

Notes on Music Antidotes

Satyaki Brockschmidt

Music can be used for many purposes, such as entertainment, setting an environment, inducing certain moods, giving instruction, and healing. It's also a very powerful tool for personal/spiritual growth and conscious living. If inner growth is your goal, it's essential to consciously surround yourself with music that truly supports that goal. For apart from music's outer forms—genre, lyrics, etc.—every piece of music also has more subtle and potent factors that influence us on deeper-than-conscious levels. Choosing music is thus not so much a question of likes and dislikes, or of others' opinions, but of what, exactly, a piece of music actually communicates *to you*. That is, what state of *consciousness* does it induce? Is that a consciousness you want or need to strengthen? Or is that consciousness detrimental to your inner aspirations?

Paramhansa Yogananda said that environment is generally stronger than will power. Whatever surrounds us has, in other words, a very strong influence on our attitudes and consciousness, and thus our *magnetism*. Magnetism is what ultimately determines our experience of life, including our own thoughts, for it determines what we attract into our lives.

Conscious living means to intentionally surround yourself with the qualities you seek to develop, rather than passively accepting those things that your present state of awareness attracts by default. For example, if you're generally cynical, the very magnetism of that consciousness attracts to you people and things that resonate with and reinforce that cynicism. To overcome that negative quality, then, you need to surround yourself with people and things that resonate with and reinforce *opposite* qualities like trust, supportiveness, optimism, and acceptance.

Music is a powerful tool in this regard because it acts on consciousness more directly than most other mediums of communication. Music is a vibration that easily bypasses any mental or rational defenses to affect us on energetic and emotional levels, and often does so regardless of considerations like genre and lyrics.* Music even affects us on cellular and atomic levels, as demonstrated, for instance, by studies with plants (*The Secret Lift of Plants*) and ice crystals (*The Hidden Messages of Water*).

* Because a genre tends to magnetize a similar consciousness to itself, most music of a genre tends share a similar vibration to the point that some generalizations can be made. There are always exceptions, however, depending on consciousness and skill of specific artists.

What's ultimately communicated through any piece of music is the consciousness and magnetism of both composer and performer: their attitudes, their emotions, their aspirations (or lack thereof), and their approaches to life's challenges. Do the artists merely express problem-consciousness, or do they actually offer solutions? Do they complain, or are they trying to understand? Do they have clarity of feeling?

Whatever your goals in life happen to be, keeping good company supportive of your goals is paramount. Where music is concerned, then, ask yourself whether you'd invite those composers and performers to share your home. Would you want to eat with them? Commute with them? Exercise with them? For when you listen to their music you're inviting their consciousness and magnetism into your heart and soul.

In choosing music, first be clear on those qualities that you're seeking to develop, then seek music that awakens and uplifts those qualities in a genre where you're most receptive. *This is a personal and individual matter.* Although music's effects might be universal, whether those effects are beneficial or not is individual. Music that promotes love toward one person, for example, can be helpful to someone who's vengeful or selfish but would be contractive for someone who's aspiring to expand their love to all. Music that induces an active, busy energy is very good for a slothful person but detrimental to a meditative monk.

Know, too, that the *clearer* the music is, the more powerfully it transmits its messages. Clear, uplifting music is the most helpful for living more consciously. Clear, depressing music should be avoided! Muddy or scattered music, whether uplifting or not, generally won't have much power. Even so, your own emotional response to music, and the focus of your will, can override the music's inherent magnetism. Romantic love songs, for instance, can be spiritualized by singing them to a Divine Beloved. Songs that awaken memories of a joyful childhood can be uplifting even if the song itself is somewhat sad.

The key is having the self-discipline to focus on uplifting qualities whether they come from music directly or from your own responses to it. If you respond negatively to an uplifting song, best to avoid it. It's also best to avoid the temptation to find music that supports or justifies negative emotions (as you find in a great deal of country and pop music).

