). There are numerous studies on the benefits of music education and the impact of actively making music. Susan Hallams' (2015) book, *The Power of Music*, is a synthesis of research based on music and the intellectual, social and personal development of children and young people. Aural perception, enhanced verbal and visual memory skills, self regulation, creativity and academic attainment are amongst the many benefits listed as having a direct relationship with musical activity. The development of these and other skills,

acquired through musical activity, are certainly beneficial towards the creation of a sense of positive self worth and a foundation for experiencing inner peace.

Kraus and Chandrasekaran explain:

Neuroscience research has shown that music training leads to changes throughout the auditory system that prime musicians for listening challenges beyond music processing. This effect of music training suggests that, akin to physical exercise and its impact on body fitness, music is a resource that tones the brain for auditory fitness. Therefore, the role of music in shaping individual development deserves consideration. (2010, p. 599)

Miranda (2013) presents compelling evidence supporting further acknowledgement to the importance of music in adolescent lives. The interaction of music in adolescence is significant, influencing “at least seven major areas of development: aesthetics; identity; socialisation; emotion regulation and coping; personality and motivation; gender roles; and positive youth development”.

As I have first hand experience working with adolescent music students from a variety of backgrounds for over 15 years, it has become apparent to me that music plays a vital role in creating self awareness, positive self esteem and multi faceted acceptance of others and the world. Particularly for those who are experiencing feelings of alienation from peers and society, music creates a sense of belonging to a community larger than the immediate day to day environment.

Music seems to have benefits for older adults too. In a population twin-based study, Balbag, Pedersen, and Gatz (2014) found that older adults who had learned and continued to play a musical instrument were significantly less likely to develop dementia or cognitive impairment than their non-musical twins. There is also ongoing research about how music can help unlock memories and improve the quality of life for dementia patients. Dr. Oliver Sacks, neurologist and author of *Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain* (2011), mentions how closely connected the parts of the brain that respond to music are associated with memory, emotion and mood. Music, incredibly, enables Alzheimer's patients to access memories that have otherwise become inaccessible, the ability to communicate better, sing parts of songs and remember names of favourite musical artists remain with the patient for a period of time after listening to a familiar tune from the past. This remarkable aspect of music is being utilized in a large number of nursing homes throughout the U.S.A by a movement called *Music and Memory* (Thomas et al., 2017), whereby dementia and Alzheimer's patients are given music players with personalised playlists. Listening to favourite music seems to tap into deep memories spared by dementia, bringing participants back to life, enabling them to feel like themselves again, to converse, socialize and stay present. The results are frequently referred to as being nothing short of miraculous. The documentary, *Alive Inside: A Story of Music and Memory*, shows how effective listening to biographical music is for awakening memories and literally giving a new lease of life to people who are otherwise incapacitated (Rossato-Bennett, M., & McDougald, A., 2014).

Music has also been used to positively influence psychological states in working adults, including raising energy levels, reducing stress and tension, and decreasing depressive symptoms. The results from research conducted on a single music relaxation session, show that music relaxation significantly increased participant feelings of relaxation and pleasantness and significantly decreased participants feelings of tension (Smith, 2008).

These examples, among a growing body of research demonstrate the enormous potential for music to be used in a wide range of therapeutic applications. The underlying power of music that enables people to improve their experience of life and to feel more at ease, relaxed, and in some cases, to heal, I argue is directly related to one's sense of inner peace and thus contributes to social harmony.

It appears that inner peace is a personal experience unique to the individual, as each person is unique, it stands to reason, that the experiencing of inner peace is as varied as there are different people around the world. Just as Dr Williamson (2014), warned against the 'vitamin model' for music and lifelong well being, for inner peace too, there is likely no one type of music that suits everyone at all times, as a sure way to experience inner peace. The main point of this dissertation is to illustrate that music, in a myriad of different forms, styles and genres, does assist people the world over to feel happier, more relaxed and at peace with themselves and others.

