

MUSIC: EVOLUTION OR CREATION?

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We all know that the theory of evolution has influenced not only every part of science but also every aspect of life, and all branches of art!

In musicology as a study, and music as an art, a threefold influence can be seen. The first has to do with theories about the origin of music and musical instruments, the second with the criticism of music, and the third with contemporary composition and playing of music.

The History of Music

The opinion about the history of music, found in most books, is that vocal music had its origin in the imitation of animals,² while musical instruments were developed from tools or weapons commonly used. *The Larousse Encyclopedia of Music*, for instance, says: "It is probable that the gong originated from a simple cooking pot, while the earliest harp may have been a modified hunting bow."³

The music of primitive tribes, then, is interpreted as a young state in the evolution of music. From those primitive forms of music, it is said, evolved a higher music, just as the abilities and knowledge of man are said to have evolved. According to this view, the music of today would have to be on a higher level than, for instance, that of the middle ages.

Since we do not believe in the evolution of man, we need to test all theories of evolution very carefully.

First of all, music is a human activity and ability. The gap between anything like music, practised by apes, and music as practised by man, is even greater than the gap in regard to language. Of course, birds sing; the animal with the highest musical ability is said to be the nightingale, which can imitate more than twenty melodies. But it can only imitate; and this imitation has the same function as the cry of another animal. Man, on the other hand, can compose his own music, can sing or play together with others, for instance in a choir, can use musical instruments and design them, can compose music without any immediate function, and can think about his music!

The second thing to be noticed is that all the theories about the origin of music are speculations;² for there are no records older than about the third millennium B.C.. Indeed, a few reindeer bones with holes, which some believe to have been flutes, have been found; and bows, like hunting bows, shown in some paintings, have been said to be music bows.¹ So the theory of the early evolution of music has as little basis in fact as has that of language.⁴

From about the third millennium B.C., however, onward until the present, are found instruments, pictures, descriptions of pieces of music, writings on the theory of music, and even some written music. *The Atlas to Music*, while maintaining the evolution of music, states: "Moreover the time of antique high civilizations begins only after the natural catastrophes with floods (Bible and Gilgamesh epos) assumed around 3000 B.C.."⁵

Many historians deny that there was music on a

higher level before the Flood. But I am sure that there was; because I believe that God created man with all his faculties and abilities, including that of making music. It did not take thousands of years to get man singing. So it is no problem when we read in Genesis Chapter 4 about Jubal, who was a descendant of Cain in the seventh generation:⁶ "... Jubal, the ancestor of all musicians who play the harp and the flute."⁷ Jubal was displaying the same pioneering attitude as his brothers did, in being the first to live in tents, and to use bronze and iron.⁸

Many scientists believe that music, like language, has one source; and in this they agree with what the Bible seems to teach. But the fact that cultures living thousands of miles from one another use almost identical instruments is remarkable and curious, as the *Atlas to Music* says.⁹

The music of the third millennium B.C. was not primitive, as if it were just evolving. In India there were found more than twenty different instruments, a complicated staff system, and no sign of a long evolution at all. It seems that a high standard was there all at once, a standard, incidentally, which in India has not since been reached again.

In Mesopotamia has been found probably the oldest musical culture, which influenced painting and the religion. By Babylonian times music there had long since declined.

In China there are written works, supposed to be as old as from 2300 B.C.. At that time every learned person was to be educated in music. Emperor Tschun wanted them to know the stall system, based on mathematically calculated basis notes, and the rich history of the Chinese music.¹⁰ Later, Confucius said: "Morals and music decide about the life of a community."¹¹

Music was likewise very important in Egypt, where there seem to have been large orchestras maintained by the state. And that instrumental music and song played a large part in Hebrew life is clear from the Bible. This is true also of times long before David and Solomon, who, incidentally, were not the only singing rulers of those days.

One thing is to be seen in all these cultures. Without any long delay or preparation, there is music on a very high level, widespread among the people, and playing a very important role in religion and social life. But the rise of music is always followed by a long decline. Just compare the music of Israel in the time of Christ with that of the psalms. Or what happened to Greek music, about which quite a lot is known from paintings on

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vases¹² and other sources of information, during Roman times? In both cases a decline is apparent. Cultures still decline today, as Dr. Francis Schaeffer has shown in his commendable book *How Should We Then Live? The Rise and the Death of the Modern Culture*.¹³

The Criticism of Music

The influence of a belief in evolution is to be seen, not only in modern music, but also in what is said about that music. If everything is evolving, there is no point in evaluation or criticism, because music, like everything else, is in precisely that stage of development which is now needed. To one who believes thus, that stage has, of course, no further justification than its existence; therefore it cannot be classified as good or bad. All that matters is how the composition came into being and the reasons why it has to be as it is; in other words, its mechanistic aspect. If this be so, there could be no standards for the evaluation of music.¹⁴

