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Soothing the Savage Beast: Information sources on Music Therapy to Improve the Environment

William Theodore Johnson

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Music may be able to soothe the savage beast but can it direct the human will to improve the environment? Individually? Collectively? If so, how? The purpose of this discussion is to establish a framework whereby these questions may be explored. Following a brief discussion of music's impact upon our bodies, minds, and spirits, I will present a list of songs touching upon some aspect of the environment. A number of books have also been identified as resources for further study and contemplation. Some questions to consider include: Which genre of music is most effective in its positive environmental impact? and Is the music of any particular culture more influential in healing environmental problems? Specifically, it may be more appropriate to ask whether the music of one religion or another may be more effective in fostering environmental concern. Lynn White has suggested that the solution for the environmental crisis rests upon the shoulders of religion since that's where the blame for the crisis also rested and science has (as of the date of his article) been unable to cure the world's environmental ills (White 1967).

Sound (music) makes a difference: physically, mentally/emotionally, and spiritually. One physical impact, directly influencing the environment, involves music's powerful impact upon the growth of plants. These organisms grow toward some music as they grow toward light. Other music repels plants, even kills them. However, this does not suggest that music be played across the wilderness or in urban landscapes for the purpose of improving the environment. People shape the environment in significant ways; therefore, any improvement that the environment might enjoy through music will be brought about indirectly, as that music influences people. Environmentally friendly music may impact people physically as it motivates them to move in various ways. The mental and emotional impact of music works by educating its listeners. Finally, spiritual change takes place as music resonates with people, inspiring them to act.

Motivate

Music impacts physical states in plants, animals, and people. Some indigenous peoples around the globe also believe it affects the environment, such as through a rain dance. The impact of music upon a person's physical being is the easiest to document. However, any beneficial link between the health of an individual's body and the health of the environment is complex

and a challenge to document. Music has been shown to make people speed up or slow down, but what social/environmental impact can be shown as a direct result of a person's physical response to music?

Selected Resources

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Educate

Teaching young people about the importance of environmental care through song offers the most significant potential for improving the environment for the longest period of time. If parents, churches, schools (public, private, home), and museums used music to teach about the importance of the environment and our responsibility for its care, advertisers or others presenting a message of wasteful consumption or exploitation would find it much more difficult to reach this audience. Achieving environmental improvement through education in song should be more effective than using music's physical power over the body but less than its inspirational influence. However, the educational and inspirational impacts should work in concert.

Based upon Table 1 below, it is evident that environmentally friendly music is found in a wide variety of genres from diverse cultures and historical periods. What would the environment be like without the influence of these and many other songs? With its wide appeal, how can environmentally friendly music more effectively foster healthier environments on a global scale in the future? Successfully improving the condition of the global environment is not a simple matter of playing selected songs. Life is much more complex than that. For example, can learning about the plight of the rainforest through a song played in a temperate zone home, significantly improve that rainforest amid a number of competing interests?

In order for music to significantly improve the global environment, the popularity of this music would have to be high among the masses. The list of songs below suggests that most artists sing about many other topics and issues. Few popular artists sing primarily about the environment. Some of these songs may not become popular, hence influential, with a large audience since they attack people, make accusations, and use derogatory and insulting language. Additionally, these songs frequently focus on other

social issues, such as economic injustice, making only minor mention of environmental factors.

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Resonate

According to the ancients, the power of music was greater than that of political parties or military might. Could this power be directed toward improving the health of the environment? What sort of songs could stir a passion to preserve the land? What kind of tune would make people take seriously the need to clean up hazardous wastes or to conserve limited resources? Would each culture and language need to come up with its own original melodies or could the universal language of music convey a global message through only a handful of songs? Should this musical force be directed primarily at Western societies where the rate of consumption greatly exceeds known supplies, consequently degrading sensitive habitats worldwide?

The musical message of positive environmental change sounds like an orchestra tuning up when competing messages for economic welfare, social security, and personal convenience form one's dominant world-view. Living life out of tune with the environment suggests the need for change, perhaps radical change, especially for industrialized nations where people live life more removed from the land.

