

Ode to Music
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Without music, we would be empty creatures without humor, anger, or sadness to keep us human. Although Charlotte Mair most likely does not completely believe this, her poem “Ode to Music” (www.artvilla.com, see appendix) conveys the idea that music is holy and should not be taken for granted. Without it, life would be much less enjoyable.

Along with writing poetry, an autobiography, and short stories, Charlotte Mair sings and writes her own music. Music is a big part of her life and who she is, so it is not hard to imagine why she would write a poem that glorifies one of her passions.

The poem begins by comparing music to modern medicine by stating, “Music is a gift from God, / How it heals the whole being!” (1-2). This comparison practically declares that music is even greater than medicine because it was sent from a divine entity. It not only heals our physical health, but our entire self, our *whole being*. The word “being” could also stand for all of humanity, not just one person. Music, in this case, heals all people and brings us all together. This is a more powerful interpretation and shows music as a healing force, as well as, a unifying force.

Mair continues in line 3 with the idea that music is of divine origin: “Sounds so sacred, vibrating throughout the universe.” The first three words of this line bring out the idea that music has always had a huge role in almost all religions. Mair also creates a holy feel through her use of alliteration with these words. The repetition of “s” in “sounds so sacred” seems to be a soft, gentle whisper, perhaps from an angel. The last section of this line, “vibrating throughout the universe” further drives this idea of music being of

divine nature. Music is *so sacred*, even to anyone else who is out there in the universe. Surely, even another life form would appreciate music since it comes from God.

The next three lines, “How could we be inspired without singing the ancient Psalter? / Where would we be without the cantatas of Bach, / The symphonies of Beethoven, the operas of Mozart?” (4-6) ask what music, and what life, would be like without the musical foundations that were laid down by the Psalter (Psalms that were commonly sung), and the great composers. These early composers used the Psalter as their base and created a template for musicians to use later on. The way the question in these three lines is stated makes it seem as if Mair is saying without the early composers, music would not exist, making life less enjoyable. Because of these composers, musicians now have something to use as their foundation when creating new music. People like Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart made it possible for music to evolve into what it is today.

In lines one through six, Mair is using a heavenly diction and uses words that give a sense of honor and power while still maintaining a holy feel. Words such as *heals*, *sacred*, *inspired*, *ancient* and the phrase, “vibrating throughout the universe” were chosen because they humble the reader to the greatness of music. These few words give a sense of awe and make the reader feel small and unimportant compared to music.

The poem goes on to name other musicians and genres that have been very influential and groundbreaking. “What would we do without the folk ballads of Bob, / Joni, Buffie, and Bruce? Who could dance, sing, laugh or cry without / The blues of B.B., the jazz of Miles, the rock / guitarists like Jimmie, Eric and George?” (7-10). Although the poem lists a few great musicians, it also points out that music brings things like

dance, singing, laughter and another very human action, crying. Throughout history, dance has been very controversial, especially when related to controversial music such as jazz. Jazz has been believed by many to be evil and straight from the devil. This poem, however, states that all forms of music, even jazz, come from God because they bring about joy and tears; both of which are human nature to experience. The list of musicians continues the evolution of music and mentions that music gives us reason to dance, sing, laugh, and cry in order to remain human.

“Music is heaven’s official language” (10) again mentions that music is heaven-sent. *Official Language* means that music is a universal language, unlike all the audible languages from around the world. Music is the only one that can truly be understood by everybody, everywhere. It is also the only language that can effectively communicate many emotions that languages such as English, French, or Chinese cannot even come close to. In short, without music, there would be no universal language and would leave us unable to express many emotions.

Lines eleven and twelve review the idea that music *heals the whole being*. “It fills the body with peace, the mind with creativity, / The heart with love, the soul with complete union.” All of the major parts that make every person up are listed: the body, mind, heart, and soul. Without peace of mind, creativity, love, and a soul that is *unified* or united with the rest of us (body, mind, and heart), life would not be as enjoyable. We wouldn’t be much different than a mouse, dog, or giraffe. These things make us who we are and distinguish us from other animals.