Of course, one could find in any composition elements, taken from what has gone before. Even in the modern music, everything which had been part of music for centuries could not be forgotten. But if one consider only how it arose and why it arose in that way, it is possible to forget that it was composed, and personally, by some composer. The mechanistic viewpoint leads to losing the personal part. H. R. Rookmaker calls one of his books *Art Needs no Justification*.¹⁵ He maintains that because God created life, and man's faculties and abilities, art is justified. Art is not something which was just there in another form before. Rather, it is a sign of the Creation through a personal God. To one who does not believe that God created man, art has no justification, unless it help somehow in preserving the species man. But to a believer in creation, art and music might be called living documents of a living relationship with a personal God. Then music has its meaning, or should have; and one can judge whether or not it fulfills its meaning.¹⁶

Music, then, is not a product of a mechanistic process—a by-product of evolution. It is the product of a personal activity which is as close to a true act of creation as finite man can come. And it depends on abilities and faculties created by God. Only from this viewpoint can one really say: "*Soli Deo gloria*";¹⁷ and only from it can he look for a set of values for music.

The Bible, incidentally, has something to say about this matter. The Biblical standards are to be found in some hundred(!) verses concerning music.

Because man is a fallen being, affected by sin, sin surely also influences music. So a decline is what would be expected; it can be avoided only by a living relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Contemporary Music

One who followed evolutionary notions to their logical conclusion would have to call contemporary music always better than the older works. Or, if he could not deny a decline, he would have to inquire how the older music inspired another culture where the evolution went on. But is the whole level of music improving? Usually one will see a decline in one part of

music (or of another art) while another part is improving. Consider an example. H. R. Rookmaker shows that in earlier times everyone made music and was, in some sense, an artist. But when art became more complicated it became an occupation for specialists, music as well as other arts.¹⁵ On a lower level (of performance) everyone is a musician; on a higher level, only a few. Now, who will decide which is better: that everyone make music, or that music be complicated? Well, I do not want to say that music is worse for being the occupation of a few. My point is that it depends on what is considered to be most important, whether a change is considered good or bad.

This shows why some people are annoyed by references to some music as primitive. Is it primitive because it is on a level which has to be the lowest level of evolution? Because it is not according to contemporary Western standards? On questions like this, many people have been influenced by evolutionary views without even noticing it. If music is to be called primitive at all, the only right reason would be if it was a result of the decline which is found at any place or time where God is forgotten. On that point the Bible can tell us something. But then we had better ask ourselves whether the music of our own places and times reveals any knowledge of or relation with God.

Music as Practised

The evolutionary viewpoint has influenced not only musicology, the theoretical and philosophical consideration of music; but also the composition and performance is affected by the philosophy of the composer or performer. As Guinness, Francis Schaeffer, H. R. Rookmaker and many others have shown, in a world without meaning, as it would be according to the evolutionary view, music also becomes meaningless. Indeed, that has happened in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; and I do not need to cite examples. But a believer in creation should recognize and point out the difference between meaningless music and music which has something to say. The one destroys, as is the will of the devil; the other edifies, as is the will of Jesus Christ. If a rock group sings about love or God, it may mean nothing; but if we, as Christians, sing about it, it means everything. Music which is just the result of a mechanistic process has lost its worth. But when it is the result of an activity akin to true creation, it is a part of being in the likeness of God.¹⁸ It is a fulfilling of God's will to bring the Earth under man's control, and to defeat the chaos. Such music proclaims the glory of God's creation. Read Psalms 148 and 150!

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- ²Michels, Ulrich, 1977. Atlas to musik (*Atlas zur Musik*) dtv Munich. Volume 1, p. 159. From the end of the eighteenth century there have been in fact four major theories. Herder traced music back to language, Darwin to sounds of animals, especially birds, Stumpf to wordless shouts, and Spencer to emotional interjections.
- ³Hindley, Geoffrey, 1978. The Larousse encyclopedia of music. Havilyn, New York. P. 18.

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he pursues his investigation of the peoples of prehistoric Britain.

One important lesson that should be drawn from this revised interpretation of the past concerns the danger of placing too much importance on a limited range of archaeological artifacts. The traditional picture of British Neolithic society is very dependent on the study of graves and gravegoods, and inadequate attention has been given to other sources of information. The consequence has been that an artificial picture has predominated. This danger of selectivity leading to erroneous conclusions must be very carefully watched when studying nomadic peoples, because they leave behind so little for archaeologists to recover and study. For example, consider the life of Abraham, who led a nomadic way of life. He was a civilised man and he enjoyed the benefits of civilised life. He was wealthy and powerful, so that he had personal dealings with the Pharaoh of Egypt and the king of the Philistines, and he also defeated other kings on the battle field. He was one of the important people of his day—and yet his burial chamber was all that he left for posterity. An archaeologist could have little idea of the significance of this man from a study of his grave. Other nomads may have been just as civilised as Abraham, and yet have left just as little tangible evidence of their advanced culture.

Attention has been drawn several times in this article to the importance of presuppositions in the study of the past. In the study of early man, evolutionary views have predominated and archaeologists generally appear to be unconscious of the fact. A proper discussion of Thom's work has been seriously impaired by a commitment to evolutionary principles, and the resistance to the new ideas has been largely a result of prejudice rather than rational thought. The evidences for the British Neolithic being advanced in social structure and cultural attainments are now very strong, and it is time for the facts relating to neolithic peoples in other parts of the world to be re-examined.