## **5. Music, peace propagation and social harmony**

Social Harmony could be defined as, the experience of living in a society where people of different races, faith, and nationality live peacefully, in mutual trust, in spite of their differences. Inner peace and social harmony seem to be complementary when how one thinks, feels and acts emanates outward towards others, and is in turn reciprocated. Just as we may influence people with our peaceful presence, our own internal state also seems to be influenced by others when they share their inner peace. This seems to elevate relationships to a place of mutual understanding, appreciation and wellbeing. This kind of experience is in the category of the self-evident necessitating no further proof. We could even say that it is so when we agree and commit to it.

Experiencing social harmony can lead to a relaxed calm feeling, which is the basis of inner peace. Interestingly, from my personal experience, the term social harmony seems less common than other terms such as social integration, social development, or social cohesion, as Larsen puts it, in a United Nations paper, “I suggest that we define social cohesion as the belief held by citizens of a given nation-state that they share a moral community, which enables them to trust each other” (2014, p.2). We could assert that there is a close relationship between cohesion and harmony and for the purpose of this writing, the term social harmony is put forward as a unifying title under which the above descriptions combine.

Music is a part of social harmony on many levels, from the particular and more intimate to the global, every day in social interaction, music is included and perhaps intrinsic from the mundane to the spectacular.

Clearly, the world we live in has societies that are experiencing social disharmony and unrest for numerous different reasons. However, social harmony is and has been present for a long time also. Arguably, there is genuine need for a lot more social harmony, particularly in areas where human life is at risk, and basic necessities like food, water, and shelter are not available. These terrible situations, where, through war, famine or the unequal distribution of resources, people are dying, is a very sad, often preventable injustice.

Music has given people the hope and courage to rise up and carry on in times of hardship. There are many instances in history where music and the stories held within songs have given people the required rallying call for summoning the strength to carry on, often in the face of seemingly futile odds. The music of the people is also often referenced when recalling or retelling important historical social movements.

One such genre of music came from the U.S.A through the African ex-slaves and sharecroppers in the nineteenth century. "The Blues", is, to this day, an important global form of music that translates into many languages and cultures:

From unbridled joy to deep sadness, no form of music communicates more genuine emotion...African spirituals, chants, work songs, field hollers, rural fife and drum music, revivalist hymns and country dance music, all

contributed to the development of the blues...Originating from the Mississippi Delta, just upriver from New Orleans, the birthplace of Jazz. (Kopp, 2005)

A genre of music based around struggle and release seems to carry an amount of compassion within, and when performed in earnest, a strong sense of feeling can be experienced. Modern Western music is in no small way influenced by Blues (and Jazz), which originated through a mix of African, European and American culture in a melting pot of a new society. It is but one example of how a new music emerged through the need for societal integration, cohesion and harmony. The music was and still is an important medium for the expression of emotional stress and anguish, giving a release to the tension associated with struggle and hardship all over the world, so well reflected in the release of tension from a dominant or half diminished chord into a major seventh. We could say, metaphorically speaking, that jazz music comes with syncopation and the release of tension in the famous II-V-I chord progression.

Another aspect of music is its ability to unite people, particularly when live music is performed en masse, such as at large scale concerts or festivals. Historically there are examples of significance, such as Woodstock (1969). The Michael Wadleigh film (Wadleigh, M., & Maurice, B., 1970), of the Woodstock festival created huge impact worldwide on both the careers of many of the featured artists and future generations of audiences. Capturing a sense of harmony and togetherness amidst chaos and uncertainty, the film serves as a document to the possibilities of cooperation at a time in Western

culture when many rigid societal barriers were being dismantled or challenged. Speaking of Woodstock four decades later, one of the organisers, Michael Lang, says:

We always wanted to have it as a counter-culture event, it was important to me to have it about politics, interests in ecology, and human rights. The Vietnam war was a huge issue at the time. Woodstock was a picture of what life would be like if we were in charge. We deliberately wanted to create a space where everyone was welcome. If you didn't have money to eat, there were kitchens for you, if you didn't have a tent, we had a free camp site, and those who couldn't afford tickets, we'd get them in anyway. (Nikkhah, 2009)