Let your choices also come from inside yourself—care not for the opinions of others or the labels they attach to certain kinds of music. Find what uplifts and inspires your own soul. Find the messages you need to hear.

Dimensions of Communication in Music

There are four dimensions through which music communicates consciousness.

First are the **qualities of feeling** as inherent in the music itself. Well-written music can induce just about any mood or emotion, such as courage, hope, anger, anxiety, peace, etc. This is accomplished through musical elements like melody (rising, falling, lilting, choppy, etc.), tempo (soothing, activating, agitating, etc.), rhythm (steady, scattered, heavy, light, etc.), harmonies (giving emotional depth), and the specific choice of instruments (strings, brass, woodwinds, etc.) and playing styles (plucked, bowed, etc.)

The second dimension involves the qualities of feeling that arise from **our own emotional responses**. Certain pieces of music—especially well-known melodies, anthems, etc.—bring back specific memories for us, such as some other special event or experience. The feelings that arise from these memories have much more to do with our experiences during which we'd heard that music than with the qualities of the music itself. This may either reinforce the feeling of the music or conflict with it.

The third dimension is the **quality of energy** expressed in the music. There are three basic qualities of energy: deadening (heavy or obstructing), activating (energizing or busy), and elevating (light or clarifying). Music may express one of these qualities clearly, or contain a mixture of them. Deadening energy mixed with activating energy produces depression. Activating energy by itself can become scattering; when blended with an elevating quality it can become very engaging and inspiring. An elevating quality by itself can be very focusing or calming.

The fourth dimension is the music's **resonance within our subtle energy bodies**, specifically within the different spinal centers or "chakras." Each spinal center has distinct relationships with the physical body and with different psychological qualities or attitudes (see table). Music directly affects these energy centers within us, either activating, deadening, or elevating that center and its qualities.

These effects are important because spiritual growth is primarily a matter of rising energy in the spine. The more that one's energy is directed upward in the spine, toward the higher centers, the greater one's spiritual awareness and ability to see purpose and meaning in every experience. Conversely, the more one's energy is directed downward toward the lower centers, the more one becomes enmeshed in materialism and worldliness. As energy moves

downward in the spine, one becomes more problem-conscious and tends to see life as meaningless.

True "spiritual" music, then, is whatever helps the energy within an individual's spine to rise above its "base" level, irrespective of genre. This varies greatly from person to person. If one's energy is primarily in the 2nd chakra (as happens during puberty, for instance), music that draws energy up to the 3rd chakra (as many rock songs do) are spiritually uplifting. Maybe that's why teenagers love it! But a person whose energy is primarily in the 5th chakra, that same music is spiritually degenerate. And just because music happens to be labeled "spiritual," uses Sanskrit mantras, or talks about Jesus, for instance, doesn't guarantee that its be universally uplifting. It very much depends on the consciousness of the performers, where the arrangement itself resonates within the spinal centers, and what the *listener* actually needs. It's again a very individual matter and can change over time.

As you grow spiritually, in fact, you literally outgrow certain music. Although you may have needed at one point in your life to awaken deep feelings in the heart, later you need to uplift that energy to the throat chakra, the center of expansion, lest it become narrow, possessive, attached, or emotional. The spiritual journey, indeed, doesn't end until *all* one's energies have been uplifted to the spiritual eye—the point between the eyebrows, the seat of enlightenment—and through there to the crown chakra at the top of the head, the seat of spiritual liberation. At that point, of course, you don't need music any longer!

In summary, every piece of music communicates its consciousness—its hidden message—through a combination of feelings, energy, and resonance within the chakras. Because most composers aren't aware of this reality, the inner message often contradicts the intended outer message, leading to confusion. But when a composer is aware of the inner message *and supports it* with the outer message and the very forms of the music, the result is a high degree of clarity and thus a great impact on consciousness.