Music, which fosters an honest self-examination leading to a heightened consideration of the generations to come, may or may not be an effective tool to help the environment. Such a catalyst for change does not occur in a vacuum. Music leading to environmental improvement must be readily received by a large audience and function in concert with many other elements of life, within and across cultures.

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civilization. London: Elliot Stock.

Table 1

Songs, where elements of or illusions to nature vary from conspicuous to subtle.

Many of these songs were suggested in answer to a question posted to the American Society for Literature and the Environment (ASLE) listserv in the spring of 2002. An English professor expressed interest in playing "nature" music for one of his classes. A wide variety of musical tastes are reflected here. I have added a number of songs based upon my research. If you have any suggestions, please let me know.

Artist(s) Album or CD/Song Title

10,000 Maniacs Blind Man's Zoo/Poison in the Well

In My Tribe/A Campfire Song

Addison, Joseph The Spacious Firmament

Alexander, Cecil Frances All Things Bright and Beautiful

Alford, Henry Come Ye Thankful People Come

Ambrose of Milan Savior of the Nations Come

Anonymous O My Soul Bless God the Father

Praise the Lord! Ye Heavens Adore Him

The First Noel
The Friendly Beasts

When Morning Gilds the Skies

Arrested Development Three Years, 5 Months and Two Days in the Life of

1992/

Children Play With Earth

Mr. Wendell Natural

Raining Revolution Teach a Man to Fish

Zingalamaduni/Ease My Mind

Fountain of Youth In the Sunshine Kneelin' at My Altar

Avalon Testify to Love

B52 Good Stuff/Tell it Like it is

Private Idaho

Babcock, Maltbie Davenport This is My Father's World

Baker, Henry Williams The King of Love My Shepherd Is

The Band Acadian Driftwood

Ain't no more Cane

Cahoots/Where do we go from here?

Bates, Katharine Lee America the Beautiful

The Beatles Blackbird

Bede, The Venerable A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing

Beethoven, Ludwig van Pastorale

Berg, Lina Sandell More Secure is No One Ever

Bernard of Clairvaux Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving Hearts

Blue Highway Clearcut

Blue Mountain Generic America

Bok, Gordon Peter Kagan and the Wind

Bonar, Horatius Blessing and Honor and Glory and Power

Bowring, John Watchman, Tell us of the Night

Broccoli, Dana Forest Song

Brooks, Phillips O Little Town of Bethlehem

Browne, Jackson Looking East

No Nukes/Power
We almost Lost Detroit

we almost Lost Detro

Butterfly, Sasha Sister River

Caedmon's Call God of Wonders

Campbell, John D. S.

Unto the Hills Around do I Lift Up

Chadwick, James Angels We Have Heard on High

Chapman, Steven Curtis Live Out Loud

Chapman, Tracy Heaven's Here on Earth

New Beginnings/Rape of the World

Cherney, Darrly Arizona Power Lines

Earth First!

Earth First! We'll log the other Planets Later

Earth First! Maid

Give 'Em Hell, Sally Bell

He Looked a Whole lot like Jesus You Can't Clearcut your way to Heaven

Claudius, Matthias We Plow the Fields

Clephane, Elizabeth C. Beneath the Cross of Jesus

The Ninety and Nine

Cockburn, Bruce Big Circumstance/If a Tree Falls

Radium Rain

Dancing in the Dragon Jaws/Creation Dream

Northern Lights

Wonderin' Where the Lions Are In the Falling Dark/Gavin's Woodpile

Nothin' but a Burning Light/A Dream Like Mine

Child of the Wind Indian Wars Wise Users

Collins, Judy Farewell to Tarwathie

The Coming of the Roads

Conder, Josiah The Lord is King

Copland, Aaron Appalachian Spring

Rodeo

Cory, Julia Cady We Praise Thee, O God

Cousin, Anne Ross The Sands of Time are Sinking

Cowboy Junkies Black Eyed Man/Last Spike

Craig, Phillips, and Dean Song of the Redeemed

Cranston, Kelly Bright Ocean Waters

Free from the Wolf

Crosby, Fanny Jane Praise Him! Praise Him

Crosby & Nash To the Last Whale

Dalglish, Malcolm Hymnody of Earth/Finches

For the Future
Great Trees
Harmony of Earth
Over the River
The Dark Around Us
Thrush Song
To the Holy Spirit
Walking at Night