This directly relates to social harmony and represented the changes in society that the festival was promoting and celebrating. It was not merely a festival for youth in a field. It was a monumental cultural event that attracted more than five hundred thousand people, plus many more who were unable to attend due to blocked highways amongst other reasons. The attendees were united under the banner of three days of peace, love and music. The music, of course was the draw card that attracted the masses and provided the soundtrack, the messages and a common ground for a collective focus. From the very first performer, Richie Havens, singing the intensely charged and improvised, *Freedom*, (Havens, R., 1970, track 3) to the last performer, Jimi Hendrix, one of the most popular musicians in the world at the time, performing the *Star Spangled Banner*, (Smith. J., 1773) to a largely empty field that resembles a deserted battle zone. The festival, although a financial disaster and huge clean up job afterwards, was successful, particularly through the

film, in showing the world that internal shifts in consciousness alongside influential social movements are possible through music and belief in the power of peace and love.

The question of, why is music so important to social movements, is pertinent at this point. In the book, *Playing For Change* (Rosenthal & Flacks, 2010), the question is thoroughly examined showing many examples of how music has contributed to the history of social movements. In the opening chapter, describing the impact the Almanac Singers had, on helping organize workers into the new unions of the Congress of Industrial Organizations during the early 1940's in the U.S.A., it becomes clear that the four young musicians were entirely amazed by their own effectiveness. Singing "oh you can't scare me, I'm sticking to the union...sticking to the union, till the day I die." Rallying thousands of men and women, sacrificing everything, to unite and sing together and build the CIO. Major changes were taking place for American workers; the big companies were, one by one, submitting to the power of the unions. There was a social movement happening, orchestrated largely by 'radicals', especially the Communists...and the Almanac singers were helping it along (Rosenthal & Flacks, 2010. p. 3). Interestingly, the band, which included Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger, were greeted with open arms by some CIO officials, yet by others they were treated with hostility. Treating them more like "cheerleaders than consciousness-raisers", the Communist party seemingly regarding the left-wing folksingers as non essential to its revolutionary struggle (p. 4).

I would like to stress that music by itself is not the source of social harmony or social change. As Street (Rosenthal & Flacks, 2010) has written, "music itself cannot change the world, but then again, no form of struggle can change the world by itself" (p. 252). I argue

that it is our enthusiasm and passion for music, at times and places when there is a need for unification, positive change and the rallying call to dig deep within ourselves, to overcome and accomplish actions that require focus, strength, earnestness and determination. Then, when there is a relevant song that speaks to the specific issue, to sing together, move together, and experience the feeling of working together for the greater good, people power becomes very real and may create historical significance. Perhaps, in my opinion, whether we like it or not, eventually we will have to accept that music breathes miracles into society, creating communion (a common union), a spirit that acts like a social glue.

Good singing won't do it, good praying won't do it, good preaching won't do it, but if you get all of them together with a little organizing behind them, you get a way of life and a way to do it. Lee Hays told an interviewer at the height of the Almanac singers in 1941. (Rosenthal & Flacks, 2010, p. 252)

Or as neuroscientist Walter Freeman puts it:

It is the social action of dancing and singing together, which induces new forms of behavior, owing to the malleability that can come through the altered state. It is reasonable to suppose that musical skills played a major role early in the evolution of human intellect, because they made possible the formation of human societies as a prerequisite for the transmission of acquired knowledge across generations...neither conventional neuroscience nor

aesthetics can explain the deep emotional power of music to move humans to action. (2000)

There are many instances throughout history where music played a vital role in the creation of equality and social harmony. The American civil rights movement (1954-1968), Estonian singing revolution (1986-1991), and the struggle to end apartheid in South Africa (1948-1992), are examples of where music was a key ingredient.

