



Fulfil ye my joy that ye be likeminded,
having the same love, being of one accord,
of one mind. *Philippians 2:2*

Be of the same mind [live in harmony] one
toward another. *Romans 12:16*

The harmonic series

Harmony is found in God's basic design of a single soundwave. Each music note is a soundwave with a complex pattern of what I call 'God's secret hidden notes.' Physicists call them the *harmonic series*, *harmonics*, *overtones* or *impartials*. Basically, each soundwave has a bottom tone called the *fundamental* which is joined with over a dozen higher notes in a specific pattern (which we will discover in a later article).

When we sing, play or hear a note we think it is only one note, but in reality it is actually many notes combined. When we hear a chord with two or more notes, the harmonics of each note are also involved. The result is a very strong sound. This brings extra energy as a foundation to strengthen other elements such as rhythm and melody. The harmonic series pattern is God's signature on His creation of the soundwave. Just as an artist writes his signature on his painting to say 'I did this', so does God mark each soundwave as His creation. No human can create soundwaves. Man only changes them and mixes them together in different ways.

Chord notation is notes piled vertically like a tower to indicate they sound simultaneously. Compare this with melody where notes are written horizontally like we write words from left to right. The harmonic series pattern is written like a huge

chord with the fundamental at the bottom and the hidden secret notes piled above. Note that this is just for one note. If four notes are played or sung together imagine how many notes are involved! Imagine the strength and force of a symphony orchestra even if all players played just one note at the same time.

The fundamental

Notes are written on top of each other with the fundamental at the bottom — like a tall strong tower with a solid foundation. The further away we go from the fundamental, the more discordant (unpleasant or disagreeable) the upper notes become. The notes closest to the fundamental are more agreeable. In fact the first few make up the three notes of the common major chord. This is a beautiful analogy of spiritual harmony and man's relationship with God. Christ is the fundamental of our lives — the solid rock and foundation. The closer we are to our fundamental, the more we are of one accord, joined together and agreeable. The further we get away from the fundamental, the more disagreeable our lives become and the less harmonious we are with God. The element of harmony teaches us that God is strong and He also wants agreement.

Types of chords

Different combinations of notes produce different harmonies in chords. Notes which agree (sound well together) are called *concord*s (consonant sounds). Notes which do not agree (clash) are called *discord*s (dissonance). There are many types of chords e.g. major, minor, seventh, diminished, and augmented. Each has a different sound

'flavour' and has to be heard to know the difference. It is difficult to describe it in words in an article like this. The best way to know what a banana tastes like is to eat it. Likewise each chord needs to be listened to in order to know what it sounds like. And just as foods have different effects on the body, so do chords have different effects. For example, a major chord may have an uplifting, joyous effect; a minor chord may make the listener feel pensive or sad, or perhaps sound dramatic. A discordant seventh chord creates tension, wanting to resolve to a concord; the diminished chord seems to drift and lead to unexpected places; and the augmented chord has an unsettling, jarring effect.

Harmony and the soul

Composers are fully aware of chords and their effects and use them for different purposes, positive and negative. Our mind, thoughts and feelings can be uplifted by the harmonies we hear. God can be exalted and worshipped. Our minds, thoughts and emotions can also be manipulated so we feel a false sense of security and peace. For example in new age meditation and relaxation music, the element of harmony may dominate melody and rhythm. With very little rhythm, chords merge into each other. The sounds float and drift at a slow pace and are dreamy, very relaxing and calming. Such music is heard in many places of spiritualism, in some cafes and shops.

The danger is that music dominated by harmony can create a mental shift. We saw in the first article how excessive loud beat can be hypnotic and lead to mind control

No 4: Harmony

So far in this series on music elements we have looked at rhythm, melody and dynamics. Now we will focus on the element of harmony.

Definition

A simple definition is 'harmony is two or more notes played at the same time like strong towers of sound.' It is the opposite of melody where notes are one after another.

Harmony originates from the Greek *harmonia*, meaning 'a join or concord'. It is about agreement between notes played or sung simultaneously. Harmony is also about strength. When there is agreement between two parties, the relationship becomes stronger, thus — 'United we stand; divided we fall'. In music, the term *chord* is used and it has similarities with its homophone *cord*. Both join things, combining to provide strength.