Debussy, Claude La Mer

Decius, Nikolaus All Glory Be to God on High

Deck James G. Lamb of God

DeMent, Iris Infamous Angel/These Hills

Denver, John Back Home Again

Calypso

Children of the Universe Cool an' Green an' Shady

Country Roads Earth Day Every Day

Falling Leaves (the Refugees)

Fire and Rain Garden Song I Want to Live

Rocky Mountain High

Di Micele, Alice If I was a Wolf

Dix, William Chatterton As with Gladness, Men of Old

Doddridge, Philip O Happy Day

Dolinger, Danny End of the World

Ghost of a Chance Sierra Blanca Song

Draper, Bourne H. Ye Christian Heralds

Dvorak, Antonin American Quartet

Symphony #9 From the New World

Dylan, Bob Highlands

Infidels/License to Kill Sundown on the Union

Eagles The Last Resort

Elliott, Emily Elizabeth Steele Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne

Farrar, Jay Feel Free

Ferguson, Manie Payne Blessed Quietness

Fort, Bernard Nocturnal Concerts of the World 1

Francis of Assisi All Creatures of Our God and King

Frog and Brenda Tonka Toys

Gaye, Marvin Mercy Mercy Me

Gorka, John I'm From New Jersey

I Wanna be a Tree

Jack's Crows/Houses in the Fields

Grant, Robert O Worship the King

Gregory the Great O Christ, Our King, Creator, Lord

Griffith, Nancy Trouble in the Fields

Grofe, Fernand Grand Canyon Suite

Hammer, Keith The Blessed Land of the Grizzly

Handel, George Frideric Water Music

Handsome Family Twilight/A Dark Eye

Birds You Cannot See No One Fell Asleep Alone Peace in the Valley Once Again

Hanley, B. Subvert the Dominant Paradigm

Harjo, Joy Letter from the End of the Twentieth Century

Havergal, Frances Ridley Like a River Glorious

Heber, Reginald From Greenland's Icy Mountains

Holy, Holy, Holy

Hendrix, Jimi Waterfall

Hine, Stuart K. How Great Thou Art

Hodder, Edwin Thy Word is Like a Garden, Lord

Holland, Josiah G.

There's a Song in the Air

Holmes, Oliver Wendell Lord of all Being, Throned Afar

O Love Divine that Stooped to Share

Hopkins, John Henry We Three Kings of Orient Are

Hopper, Edward Jesus, Savior Pilot Me

How, William Walsham Who is this so Weak and Helpless?

Howlin' Wolf Nature (made me do it)