Guy and Candie Carawan worked at the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee, where many prominent figures in the civil rights movement together with other movements from around the U.S.A came to be trained in nonviolent philosophy as well as to learn the songs of the civil rights movement and when interviewed by the Library of Congress, explained:

There were songs for every mood...the very jubilant songs...the very sad songs when someone was killed...the songs you used at parties...the humor where you picked fun at people, the satire. [They sang these songs for multiple purposes] to motivate them through long marches, for psychological strength against harassment and brutality, and sometimes to simply pass the time when waiting for something to happen. (Carawan & Carawan, 2011)

Reflecting on the process of the Highlander Folk School, Carawan says that the uplift of culture, arts and especially music and dance were always used to help people take on some of the big issues, make good decisions and lift spirits. When things got too 'heavy' with the intense work they were attempting to do, Guy Carawan would get out the guitar and a group of the tutors would start to sing 'Freedom Songs' and it would work as a re-unifying

grounding process within the group. These brave people from the South of the U.S.A. were at the forefront of dismantling segregation and bringing the civil rights movement to the awareness of the world, placing high value on music, good food and humour.

The struggle to end apartheid in South Africa was a movement out of oppression for the millions of black South Africans who suffered greatly under apartheid. In the documentary *Amandla! A Revolution in Four Part Harmony* (Hirsch, 2003), a musical perspective is taken depicting the resistance movement against the apartheid regime. Legendary South African Jazz musician Abdullah Ibrahim, featured in the film reflecting on apartheid, observed that, "There has probably never been a revolution that did not use songs to give voice to its aspirations, or to unite and strengthen the morale of its adherents" (Hirsch, 2003). South African black freedom music played an essential role in overcoming adversity and maintaining an optimistic spirit for oppressed people.

Vuyisile Mini, recognized for writing some of the most influential songs of the early resistance period, was a gifted actor, dancer, poet and singer, who is remembered both for the songs he composed as well as his powerful bass voice. (Songs of Struggle, 2015)

He was a prominent member of the African National Congress and uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK), the armed branch of the ANC, his execution in 1964 for political crimes by the apartheid regime was unsuccessfully challenged by the United Nations. His song *Ndodemnyama (Beware, Verwoerd!)* (Mini. V, 1948/1965, track 6), is one of the most popular liberation songs. It carried a fierce message to Hendrik Verwoerd, then Prime

Minister and the so-called "Architect of Apartheid": *"Look out, Verwoerd, the black man is going to get you. Look out, Verwoerd, the people have taken up the song."*

The song was recorded by Miriam Makeba and released in 1965 on the album *An evening with Belafonte/Makeba* and through music, she was an ambassador of the struggle in South Africa. She was also the first African woman to win a grammy in 1966 for Best Folk Recording (for their album), and for many Americans the song became their introduction to the conditions that Black South Africans were living in under the apartheid system. Makeba also paid a high price for her work as an activist, the singer was exiled from South Africa in 1960 and not permitted to return home until the 90s.

Music played an important role in the campaign to free Nelson Mandela, as well as the greater struggle to end apartheid. That influence was so significant that jazz maestro Hugh Masekela once remarked that South Africa was the only country that had music as an international catalyst to help bring down an unjust government. (Long, 2017)

The two above examples are testimony to the importance of music in social movements and revolutions. In conclusion, I would like to briefly mention the Estonian independence movement, which has been called The Singing Revolution:

Music—primarily the country's rich choral tradition—played a central role in producing a sense of unity, defiance, and hope. For centuries, foreign domination had threatened Estonian national and cultural identity...Though one of the world's smallest countries [as of 2015, 1.312 million], Estonia has

one of the world's largest repertoires of folk songs, and the Estonians have used their music as a political weapon for centuries...Estonians have taken part in an annual song festival known as Laulupidu [since 1869], where choirs from around the country come together for a multi-day celebration of choral music, with as many as 25,000 people singing on stage at the same time. These gatherings, which have attracted crowds of hundreds of thousands, have always been as much about the popular yearning for national self-determination as they have been about music. Laulupidu became the cornerstone of the resistance against the Soviet occupation... (Zunes, 2009)

In conjunction with other strategic non violent events such as the 'Baltic Chain', where more than 2.5 million Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians linked hands covering the length of the three countries as a protest of solidarity, as well as other key petitions and non violent acts timed effectively with changes in the Soviet government, Estonia gained independence from the Soviet Union and officially became independent in 1991.

