

Students can also get to know God better as they see His character reflected in His creation of music and understand that ‘education is the unfolding of God—His character and His creation’ (Peter Frogley, Light Educational Ministries). The aim is to know the living, personal God through music, rather than be drowned in a sea of music knowledge, performance and exams.

Neither playing an instrument well, nor playing in church, will get one to heaven. Music is clearly an important part of God’s creation. Therefore let us teach music from a biblical perspective and ensure God comes first in our study and appreciation of music. ‘Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things [including music] will be given to you as well’ (Matt 6:33).

‘In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight’ (Prov 3:6). *Acknowledge* in the Hebrew means ‘comprehend, consider, declare, be diligent, discern, discover, familiar friend

and have knowledge of’. Our English word does not fully convey the same meaning.

THE GIFT OF MUSIC PROGRAM

The Gift of Music program consists of two separate courses.

The Elements of Music

A theory/history/appreciation course designed to be used without a trained teacher or previous music knowledge. This has now been used in all states of Australia plus Malaysia, Singapore, New Zealand and the USA

Music for our Maker

A piano course which requires a teacher trained in this method. Currently there are trained piano teachers in Victoria, South Australia, Malaysia and New Zealand.

The author has presented *The Gift of Music* materials and conducted seminars and workshops in Melbourne, Malaysia, Singapore and New Zealand.



a Biblical perspective

BY WENDY HILL

From many discussions with parents and observations of teaching methods over the years, I have noticed an increasing concern about the music invading children’s ears, minds and hearts.

CHURCH DIVIDED

Parents are also concerned at the style of church music growing in popularity. Years ago, when the world started talking about the generation gap, Christians went to church as families. Now the generation gap is in the church. Many churches have two separate services—one for the family (older people and those with young children) and another for the youth (as if teenagers are not part of the family any more). The most noticeable difference between these services is the style of music.

WORLDLY METHODS

Many parents value their children learning music. However they become disillusioned with the world’s teaching methods and unsatisfied with worldly philosophies where success is based on superficial performance, exams and competitions. These criteria often produce a sense of failure rather than confident playing and skilled and willing church musicians.

GLORY OF GOD

J S Bach wrote, ‘Music is for the glory of God and the refreshment of man’. God first and man last. Today it seems that man’s refreshment, entertainment and intellectual satisfaction are put first and foremost. God is usually left out altogether. Too much emphasis is put on three things—the glorification of:

1. man (especially talented young children);
2. music itself (knowledge, study, instrumental and vocal skills); and
3. money (more recordings, books and teaching methods to support the music industry).

Churches can emphasise music to the point that worship itself is worshipped. Music is used as a tool to attract the young and increase attendance. It is the power of the Holy Spirit that draws people to church, not the music. It is not music which saves souls. It is faith in Christ.

The whole perspective of music today has largely shifted from being God-



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honouring and Biblical to man-glorifying and humanistic. The musical creation which is easily seen, heard and understood by man becomes more important than the Creator. But all of this head-knowledge about music will pass away and be of no use in eternity. Paul tells, 'So we fix our eyes not on what is seen but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal' (2 Cor 4:18).

Since the mid-twentieth century, popular music has had a world-wide effect not unlike an atomic bomb. The only difference is that an atomic bomb can be seen in the mushroom cloud but the blasting effects of a 'music bomb' cannot. Just as an atomic bomb devastates and destroys at an atomic level in a ripple effect, the power of atoms in soundwaves of a music bomb has a similar ripple effect. An atomic bomb's effects last for years. The damage to the ears by extreme soundwaves is just as long-lasting and pernicious.

AWAKENING

Thankfully many people now recognise the danger of extreme music and are bringing warnings in articles and books. I believe many of the problems have arisen from the lack of Biblical perspective in the field of music education. Church musicians are trained in worldly methods, humanistic philosophies and are thus easily swayed by the music of the day. What they learn as a student has a powerful influence on their musical preferences.

SPIRITUAL ROOTS

Let's go below the surface layer of music to the spiritual roots and look at two of the basic elements of music—rhythm and melody.

Rhythm

Rhythm comes from the ancient Greek *rhythmos* meaning 'measured movement.' A very simple definition of rhythm is 'long and short sounds and silences moving through a timeline'. The essence of rhythm is time. Without time we do not have rhythm. God created time. Music sounds are measured in the number of beats or counts they last, e.g. a long sound may get four counts and a short sound may get one. Like ticks on a clock, beats are even and always in the background. Silences and rests are vital to rhythm because they provide life and energy. God created rhythm at the time of Creation when He started the night/day pattern and the Sabbath, a day of rest. Night and the Sabbath are times for refreshment and renewed energy. In the book of Psalms the word *Selah* means to pause, meditate, ponder and refresh the spirit. Rhythm represents the body or flesh. In the Greek, it refers to earthly and bodily functions.

Now let's apply this Biblical perspective to today's music. The most noticeable and dominating music element is rhythm, with its strong beat, combined with excessive loudness. We only have to hear the thumping noise from some cars to experience this. There are no times of silence. The beat is so relentless and repetitive it drains the listener. Rhythm is out of balance with other music elements

and this represents an imbalance where the body/flesh dominates.

Melody

Melody comes from the Greek *melos* meaning 'word, limb or part of something'. A simple definition of melody is high and low notes following each other like words. Melody and words/language are very closely linked. God created language. Melody is meant to be sung. High and low notes are sung one after the other just as words are spoken one after the other. A melody would not make sense if all the notes were played at the same time. Just as rhythm represents our body, so does melody represent our spirit. The spirit is what differentiates us from plants, animals and rocks. God designed us with language and ability to communicate with Him. The spirit is our direct link with Him. In the Bible, the word melody is used many times and is almost always associated with praise, joy, delight, gladness, happiness, rejoicing and a new song.

How does this relate to popular music today? In much popular music, words and melody are drowned out by rhythm, beat and volume. Do we hear sounds of praise, joy, delight, gladness, happiness and rejoicing? Do we feel peace and refreshment? Do we observe a clear example of spirit dominating body? Do we hear rhythm and melody in balance and order with God being glorified? Sadly not.

What does the Bible say about balance and order? 'God is not a God of disorder but of peace' (1 Cor 14:33). If God created music then are there some types

of music which are not acceptable to Him? He told Amos how He despises certain types of offerings in religious feasts and assemblies. 'Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps' (Amos 5:23).

We have only briefly looked at balance between two music elements but there are many more elements, all with spiritual foundations. Music plays a major part in moulding character. Students need to be taught the Biblical foundations to understand how music fits into the rest of God's creation so that music does not dominate their lives.

GIFT OF MUSIC

The Gift of Music program is based on scriptural foundations with fourteen music elements. Together with *The Elements of Music* (its theory/history/appreciation course) and *Music for our Maker* (its piano course), it aims to bring music education into the flow of God's creation. Worldly courses do not acknowledge God at all and Christian courses tend to be more 'christianese' than Biblical. The two *Gift of Music* courses are unique in that they use music as a tool to teach about God rather than using God to teach about music. *The Gift of Music* aims at prevention rather than cure, focusing on presenting a godly music education rather than criticising the present day praise and worship ministry. This biblical standard will enable the next generation of young musicians to discern what is God-honouring music from what is not and also to appreciate a godly balance and order in music.