“Music is the vehicle wherein humankind journeys / As one family of brothers and sisters without / divisions and barriers.” Music gives people another way to be

connected. It can directly unite individuals through musical ensembles and make the members of the group feel as if they are brothers and sisters, or can simply give people another thing to have in common. Either way, music creates a very powerful bond and can give a unique sense of belonging and acceptance. “Without divisions and barriers” suggests there are neither divisions nor barriers in music. All music is connected in one way or another to other types of music. There are no barriers, allowing music to evolve into anything. There are endless possibilities to what music can become.

The next two lines reinforce the idea that there are no *barriers* in music; it can go anywhere and become anything. “We travel with music to the wonders of the world, / Places of such breathtaking, astounding beauty and sweet ecstasy.” (16-17). “We travel with music to the wonders of the world” is saying that throughout the entire world, music is present. All cultures have music, no matter how different they are, and every single culture has something new to be learned from. *Wonders of the world, breathtaking, astounding beauty, sweet ecstasy*. Each of these words/phrases give a sense of awe and brilliance and inspires you. They make music seem other-worldly, again connecting to the idea that music is God’s doing.

Charlotte Mair finishes her poem with an instruction that hints a small threat. “So wherever you may be or whoever you are, / Sing a song, play an instrument, dance with joy / In this life-long ode to music.” (18-20). Go out into the world, no matter who you are, and enjoy life through music. Otherwise, you will miss out on many opportunities for joy and happiness.

The way this poem is set up correlates strongly with one of the main messages; music has no limits. There is no set rhythm, rhyme scheme, or rules at all. Although some

poems do have guidelines they have to follow, a poem can still be considered a poem without following them. By not following a certain form of poetry, Mair is further showing this theme. Although music sometimes follows rules of chord progression, style, and form, it does not have to do so in order to still be music and, in turn, still affect the listener in a positive, meaningful way.

“Ode to Music” is full of loaded questions that all but answer themselves. Mair asks where we would be without the great early composers, how we could dance and laugh without the blues and jazz music, and how we could be inspired without the Psalter, the base of all music in our area of the world. She believes that God gave us a limitless gift that can fully convey all emotions and help us understand ourselves better. Mair uses very little element of craft and no recognizable form, and that is what ties the meaning of the poem to the actual poem itself. “Music is a gift from God, / How it heals the whole being!” ”Music is [...] without divisions and barriers.” Amen.

Works Cited

Mair, Charlotte. Ode to Music. Retrieved April 16, 2008, from <http://www.artvilla.com>.

Charlotte G Mair. (n.d.). *AuthorsDen*. Retrieved April 16, 2008, from
<http://www.authorsden.com>.

Appendix

Ode to Music (Charlotte Mair)

1 Music is a gift from God,
2 How it heals the whole being!
3 Sounds so sacred, vibrating throughout the universe.
4 How could we be inspired without singing the ancient Psalter?
5 Where would we be without the cantatas of Bach,
6 The symphonies of Beethoven, the operas of Mozart?
7 What would we do without the folk ballads of Bob,
8 Joni, Buffie, and Bruce? Who could dance, sing, laugh or cry without
9 The blues of B.B., the jazz of Miles, the rock
10 guitarists like Jimmie, Eric and George? Music is heaven's official language,
11 It fills the body with peace, the mind with creativity,
12 The heart with love, the soul with complete union.
13 Music is the vehicle wherein humankind journeys
14 As one family of brothers and sisters without
15 divisions and barriers.
16 We travel with music to the wonders of the world,
17 Places of such breathtaking, astounding beauty and sweet ecstasy.
18 So wherever you may be or whoever you are,
19 Sing a song, play an instrument, dance with joy
20 In this life-long ode to music.