Reinforcing the role music plays, Danaher (2010) says, "Music is an important component of social movements. It helps establish and maintain collective identity, leads to vitalizing emotions, takes advantage of free space afforded by political opportunities, and helps establish and maintain social movement culture."

## **6. The popular musicians contribution to inner peace and social harmony**

Even though music has powerfully armed diverse social movements for justice, it is the sublime power of music to bring peace to the mind and healing to the soul that, in my view, has always been in the background behind the social movements, propelling us to a better scenario for a more harmonious and peaceful social arrangement.

The popular musician has, I suggest, contributed greatly to our collective consciousness, to many of the accepted ideas and common concepts of today. The dissemination of knowledge held within the lyrics of the songs, in combination with the accompanying music, delivers the message in a readily absorbable form to the listening audience. This could be an environmental, social, spiritual, humanitarian issue or cause amongst many others, usually based on giving voice to a crisis or movement that the artist is passionate about. This process of articulating with words and music, thoughts and emotions that resonate with audiences who have the realisation, consciously or unconsciously, that the song is expressing thoughts and feelings they value or align with but have not heard expressed in such a way, is a service to humanity that the popular musician is renowned for. To uplift the minds of listeners through their work is at the core of how music can and does have life changing and thus world changing effects, creating inner peace and social harmony by supporting how one thinks and perceives the world. As many wise people and the Bible (proverbs 4:23) have said in varying ways "As you think, so shall you become".

Based on this principle, popular musicians worldwide are voices that speak through music, one by one, directly to the minds of the people, generating inner peace and new found awareness which contributes towards social harmony.

Individual cases where people speak about how music saved their lives are not uncommon. For example, teenager Ashton Wyss developed depression and anorexia and despite being treated by a therapist was not recovering. His full recovery came through music, crediting Ed Sheeran as saving his life, by listening to Sheerans' +(Plus) album repeatedly. He says: "As soon as I played the album, I could feel my mood lifting... Sheeran's music became my coping mechanism. It helped me to let my feelings out instead of trapping them inside..." (Hernando, 2015). Wyss, a singer-songwriter now promotes the healing power of music to others through music.

Following are three songs which have had mass appeal: *Big Yellow Taxi* (Mitchell, J., 1969, track 10) , featuring the environmental messages of a young Joni Mitchell singing "they paved paradise and put up a parking lot", which has been recorded by more the 410 artists, to "imagine all the people living life in peace", from the song, *Imagine* (Lennon, J., 1971, track 1), by John Lennon, which could be called a world anthem for peace, and Cat Stevens, singing the unifying lyrics, "oh I've been smiling lately dreaming about the world as one", in his song *Peace Train* (Stevens, C., 1971, track 10), have all had huge impact as popular songs, and thus influenced popular culture.

Anna Rugis, touring backing vocalist for Van Morrison and Cat Stevens during the 1970's speaks of how the performance of *Peace Train* was a career highlight. Expressing how her

feeling of hope for the future of humanity was experienced whenever it was performed, as thousands of lighters filled the air and audiences sang along magnifying an immense sense of unity and peace. No other song she sang with the artists created this feeling (A. Rugis, personal communication, July 25, 2017).

These popular musicians are not only hugely famous for their influential music, they have given listening audiences their personal insights on a range of issues, including alternative political, social and spiritual perspectives, creativity and much more. The influence that fame and stardom provides for popular musicians to contribute to society is potentially massive.

This was especially noticeable in John Lennon and Yoko Ono's work, both inside and outside of music, challenging the status quo, promoting equality and world peace. This key aspect of 'walking the talk' as an artist, both on and off stage, I argue is a role that some popular musicians worldwide, willingly, and bravely fulfill. There are many modern day examples of popular musicians who are valuable role models in this respect. This happens it seems through the expression of experiential knowledge, insight, perspective, and belief, with the desire of contributing towards helping others, and to create a more accepting world, through music and in other areas of their lives. By and large this contribution is encouraging and life affirming, leading towards inner peace, social harmony and the greater good for all.