Hoyt, Robert Red River

Indigo Girls Nomads, Indians, Saints

Southland in the Springtime

World Falls

John of Damascus Come Ye Faithful Raise the Strain

The Day of Resurrection

Johnson, Nagasaki, and Hurricane Monkey Wrench Blues

Johnson, Scotty Century of Fools

Spirit Lives

Josef, Paul Hey Terania

Kallet, Cindy

Angels in Daring/The Last Leviathan

This Way Home/New Hymn

Them Stars

Working on Wings to Fly/Roll to the River

Keelaghan, James Cry, Cry, Cry/Young Men and Fire

My Skies/River Run

Keeler, Greg Chugwater Buffalo

Church Bells Death Valley Days Little Bitty Bugs Fossil-Fuel Cowboy

Make Bucks, Get Rich, Be Better than Everybody, Get

Fat, and Have a Heart Attack

Manly Men Ski Yellowstone

The Ballad of Billy Montana

There Ain't no such thing as a Montana Cowboy

The Last Great American Cookout

What's left of the West

Kelly, Paul Buffalo Ballet

From Little Things Big Things Grow

Kelly, Thomas Hark, Ten Thousand Harps and Voices

Look Ye Saints, the Sight is Glorious

Ken, Thomas All Praise to The, My God this Night

Awake My Soul and with the Sun

Kethe, William All People that on Earth do Dwell

Kipling, Rudyard God of Our fathers Known of Old

Knopfler, Mark Sailing to Philadelphia/Silvertown Blues

Lathbury, Mary Artemisia Day is Dying in the West

LeBlanc, Leny All for You

Lee, Katie Colorado River Songs

Glen Canyon River Journey

Lehrer, Tom Pollution, Pollution

Levy, Phil, and Saul Roche Take Your Bulldozers Away

Lewis, Laurie The Wood Thrush Song

Lightfoot, Gordon Don Quixote/Ode to Big Blue

Longfellow, Samuel God of the Earth, the Sky, the Sea

Los Lobos Just Like You

Los Super Seven Plane Wreck at Los Gatos

Luther, Martin From Heaven Above to Earth I Come

Lyons, Dana Animal

Cows with Guns I am an Animal My Country

Our State is a Dumpsite

RV

Sea Shepherd The Tree

Turn off the Wrench

TV god

Lyte, Henry F. Praise My Soul the King of Heaven

Martin, Civilla D. His Eye is on the Sparrow

Matheson, George O Love that will not Let Me Go

Matthews, Dave Don't Drink the Water

One Sweet World

Merchant, Natalie Motherland/Motherland

Tigerlily/Where I Go

Midnight Oil Blue Sky Mining's

Diesel and Dust/Dreamworld

Warakurna Blue Sky Mine

Milton, John Let Us with a Gladsome Mind

Mitchell, Joni Big Yellow Taxi

Mo, Keb Keb Mo/Victims of Comfort

Monsell, John Samuel Bewley Sing to the Lord of the Harvest

Montgomery, James Angels from the Realms of Glory

Hail to the Lord's Anointed

Moore, Christy Miracles of Nature

Morrison, Van Alan Watts Blues

Munster Gesangbuch Fairest Lord Jesus

Nash, Graham Barrels of Pain

Nations on Fire Ecology

Neander, Joachim Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

Neill, Casey Dancing on the Ruins of Multinational Corporations

Hallowed by thy Ground The Courage you've Shown New Riders of the Purple Sage Garden of Eden

Last Lonely Eagle

Newton, John How Tedious and Tasteless the Hours

Nicolai, Philipp How Lovely Shines the Morning Star

Noel, Caroline Maria At the Name of Jesus

Nordeman, Nichole Every Season

Olearius, Johannes Comfort, Comfort Ye My People

Oliver, Bill Back to the Earth

Bugis and the Beast

Condo Habitat Holes

If Cans were Nickels Muir Power to You

Overgrazed

Pine away Pine Bark Beetle Pretty Paper, Pretty Trees

Shopping Maul Snail Darter March

Song for William O. Douglas

Spawn till you Die Texas Oasis Talking to Kids Turtle Island

We've Got Better things to Do Woodpecker Rebellion

Olivers, Thomas The God of Abraham Praise

Olson, Sigurd, et al. The Canal Song

Ortega, Fernando This Good Day

Ostrow, Cecelia Bird Song

Cummins Creek I Talk to the Trees Let Things Grow

My Sweet Oregon Home

Oh, California
Warrior of the Earth
You were There for Me
You've Got the Power

Outkast Gasoline Dreams

Owens, Priscilla J. Jesus Saves!

Page, Jim Oregon Landslide

Paris, Twila True North

Phillips, Utah, & Ani Difranco Natural Resources

Pierpoint, Folliot Sanford For the Beauty of the Earth

Pixies Wave of Mutilation

Poi Dog Pondering Wishing Like a Mountain and Thinking like the Sea/

Bury Me Deep Fruitless Praise the Lord Thanksgiving

The Ancient Egyptians

Point of Grace Blue Skies

Prine, John Paradise

Prudentius, Aurelius Clemens Earth has many a Noble City

Rand, Joanne Koyaanisqatsi

Never Alone Remember Me Taking Sides Working Woman

Rautavaara, Einojuhani Canticus Arcticus

Reed, Lou Last Great American Whale

Reich, Steve Desert Music

REM Eponymous/Fall on Me

Fables of the Reconstruction/Green Grow the Rushes

Green/Orange Crush

Life's Rich Pageant/Cuyahoga

Fall on Me Stand

RHCP Californication

Rinkart, Martin Now Thank We all Our Lord

Roberts, Daniel C. God of Our Fathers

Robertson, Robbie Music for Native Americans/Akua Tuta

Ancestor Song

Robinson, George Wade I am His and He is Mine

Rosetti, Christina G. In the Bleak Midwinter

Rowan, Peter The Forest for the Trees

Sagebrush, Johnny Amazing Waste

Bad Wolf D. C. Circus For Ned Ludd For the Wilderness

Give Me that Earth First Religion

It's Time to Fight Justifiable Rivercide

Lock it Up

Look What We've Done Monkeywrenchin' Mount St. Helens

Never Take those Trees Away

Oh, Wilderness

Paradice

Put Down Your Axe, Paul Bunyan

Rape & Scrapin'

