



## Body

The body is not commonly regarded as being a music element — but without it we cannot play, sing, read, write or hear music.

In fact, the body is an essential building block of music. The previous ten elements discussed — rhythm, melody, dynamics, harmony, tempo, tonality, form, sound-waves, timbre and touch — would be meaningless without a body to receive and interpret them.

### Definition

We all know what our body is but here is a definition I teach my students which summarises its complexity:

The body is man's visible, tangible part made of atoms. We have a brain and bones and muscles and nerves and many internal organs. Five senses tell us what's happening all around and they are hearing, sight and smelling and taste and touch.

Body is the visible, touchable and physical part of our being. Like plants, animal and

the earth, bodies are made of atoms created from the earth. 'And the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground...' (Genesis 2:7a). God has designed the body in an amazing way with five senses so it receives information from the outside environment and we can understand and live on this planet. Our body is an extremely efficient science laboratory. The brain is the information centre and control tower, sending and receiving billions of messages to and from the sense organs. All five senses are involved in music making — ears for listening, eyes for reading, skin for touching the instrument, tongue for singing and discussing music and the nose for breathing. Obviously, we don't smell music but still have to breathe. Whilst we don't literally taste music, we can have good or bad taste in music.

### God-message

The body as an element of music teaches us something about God's character. The God message for body is:

God designed us physically so we can hear, read, write, play and sing music for His glory and for our refreshment and health.

We learned in an earlier article that the element of rhythm represents the body or flesh because of its response to strong beats (evenness of beats) and rhythmic patterns (long and short sounds and silences moving through a timeline). The Greek word *rhythmos* refers to earthly and bodily functions. Melody and harmony evoke aesthetic

concepts such as beauty and joy. But rhythm is more of an earthbound physical feature like the rhythm of heartbeats, breathing, seasons, tides and planetary movements. Because rhythm moves through a timeline, it also reminds us we are time bound during our earthly timeline. Our bodies are earthly matter and will not be taken to heaven. The body and rhythm are definitely connected with our life on earth rather than eternity.

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### Music and the body

Music has direct physiological effects on the body such as clapping, feet tapping, hip swaying and dancing. Many responses are spontaneous and uncontrollable reflexes. The inner ear, where music enters the brain, modulates posture, muscular tone, breathing rhythms, heartbeat, blood pressure, feelings of nausea and eye reflexes. Respiration is affected when fast, loud music accelerates the breathing or slow, quiet music relaxes and slows it down. The even rate of blood circulation changes due to changed heart rate. Heart pulses are altered and even eyelid and pupil movements may change. The entire nervous system is

affected, which may cause nervous tension or relaxation.

When composers over-emphasise such music elements as dynamics, tempo, rhythm and beat there can be dramatic bodily responses (e.g. epileptic seizures and heart attacks can be precipitated). The inner ear is overstimulated and muscle strength is lost, causing frenzied dancers to collapse. Low frequency bass notes combined with driving rock rhythms overstimulate the adrenaline and sex glands. The ability to make decisions is affected as the body tries to correct an imbalance of hormone discharge by drawing blood sugar from the brain. Permanent ear damage results from music over 75db, leading to tinnitus and deafness in younger and younger age groups. Extreme volume is used in tribal initiation ceremonies to create insensitivity to pain. Hence the use of loud drums in Moloch worship to mask the sounds of crying babies and mothers during infant sacrifice. A predominance of bass frequencies causes a trance state because it transmits more energy to the brain than higher frequencies without damaging the ear thus affecting the alpha brain state. Loud rock music has been used for interrogation and torture by the military.

Despite all the evidence, some still claim that music is neutral and does not affect us. Composers know exactly how to use the music elements to manipulate the body because they know it will affect character and moral behaviour.

They have a keen ear for music and Satan knows what organs to excite, to animate, to engross and charm the mind so that Christ is not desired.

*Testimonies for the Church  
Volume 1, page 497*

And we haven't even touched on how music affects the spirit and worship! Whilst this is all very negative and depressing, there are nevertheless many positive ways of using music.

### The body in worship

A Swedish research team placed heart monitors on the ears of a high school choir and got them to sing hymns. Changes in heart rates were measured as the choir sang different harmonies and exhaled and inhaled at the same times. This guided breathing slowed the heart rate down producing a calming effect. From an initial chaotic state, heartbeats soon became a series of uniform peaks. External synchronisation of melody and rhythm led to an internal counterpart. This lovely quote describes it well:

Sacred song has wonderful power. It has power to subdue rude and uncultivated natures, power to quicken thought and to awaken sympathy, to promote harmony of action and to banish gloom and foreboding that destroy courage and weaken effort.

*The Voice in Speech and Song, page 407*

How is the body to be used with regard to worship? Obviously it is necessary, but like all other music elements, it should be

## Our Heavenly Father knows the power of music and what is best for our health

controlled and not be used in the extremes. Worship is possible and acceptable to God when there is no physical movement at all. When Ezekiel had a vision and saw the likeness of the glory of the Lord, he fell upon his face. Paul sang and worshipped while bound in chains in prison. When John saw Jesus on the Isle of Patmos he 'fell at His feet as dead.' The body becomes irrelevant. There are many who remain still while singing and their music is more powerful because focus is on the words and message with no distractions from bodily movements.

True religion does not demand great bodily demonstration... These are no evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

*Selected Messages Volume 2, page 26*

### Fearfully and wonderfully made

There is so much more that could be said about the body as an element of music but I will close with a few scriptures and a thought-provoking quotation. As Christians and believers in the one true Creator God, Giver of life and music, we know that our bodies are not our own. Our Heavenly Father knows the power of music and what is best for our health — physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually — because He created us.

Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are Gods.

*1 Cor 6:19–20*

I will praise Thee for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

*Psalm 139:14*

**The following very powerful words written in the 1800s and remind us of our true rights.**

Have I not the moral right to do as I please with my body? No, you have no moral right because you are violating the laws of life and health which God has given you. You are the Lord's property, His by creation and by His redemption. Every human being is under obligation to preserve the living machinery that is so fearfully and wonderfully made.

*Healthful Living, page 10*



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