... a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

Ecclesiastes 4:12

by a manipulator. Likewise, excessive harmony can also lead to manipulation. Music does not go directly from the ear and auditory nerve to the main auditory centre (auditory cortex) in the brain cerebrum. It does not go straight to the frontal lobe in the forehead where reasoning, logic and discernment take place. Instead, the music signals travel from the auditory nerve through the brain stem and up to the thalamus before reaching the cerebrum. The thalamus is like a relay station for emotions and sensations. When the thalamus is stimulated for long periods of time it influences the master brain by suggesting a new and misleading 'real' situation. Feelings dominate. Reason, discernment and decision making can break down. The mind is open to manipulation. Of all the art forms, music (especially harmony) speaks most to the emotions. Excessive harmony can be used to manipulate people's minds.

In the first article of this series we explored how rhythm and beat represent the body because of the direct physical effects and the fleshy, carnal nature of man. In the second article we saw how melody represents the spirit because of the direct link with language and communication. Now the element of harmony represents the soul because it directly affects thoughts and emotions. Well balanced music will have melody (i.e. the spirit, words) as the dominating element, followed by harmony (the soul, emotions) and lastly, rhythm/beat (the body). Unbalanced music usually turns this upside down with rhythm/beat (body, flesh, carnal nature) dominating and melody at the bottom (words are drowned out).

Harmony throughout history

Western music up to the Middle Ages and early Renaissance (1400–1500s) used mostly one melody (monody). Two, three, and more melodies were gradually added and sung at the same time regardless of whether they sounded well together. This would sound very unpleasant to our ears today. This music style was called polyphony (many melodies). Composers thought horizontally because that is the way melody and words move. The Renaissance is remembered as the 'golden age of polyphony'.

In the Baroque period (1600–1750) composers began to think more vertically (harmonically) and matched simultaneous notes so they sounded more agreeable. Four part harmony became popular for four voices — soprano, alto, tenor and bass — and this became the basis of four part hymns. The Baroque was a time of very grand, dramatic and emotional music. Imagine the contrast between the earlier Middle Ages monody and Baroque music with four voices singing including all the hidden harmonics!

In the Classical Period (1750–1800), there was a shift to music with mainly one melody only, but with chordal accompaniment (homophony). This is still common today.

The God-message of harmony

Harmony is essentially two or more notes played at the same time like strong towers of sound to provide strength and agreement to other music elements. It teaches us that God is our ultimate strength and wants us to agree with Him. The spiritual cords

of faith keep us strong and in harmony (i.e. joined) with God in time of trouble.

The name of the Lord is a strong tower;
the righteous runneth into it and is safe.

Proverbs 18:10

We mentioned earlier Ecclesiastes 4:12 '... a threefold cord is not quickly broken'. When we combine this verse with Isaiah 33:22 we see a strong threefold role of Christ: 'For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver; the Lord is our king. He will save us.'

Wow! Here we see the mightiest strength, agreement, security and peace in the government of the triune Godhead, the ultimate source of true harmony.

In John 1:1 we are told,

In the beginning was the Word (Jesus)
and the Word was with God and the
Word was God.

They were and still are of one accord, united, undivided, one in nature, character and purpose. Isaiah prophesied in chapter 9 verse 6 that Christ would be called

...the mighty God, the everlasting
Father, the Prince of Peace.

The law of life is love because God is love (1 John 4:8). And this love is the harmonious foundation of how God governs the entire universe. Jesus said,

At that day ye shall know I am in my
Father and ye in me and I in you.

John 14:20

God wants each individual person to be in agreement with Him and have a relationship with Him. This is the ultimate perfect

harmony — 'at-one-ment'. If we choose to live in accordance with God's basic law of life (i.e. love) then shall we find true and perfect harmony, happiness and peace.

It is hard for us to comprehend what the universe was like before sin entered — perfect harmony, perfect peace, all the angels living in one accord with their Creator, no notes of discord to mar the heavenly music, every musical sound in harmony with God's voice. In the future heaven it will be just the same — perfection according to God's standards. I have never heard the music of heaven but know of several who have. I long to hear how God originally designed music with the elements perfectly combined and balanced and to hear the sounds of the sweetest harmony of voices and instruments. It is now incomprehensible to our earthly ears. How will it compare with the music we are surrounded with today?

The following hymn by George C Stebbins summarises the element of harmony beautifully:

I've found a friend, oh, such a friend!
He loved me ere I knew Him.

He drew me with the cords of love and
thus He bound me to Him.

And 'round my heart so closely twine
those ties which nought can sever,

For I am His and He is mine for ever and
forever. ■