Acknowledgements

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A Rapid Post-Flood Ice Age

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⁵²Bunker, *Op. cit.*, p. 1132.

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CREATION RESEARCH SOCIETY

History The Creation Research Society was first organized in 1963, with Dr. Walter E. Lammerts as first president and editor of a quarterly publication. Initially started as an informal committee of 10 scientists, it has grown rapidly, evidently filling a real need for an association devoted to research and publication in the field of scientific creationism, with a current membership of about 500 voting members (with graduate degrees in science) and over 1600 non-voting members. The *Creation Research Society Quarterly* has been gradually enlarged and improved and now is recognized as probably the outstanding publication in the field.

Activities The Society is solely a research and publication society. It does not hold meetings or engage in other promotional activities, and has no affiliation with any other scientific or religious organizations. Its members conduct research on problems related to its purposes, and a research fund is maintained to assist in such projects. Contributions to the research fund for these purposes are tax deductible.

Membership Voting membership is limited to scientists having at least an earned graduate degree in a natural or applied science. Dues are \$10.00 (Foreign, \$11.00 U.S.) per year and may be sent to Wilbert H. Rusch, Sr., Membership Secretary, 2717 Cranbrook Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104. Sustaining membership for those who do not meet the criteria for voting membership, and yet who subscribe to the statement of belief, is available at \$10.00 (Foreign, \$11.00 U.S.) per year and includes subscription to the Annual Issue and Quarterlies. All others interested in receiving copies of all these publications may do so at the rate of the subscription price for all issues for one year: \$13.00 (Foreign, \$14.00 U.S.).

Statement of Belief Members of the Creation Research Society, which include research scientists representing various fields of successful scientific accomplishment, are committed to full belief in the Biblical record of creation and early history, and thus to a concept of dynamic special creation (as opposed to evolution), both of the universe and the earth with its complexity of living forms.

We propose to re-evaluate science from this viewpoint, and since 1964 have published a quarterly of research articles in this field. In 1970 the Society published a textbook, *Biology: A Search for Order in Complexity*, through Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506. Subsequently a Revised Edition (1974), a Teachers' Guide and both Teachers' and Students' Laboratory Manuals have been published by Zondervan Publishing House. All members of the Society subscribe to the following statement of belief:

1. The Bible is the written Word of God, and because it is inspired throughout, all its assertions are historically and scientifically true in all the original autographs. To the student of nature this means that the account of origins in Genesis is a factual presentation of simple historical truths.

2. All basic types of living things, including man, were made by direct creative acts of God during the Creation Week described in Genesis. Whatever biological changes have occurred since Creation Week have accomplished only changes within the original created kinds.

3. The great Flood described in Genesis, commonly referred to as the Noachian Flood, was an historic event worldwide in its extent and effect.

4. We are an organization of Christian men of science who accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour. The account of the special creation of Adam and Eve as one man and woman and their subsequent fall into sin is the basis for our belief in the necessity of a Saviour for all mankind. Therefore, salvation can come only through accepting Jesus Christ as our Saviour.

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⁵Reference 2, p. 159, also pp. 158 and 160-173.

⁶The fact that Jubal was a descendant of Cain does not mean, as some seem to have supposed, that instrumental music is an invention of the devil.

⁷Genesis 4:21.

⁸Genesis 4:20 & 22.

⁹Reference 2, pp. 158 *et seq.*

¹⁰Reference 3, pp. 26 & 27.

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¹²Schirmmacher, Thomas, 1977. The art of Greek vases. Giessen (Unpublished.)

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¹⁴This is not to say, of course, that every criticism which is written today is utterly without standards. But the fact that critics can so often disagree so completely shows that there is no generally accepted set of standards.

¹⁵Rookmaker, H. R., 1978. Art needs no justification. Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester.

¹⁶For instance, music which increases the chaos, or destroys, or is inspired by the devil, can then be recognized for what it is, and called what it is. And one thing which it is is dangerous.

¹⁷S. D. G., meaning "To God alone the glory" was written by Johann Sebastian Bach on every piece of music which he wrote.

¹⁸Genesis 1:26 & 27.

Cover Illustration

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ice age. One piece of such evidence is shown on the front cover; it is one of the "flowerpots" or stacks on the eastern shore of Flowerpot Island in Georgian Bay, Ontario. The base of the stack has been undercut by wave action. Three of these stacks were present when explorers first visited the region, but only two remain today. The instability of the stacks is evidence against the theory of a great ice sheet excavating the basins of the Great Lakes. For stacks such as this would surely have been swept away by the supposed glaciers.

On the other hand, Mr. Michael J. Oard proposes, elsewhere in this issue of the *Quarterly*, a way in which a short ice age might have occurred after the Flood. It is desirable that all the possibilities be considered; in that way we are most likely to arrive at the truth.

It may be that there is truth on both sides: that there was, after the Flood, a time of much snow and cold weather in what are now temperate regions, but that many of the geological features commonly ascribed to the glaciers were really caused by something else.