

Lullaby: The Acoustic Bridge

It is not difficult to find the universal and fundamental role sound and music intrinsically play in our human lives. Most people can readily relate how a certain piece of music makes them feel, whether joyous, melancholy, excited, contemplative, or any emotion in between. As we begin to understand this more deeply, we begin to observe our relationship to the even more fundamental dimensions of music, to sound itself. Discovering, or perhaps more accurately, remembering, the vibrational quality of our being and all beings connects us profoundly to All and reveals how unifying sound is and healing it can be, as it is the inherent nature of all things. This relationship to, or expression of sound and music, is seen earliest life; in the miraculous womb and beautiful bond between parent and child. The lullaby exemplifies this natural and healing expression of music. The lullaby is universal, serves several beneficial functions for mother and babe and ultimately shows how innately musical we are, thus helping us further understand our true nature as human beings: as sound beings.

The lullaby has been sung from parent to child for thousands of years in all cultures around the world. Verses of an ancient Babylonian lullaby found etched onto a small clay tablet dating back 4000 years indicate some of the earliest recorded lullabies. Some say the Vedda lullaby from Sri Lanka may be even older<sup>1</sup>, while other lullabies passed down orally have unknown origin dates. Regardless, the timeless and universal quality of the lullaby cannot be denied. Across cultures worldwide, the songs sung from parent to child are incredibly similar. The melodies are often very simple and play in a narrow range, usually within the musical fourth or

fifth. These lulling songs also tend to be in the 6/8 signature, providing a rocking quality to the song. Lullabies are often in minor keys and share some of the dark or mournful characteristics of a lament. Many are peaceful or hypnotic. All, however, share the most important and fundamental quality of being “rooted in love, tenderness and caring”<sup>2</sup>.

The shared qualities of the universal lullaby are such that they help promote several beneficial outcomes for the parent and child. The most obvious are to calm, comfort and soothe the child as well as to encourage them to sleep. In addition, the singing itself is therapeutic for the parent as they’re able to pray through song, express concern, process what happened during their day, or simply release tension. Beyond this lulling for both parent and child, however, a deep bond is formed between the parent and child when the lullaby is sung, particularly between mother and infant. This deep connection of love and protection begins in the womb, as the baby begins to hear sounds around the 24<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy<sup>3</sup>, up to about 4000Hz in frequency. From this point on, while the baby can hear sounds from outside the womb, the mother’s voice is the most important in that her body itself acts as the sound resonator. Thus, the baby’s sound education begins with the mother’s voice acting as an “acoustic bridge” between the inner world within the womb and the outside world beyond it. During this fetal stage of life, acoustic stimulation is actually necessary for development (unlike visual stimulation which is not necessary until after birth). This sound education, which helps the child learn not only music but language as well, continues for years after birth as the child creates auditory memories, especially when in protected REM (rapid eye movement) sleep. As emotional memory is recorded and stored as part of auditory memory, even while back in the womb at 34 to 36 weeks of pregnancy, the child is able to “distinguish different moods or emotional qualities to speech

and music”<sup>3</sup>. Lullabies therefore not only have an important role to play after birth, but before as well.

Lullabies obviously serve child and parent, particularly mothers (although fathers also participate in lullaby singing) in substantial ways, yet they also show the innate role music plays in our nature. Mothers are usually naturally inclined to sing to their babies, and even when not singing, speak in a sing-song manner to them. Babies naturally respond musically with coos and gurgles and rhythmically with gestures, surprisingly in time and pulse to the mother’s sounds!<sup>2</sup> This natural expression of sound and music from parent to child shows that the lullaby is truly timeless in that mothers of the future will naturally sing to their babies, thus continuing the beautiful legacy of the lullaby. And with it, the expression of love and care, powerfully shared through vibration connecting us all.

1. <http://vedda.org/lullaby.htm>[http://csa-sia.blogspot.com/2012/10/origins-of-lullaby-by-siamak-samiean\\_29.html](http://csa-sia.blogspot.com/2012/10/origins-of-lullaby-by-siamak-samiean_29.html)
2. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-21035103>
3. <http://www.wonderbabiesco.org/UserFiles/File/Graven%20and%20Browne%20Auditory%2008.pdf>
4. <http://lullabyabc.com/>
5. <http://www.education.com/reference/article/importance-lullabies/>
6. [http://www.ijbssnet.com/journals/Vol\\_3\\_No\\_7\\_April\\_2012/35.pdf](http://www.ijbssnet.com/journals/Vol_3_No_7_April_2012/35.pdf)
7. [http://csa-sia.blogspot.com/2012/10/origins-of-lullaby-by-siamak-samiean\\_29.html](http://csa-sia.blogspot.com/2012/10/origins-of-lullaby-by-siamak-samiean_29.html)