Such composers can even add yet another dimension. While most songs might activate, uplift, or deaden certain qualities at a particular spinal center, much more can be communicated through transitions *between* multiple centers, namely, specific states of awareness and even specific solutions to negative emotions and other challenges of life. In this way music can serve as an effective *antidote* to those negative emotions.

Listening to the Messages

I. Become aware of the spinal centers

As described in the spinal centers table, tense and relax the muscles around each of the centers, thereby drawing energy and awareness to that center.

It's also helpful to chant AUM at the different chakras using specific these notes: G (below middle C) for the 1st chakra, to A (2nd), B \flat (3rd), D (above middle C, 4th), E \flat (5th), F (medulla), and G (spiritual eye). Do this up and down a few times, ending at the point between the eyebrows.

II. Neutralize your emotional responses

To hear what a piece of music is saying in and of itself, it's necessary to listen without becoming personally and emotionally involved either with attraction or repulsion. To neutralize your emotions, try focusing on something very mundane that brings up no old memories (good or bad), no social or political thoughts (like concerns over where the thing is made), and no value judgments. This might be a pencil, a brick, a chair, a pad of paper, or even a mundane experience like brushing your teeth or folding clothes.

Focus on that object or experience for a few moments and try to feel a freedom from reactivity. Then, while listening to a piece of music, hold your mind on that neutrality (neutralizing your tendency to react emotionally) while allowing yourself to feel what the music is doing on its own. With a little practice, you'll be able to do this at will.

III. Reading the message

While listening, make mental notes of the different dimensions of communication that enter your awareness: the qualities of feeling, the energies involved and the direction (up, down, neutral) of those energies, and any resonance within the spinal centers. Also allow your mind to generate imagery if it wants. Such images can be very revealing!

You can listen to a song several times, focusing on each dimension individually. After listening, jot down whatever notes or images you can to describe your experience (without analyzing them). If you felt a resonance at a particular spinal center, look at the qualities of that center and see if they ring a bell with any specific feelings you might have had.

It's then fun to go back and look at the title and lyrics (if any) for the song and see if there's any real correlation. You can also listen to the song again and try to go even deeper into the experience you described. A truly great song will give a bountiful harvest no matter how many times you listen to it. Those are the songs that really survive decade after decade.

IV. Music as an antidote

Once you've gotten an idea about the qualities of a song, think about the opposite qualities. If a song awakens a deep love in the heart and lifts it upward ("opening the heart"), for instance, the opposite movement would be to pull that energy downward and contract it into the heart ("putting up walls"). A song that awakens a sense of contentment would have as it's opposite a sense of greed or desire.

In this way you can build a collection of songs that are antidotes to specific negative emotions or states of consciousness—that is, they generate a consciousness in which the negativity cannot exist. When you become aware that you're struggling with such a state, listen to the antidote song several times. If you listen with concentration, you can pull yourself out of a mood in a matter of minutes!

Songs that make transitions between different spinal centers, or move between different feelings, generally have an even deeper or more specific message. When positively directed, these songs can even offer specific solutions to certain problems.

A good example is *Playboy of the Western World*, an instrumental piece composed by Donald Walters and performed on *The Mystic Harp* by Derek Bell, the late harpist for The Chieftains. It begins with a first melody line played on the harp in such a way to suggest promiscuity or flirtation, resonating with the sacral center (2nd chakra) around the sex organs. Then a second melody line that resonates at the spiritual eye takes over, suggesting the response of the "Higher Self" that asks, "Are you really happy with such behavior?" In response, the first melody line returns but now at the heart center and with a harmony line, suggesting a dance with a partner, as in marriage (certainly higher than promiscuity). The Higher Self (the second melody line) responds again as if to say, "That's better, but still not enough." The third time through the first melody, the resonance is at the cervical center, suggesting an expansion of that love to include *all* life, at which point the Higher Self comes in to celebrate: "Yes! Now you've got it!" A profound spiritual teaching right in the span of a short song!