To reinforce this point, regarding helping to raise awareness, in 1966, when Bob Dylan was asked: "Do you think you have a purpose and a mission?" He replied, "Henry Miller

said it: The role of the artist is to inoculate the world with disillusionment” (Dylan & Cott, 2006).

And to add another perspective, In typical openness and honesty answering questions during an interview days before his murder in 1980, when asked how it felt to have influenced so many people, John Lennon says: “it wasn’t really me or us. It was the times...” and Yoko Ono says: “as I said, they were like mediums. They weren’t conscious of all they were saying, but it was coming through them.” When asked Why? Lennon says: “we tuned into a message. That’s all. I don’t mean to belittle the beatles...I’m just trying not to overblow their importance as separate from society” (Cott, 2010).

### **7. How does music serve as a vehicle for the popular musician towards his or her experience of inner peace?**

As the popular musician writes, records and performs songs that have meaning to them, they are transforming thoughts and feelings into music. These sounds and words are products of a process of opening up to, releasing and projecting emotions and ideas that were not in a musical form prior to the process of songwriting. This is in a sense a ‘chemical reaction’ that the body of the artist can experience on a regular basis. I argue that this is a therapeutic process that has the potential to raise the consciousness of the musician, leading to a greater sense of self worth and inner peace.

Songwriting used as therapy, clinically and informally, as psychological and emotional release, is relatively simple and can provide transformational results leading to inner peace. The following statement from Music Therapist Jacqueline Robarts working with a traumatised child is an example, “Lena’s songs enabled her to acknowledge her sadness and loneliness, her anger and her joy as her music began to forge a new sense of herself, developing her confidence to face the future” (2003).

The benefits of allowing oneself to verbalise inner thoughts, feelings and emotions through music are wherein the innate therapy of the musician resides. This ancient process is perhaps more valuable now than ever before, with the increase of stressors in the modern world. Our inner peace and social harmony are crucial foundations for choosing the best paths forward for our survival.

Musicians, in order to write songs, need to have some form of focusing the mind into alignment with the necessary attributes of producing music that they decide is worthwhile. The method is unique to the individual songwriter and thankfully we hear songs that are original sounding still today. However, to look into a unity within the diversity and to attempt to simplify the practice of songwriting to a common shared experience for all musicians, I say that the art of listening is at the crux of the work of songwriters. Listening for a spark or seed of an idea that sets the writing in motion, through to listening to the completed recording as it is about to be released, in turn creates the next cycle of listening from the audience's position.

To live a balanced life with a spiritual practice or regular therapeutic activity that keeps one content and at peace alongside music is also extremely useful for the busy professional musician. Allowing oneself to align with nature and to connect with the natural world is crucial for holistic health and to clear away unwanted or negative thoughts and energies and to be able to 'listen to the muse' and create the space to be inspired to write is essential. Nature settings such as the forest or ocean are very beneficial for clearing and assisting with recharging and grounding. The sounds of nature are music to our souls. I have experienced first hand the wonderful benefits of inspiration from taking the time to walk on the beach or in the forest.

Once aligned, if higher consciousness, for example, is an area that she or he is drawn to, the discoveries and knowledge acquired provide the musician with greater compassion, understanding and insight, and so, these themes influence the music that she or he is compelled to write. This in turn, when performed, expresses the qualities that the musician embodies and has focussed on. Therefore the cycle of cultivating inner peace and social harmony by self inquiry and spiritual practice manifest externally as the musician shares the songs she or he has written with the world. Inner peace and social harmony are naturally created as the musician works on their art as a service to all humankind. As we work on our self we work on our art.

## **Conclusion**

I have endeavoured to explore significant aspects of how music and the popular musician contribute to inner peace and social harmony. Therapeutic, personal and universal answers have been presented, whilst also providing scientific research supporting how, why and in which way these contributions happen. A wide range of material to support my views has been covered, and I hope that this initial attempt will serve as a platform for future work and inspiration to others...Perhaps social harmony and world peace are just a few songs away.

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