River

Sacred Land

Stand in front of that 'Dozer Stop the G.O. Road

The Buffalo are Gone

They'll be Tearing Down the Mountain

Thinking Like a Mountain

Were you there when They Built Glen Canyon Damn?

Will our Mother be Unbroken?

Will They do it Again?

You Can't Screw around with Mother Nature

Samples Nature

Schlegel, Kathrina von Be Still My Soul

Schutz, Johann Jakob Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above

Schultz, Mark Remember Me

Scottish Psalter The Lord's My Shepherd

Seed, John Extinction

Shindell, Richard Fishing

Simon, Paul The Rhythm of the Saints/Can't Run But

Cool, Cool River

Smith, Samuel Francis My Country 'Tis of Thee

Smith, Walter Chalmers Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise

Springsteen, Bruce Ghost of Tom Joad

The River

This Land is Your Land

St. James, Rebecca God

Universe

Worship God/Song of Love

Stephanie Earth First!

Stevens, Dean/Cindy Kallet This Way Home/Salmon River

Storm, August Ludvig Thanks to God

Stowe, Harriet B. Still, Still with Thee

Talking Heads Fear of Music/Air

Flowers

True Stories/City of Dreams

Taylor, James Hourglass/Gaia

Theodolph of Orleans All Glory Laud and Honor

Thomas, Alexcenah Bring Them In

Thompson, Richard and Danny Industry/Big Chimney

Lotteryland

Thompson, Will L. Jesus is all the World to Me

Thomson, Mary Ann O Zion Haste

Thrupp, Dorothy A. Savior Like a Shepherd Lead Us

U2 The Joshua Tree/In God's Country

Unforgettable Fire/Sort of Homecoming

van Dyke, Henry Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee

Whittier, John Greenleaf Dear Lord and Father of Mankind

Williams, Clara Tear Satisfied

Williams, Vaughn Symphony #6 In the Fen Country

Winston, George Forest

Walkin' Jim Stoltz A Kid for the Wild

Forever Wild Listen to the Earth Lone Lion Runs Power in the Earth Spirit is still on the Run

The Litter Song

There is Power in the Earth

Wild Wind

Yellowstone Tales

Ware, Henry, Jr. All Nature's Works His Praise Declare

Warning, Anna L. In Heavenly Love Abiding

Watts, Isaac Begin My Tongue Some Heavenly Theme

Come Sound His Praise Abroad
I'll Praise my Maker While I've Breath
I Sing the Mighty Power of God

Joy to the World

The Heavens Declare Thy Glory Lord When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

Weissel, Georg Lift up your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates

Wesley, Charles Christ the Lord is Risen Today

Whittle, Daniel W. Christ Liveth in Me

There Shall Be Showers of Blessing

Williams, Dar The Green World

The Ocean

Wolaver, Bill and Robin Make His Praise Glorious

Wood, Douglas Cattail Marsh

Gonna Rain Headin' for Cover Little Blue Ball Little Stream Ne Pa Ko Onward Canoe Ranger Rick River Dreams Sarah's Prayer

The Big Trees are Down The Earth is a Spaceship

The Fisherman

The Minnesota Mosquito Song

The Puzzle

The Frog and the Flea The Outhouse Blues The Wild Foods Song What is Your Story?

Wild Again

Wind Upon the Shoulder

Wordsworth, Christopher Day of Rest and Gladness

Lord of Heaven and Earth and Sea

XTC Drums and Wires/Roads Girdle the Globe

Yindi, Yothu Garma/Gone is the Land

Lonely Tree

Young, George A. God Lead Us Along

Young, Neil I am the Ocean

Additional Resources

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