When you feel a series of transitions in a song, you can again try to feel them in the opposite direction with the opposite quality and see what state of consciousness is produced (like frustration, despair, etc.) Then play the song again and feel yourself rising out of it, adding another arrow in the quiver of tools for your personal and spiritual growth.

Qualities of the Spinal Centers (Chakras)

Center	English Name & Location	Sanskrit & Literal Translation	Body Parts & Controlled Functions	Exercise to Help Locate	Musical Note for Chanting AUM	Ashtanga Yoga & Spiritual Aspects	Beneficial & Misdirected Attitudes	Element	Inner Sound
7 th	Crown, 1000-petaled lotus <i>Top of the head</i>	Sahasrara <i>Thousand Fold</i>	Seat of the soul; site of liberation after enlightenment at spiritual eye	Go into <i>samadhi</i>	(none— beyond sound)	Samadhi <i>Liberation</i>	Beyond duality, harmony, free, omnipresent, omniscient, samadhi bliss	Super- ether	AUM, like roar of great bursting sea
6 th (+ pole)	Spiritual/Third eye, Christ center; <i>point between the eyebrows</i>	Ajna <i>To perceive</i>	Seat of enlightenment and intuition; concentration and will power	Knit eyebrows and look up to point between eyebrows	G (above middle C)	Dhyana <i>Divine joy, Enlightenment</i>	Attunement, radiant joy, solution-consciousness <i>Too intellectual, coldly rational, misuse of will</i>		
6 th (- pole)	Medulla oblongata, “Mouth of God”	(same as above)	Entry point of cosmic energy; regulates breath	Contract muscles at base of skull, tilting head back	F	Dharana <i>Ego (self-offering)</i>	Selfless service, divine surrender <i>Ego-involved, proud, vain, “I, my, me, mine.”</i>		
5 th	Cervical center (throat)	Vishudha <i>Purification</i>	Neck, throat, vocal cords; all oral communication	Contract throat and neck, feel bump at top of spine	Eb (E-flat)	Pratyahara <i>Calmness, expansion</i>	Expansive, deeply calm, silence <i>Restless, spacey, bored, mercurial, worldly longing</i>	Ether	Wing through trees, rushing water
4 th	Dorsal Center (heart)	Anahat <i>Unstuck</i>	Heart, lungs, diaphragm, circulation, arms, hands, manual dexterity	Squeeze shoulder blades together	D	Pranayama <i>Divine Love</i>	Devotion, love, compassion <i>Attachments, negative emotions out of control</i>	Air	Deep bell (or higher bell)
3 rd	Lumbar Center (navel)	Manipur <i>Lustrous Jewel</i>	Stomach, intestines, digestion, assimilation	Pull stomach muscles/navel in toward spine	Bb (B-flat)	Asana <i>Fiery self-control</i>	Zest for life, self-control <i>Ruthlessness, abuse of power</i>	Fire	Harp, vina, plucked string instrument
2 nd	Sacral Center (sex organs)	Swadisthan <i>Sweetness</i>	Sexual organs, reproductive system, procreation	Contact sexual muscles	A	Niyama <i>Ability to follow positive observances</i>	Flexible, open, willing, intuitive <i>Ungrounded, wishy-washy, spineless</i>	Water	Flute (crickets, trickling water)
1 st	Coccyx Center (base of spine)	Mulandhara <i>Root/Support</i>	Legs and feet, walking, anus, elimination	Contact anus	G (below middle C)	Yama <i>Ability to follow rules and commandments</i>	Steadfastness, courage, loyalty <i>Stubbornness, heavy-minded</i>	Earth	Bumblebee (rumbling motor)

Additional Qualities of the Spinal Centers (Chakras)

(I) Coccyx Center (1st Chakra)—Earth Element

Key Beneficial Attitudes: Loyalty, courage, steadfastness, groundedness

Key Misdirected Manifestations: Stubbornness, rigidity

Other Beneficial/Positive Attitudes: Firm in purpose, steadfast, persevering, resolute, determined, strong, tenacious, unswerving, dependable, steady, trustworthy, secure, stable, methodical, patient, enduring, clinging to truth

