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Final Research Paper
Certificate Program
Globe Institute of Sound & Consciousness

May 9, 2019

Equal Temperament, Universal Harmony & Ancient Esoteric Music

While Equal Temperament has enabled much innovation in modern music, the creation of forms of music like Jazz, and the flexibility to change keys mid-song, something fundamental to the ability of humans to peacefully co-exist in a sort of balanced universal harmony may have been lost.

What was Lost in the Universal Adoption of Equal Temperament?

In Ross Duffin's book, *How Equal Temperament Ruined Harmony (and Why You Should Care)*, he argues that "[equal temperament] is not a system that favors harmonic performance, much less harmonic thinking. Anyone born after the beginning of the twentieth century had virtually no awareness of non-ET systems..." and does not completely grasp what was lost by the universal implementation of ET (Duffin, 145).

Duffin references the entry for "Harmony" in the 1929 edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica, by Donald Francis Tovey (Duffin, 145):

"No true harmonic ideas are based on equal temperament."

If in fact, through the universal adoption of ET we lost the ability to think and perform, or act, harmoniously, *what are the implications of this loss?*

In the *The Mysticism of Sound and Music: The Sufi Teachings of Hazrat Inayat Khan*, Khan writes that "[a]ll the trouble in the world and all the disastrous results arising out of it – all come from lack of harmony." (Khan, 7)

Khan makes a distinction between 'soul-made' and '[hu]man-made' music. He explains that music that comes from the soul has an essential similarity everywhere, across cultures, no matter what particular methods are used to make the music. He writes that "whatever means be chosen to bring the different minds of people together, there cannot be a better means of harmonizing them than [soul-made] music." (Khan, 7)

In speaking of the power of music, Khan explains that the music of the soul not only harmonizes people with one another, but also harmonizes each person with source. (Khan, 53)

Khan recognizes the contrast between ancient esoteric soul-made music derived from the love of nature and modern man-made music.

“When the ancient music is compared with the modern, one will no doubt find that there is too vast a gulf between them. If there is anything which gives one some little idea of the music of the human race, it is Eastern music, which still has traces of ancient music in it.” (Khan, 47)

Khan points particularly to Eastern music that has been preserved as part of the Hindu tradition, as music today that contains trace elements of ancient music. The question of what these traces are could be an interesting topic for future research. For now, let’s turn to Ancient Old Kingdom Egypt for insight into the power of ancient esoteric soul-made music.

In *The Hermetic Code in DNA: The Sacred Principles in the Ordering of the Universe*, Michael Hayes speaks of the Ancient Old Kingdom Egyptians:

“They existed in the infinite cosmic ocean; they were “quantum tunnellers,” “superconductors,” denizens of the plane of light above and of the quantum field – the underworld – below.” (Hayes, 309)

Hayes describes these Egyptians as having such vast consciousness that they could view the universe from every angle, access non-local dimensions with ease, and generate tremendous power through group harmonizing to accomplish such feats as moving megalithic stones with ease. Through mythological investigation, Hayes makes the case that “they did this by adopting the harmonic principles of music as a code of conduct, a systematic, “religious” method of harmonious psychological development...” (Hayes, 309)

Hayes believes that “practically everything the Old Kingdom Egyptians did was performed to the accompaniment, so to speak, of the esoteric music composed by the... [founders] of Egyptian culture, the so-called gods [and goddesses] of the First Time.” (Hayes, 302)

Is it possible that the ancient esoteric music of the Old Kingdom Egyptians could hold some of the keys to thinking and acting harmoniously? What are the qualities and characteristics of this music? What does it sound like? Will we ever truly know?

On the Album, “Inner Vision: Eight Sacred Improvisations on the Original 7 Diatonic Modes Played in the World’s Most Ancient Tuning System,” Randy Masters worked with harpist, Joel Andrews, to explore the 7 ancient Egyptian Pythagorean modes. While the music itself is not ancient in terms of composition, the energy evoked by each of the different modes – through Andrews’ style of play and the particular mood of each scale – offers a window into the world of ancient esoteric music.

References:

Duffin, Ross W. W.W. *How Equal Temperament Ruined Harmony (and Why You Should Care)*. Norton & Company. New York, NY. 2007.

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