Other Misdirected or Negative Attitudes: Set (or stuck) in one's ways, too disciplined, perverse, obstinate, dogged, mule-headed, dogmatic, unyielding, bigoted, intolerant, inflexible, obdurate, heavy-minded, dense, addicted to matter, plodding, unchangeable, humorless, judgmental, problem-oriented

(II) Sacral Center (2nd Chakra)—Water Element

Key Beneficial Attitudes: Flexibility, openness, willingness to change

Key Misdirected Manifestations: Wishy-washiness, undependable

Other Beneficial/Positive Attitudes: Fluid, free-flowing, flying, gliding, graceful, changeable, open-minded, mobile, creative, intuitive, willing to change, resourceful, supple, litting, pliable, adaptable

Other Misdirected or Negative Attitudes: Flightily, flippant, silly, fickle, "so-open minded your brains fall out," indiscriminate, spineless, slipshod, slovenly, unreliable, ungrounded, watery, weak, lacking in purpose, untrustworthy, unable to make or stand by decisions, shallow, unenthusiastic

(III) Lumbar Center (3rd Chakra)—Fire Element

Key Beneficial Attitudes: Self-control, enthusiasm

Key Misdirected Manifestations: Ruthlessness, domination, control of others

Other Beneficial/Positive Attitudes: Self-disciplined, zealous, vigorous, vital, energetic, awake and ready, effervescent, gusto, dedication, verve, eagerness, passion for a right cause, spirited

Other Misdirected or Negative Attitudes: Control issues, cruelty, abuse, negative intensity, fanaticism, dictatorial tendencies, addicted, greedy, relentless, merciless, severe, compassionless, avaricious, abusive

(IV) Dorsal Center (4th Chakra)—Air Element

Key Beneficial Attitudes: Divine love, devotion, compassion

Key Misdirected Manifestations: Emotions out of control

Other Beneficial/Positive Attitudes: Loving feelings toward all, selfless, unselfish, serviceful, forgiving, unconditionally loving, empathetic, sympathetic, generous, healing, unifying, non-attachment

Other Misdirected or Negative Attitudes: Jealousy, lust, anger, fear, selfish love, possessive, attachments, greed, desires, hatred, loathing, sharp-tongued, self-indulgent, divisive, gossipy, judging, complaining, bitterness.

(V) Cervical Center (5th Chakra)—Ether Element

Key Beneficial Attitudes: Dynamic calmness, expansion

Key Misdirected Manifestations: Restlessness, boredom

Other Beneficial/Positive Attitudes: Peace, communicative, lovely voice tones, expansive, broadly aware, placid, serene, unruffled, cooling, expansively centered, ability to relate to others' realities

Other Misdirected or Negative Attitudes: Tired of peace and quiet, longing for excitement in worldly things, pent-up energy, pent-up feelings, uncommunicative, mercurial, spacey

(VI) Medulla/Spiritual Eye (6th Chakra, +/- poles)—Super-Ether Element

Key Beneficial Attitudes: Perfection of divine will, enlightenment

Key Misdirected Manifestations: Total ego-involvement

Other Beneficial/Positive Attitudes: Perfect attunement with God's will/with the universe, receptivity to grace, wisdom, radiance, living each moment in high state of consciousness, solution-oriented

Other Misdirected or Negative Attitudes: Egotism, self-centeredness, inability to relate to others' realities, pride, vanity, self-seeking, "I, my, me, mine"

(VII) Crown/Thousand-Petalled Lotus (7th Chakra)

The seat of the soul, the place where final liberation is achieved, is beyond duality (positives and negative): total unification, harmony, fulfillment, ever-conscious, ever-existent, omnipresent, omniscient, infinite, timeless, formless, all-pervasive, ever-new joy, freedom, *samadhi* bliss.