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Why is Music so Important to World Culture?

Music means a lot of different things for different people. It has such a deep resonance in all cultures around the world. No matter where you live or who you are, music connects all people in a way nothing else can. There are people who think music is just music, but it is so much more than that. When talking about its affect on people of a culture, not everyone will have the same views. People in India, who integrate music into almost all facets of life, will have different views on music compared to people from the United States. Music has become a way to not only understand other cultures, but also to become more accepting of others and their differences. While I was doing research on this topic, soon began to realize that more and more sources were from middle eastern journalist. Everyone has a certain feeling or passion for music to some capacity wherever you come from. I believe that music plays just as big a role as any when it comes to a reflection of a culture and the people involved in that culture. Hip Hop and R&B have really had an impact on the black community because of the relatability to the artist and where they come from. That connection is so strong because as African Americans, we’ve endured through challenging and damn-near impossible tasks. Music is so important to world cultures because it contributes to the hearts of the people listening and reflects how society is viewed through the genre of music.

The contributions that music gives to a culture are shown through everything that a culture involves music with. Author Vikas Shah MBE, from *ThoughtEconomics,* wrote “The Role of Music in Human Culture” with a collection of interviews from many different award-winning producers, composer, actors. In these interviews, Vikas delves into questions on what music to these people and he received some beautiful answers. David Levitin, a writer and musician, states that “…Whenever humans come together for any reason, music is there,” and precedes to name events like weddings, funerals, graduations, prayer, etc. I agree with him here because when music is used at events it unites the masses. Especially in certain cultures because majority of people will begin to dance and sing and become joyful. Vikas interviewed one of my favorite composers in Hans Zimmer, who is an award-winning composer and has done music for over 100 films. His answer to Vikas question, “What would the world be without music” shows how he views music as, “a huge chunk of social communication mechanism would be gone.” I love Hans’ stance on this because music is apart of my everyday life and without it my life would feel so much blander. One of Hans’ productions is the soundtrack from my favorite movie, *Interstellar*, and the way his work sounds brings out his view of the importance of music. I think music gives culture a voice and describes it with the effort that artist put into the genre.

The culture of a place can often reflect the music that comes from that place. Hujjatullah Zia, from “Outlook Afghanistan”, writes “Music Reflects Culture” explaining why music and poetry reflect the culture and folklore of a society. Zia states, “Songs and music mirror history, values, norms, and the mentality of a society.” This statement is true because at most cultural ceremonies that are celebrated with songs and music, it’s to demonstrate the tradition of that culture. Music plays such a large role in the emotions of the people who listen to it. Some people find joy and happiness listening to rhythm and beat of music. On the other hand, there is music out there that can feel you with unwanted emotions and make you feel sad or lonely. Zia also states that, “Others just enjoy traveling mentally with music in romantic and utopian cities with their beloved friends.” I believe the United States strives to be a version of a utopia and living here has shown me that listening to music can bring about inspiration and creativity. If one can share that feeling with others, it then becomes a mentality to who ever hears the same music. I grew up in my church choir so listening and singing religious and gospel music can fill you with an energy fit to serve and worship. The words from these gospels can be calming, centering and worthwhile. In a culture where people can gather in solace to enjoy each other’s company, music can be a bonding factor just as communicating is.

Music can inherently talk more about a culture than what most can even say about it. The impact of music on society or a culture spans farther than just listening to the music. Feeling the melody and embracing the words makes a song or sound resonate in a community far more than just saying the words. Belinda Huang, from “Sonicbids”, wrote “What Kind of Impact does our Music Really Make on Society” speaks on the cultural impact that she believes music has on different cultures. In the article, Belinda starts off with the perspective of musicians, in sighting that she is a part of that group. She says, “As musicians, we are carriers of influence, whether or not we are aware of it and whether or not we intend to be.” This is a great point to start off with because the amount of artist who don’t care about the image that they put out really doe nothing but harm communities and cultures alike. She goes on to talk about the youth and the adolescents who are, “still extremely malleable to the world around them.” Huang names the song “Get Lucky” by Daft Punk and the Katy Perry halftime show. She did this to say that kids would be singing these songs verbatim, so they too are impacted by the music they listen to. She says, “The popular music of our day reflects the culture of our day…culture is changing far more frequently than ever before.” I believe her with this statement because the evolution of social media and the ability to share information and music with a touch of a button. This also explains why music taste can change so quickly today because we have access to almost all genres of music.

In our class, we wrote our previous essay on identities and how they can affect what people might like or dislike. Music can be and identity of not only a person but an identity of a region or community. Nwakego Kristine Chukwuma, from “Diggit Blog,” wrote “Identity Through the Eyes of Music” with intentions to up the topic on how can music reflect a person or cultural identity? They start off with saying that music, “seems to be a key to identity because it offers, to intensely, a sense of both self and the collective.” I agree with their stance on this because music can be shared with people so easily now that you can really identify whole groups with the same music taste. Music constructs a sense of identity through the direct experiences it offers of the body. They begin to discuss rap music and how it first gained popularity in the 1970’s in the U.S. My instructor, Dr. Caitlin Anderson previous stated that the genre that gets her the most excited and thrilled to listen to in K-POP. Kristine speaks on K-POP and says that, “Koreans emphasis on reserving the old and embracing the new. As a result, not only do they advertise themselves in the world by K-POP music but also they preserve their traditional music which is their identity.” I didn’t originally know what K-POP was, but the identity of a culture can be show through their music and at the same time evolve with the times. In the ending of her excerpt, she goes on to say that music is “truly beautiful” and is “not just simply music.” Music has meaning to everyone in the world, and it is a powerful to that can shape generations.

To summarize, music is vastly important to everyone on one level or another. It is a way we express ourselves and even though not all music is shared, the concept and the meaning behind it is reciprocated around the world. Music contributes heavily to cultures by being almost like the heart and soul of a community. During events and ceremonies, music is expected because of the impact it has on the people it was made for. It doesn’t matter the type of music, it about how that type of music makes you feel and how it changes your identity. It can reflect a culture due to the history behind it. Not all songs have a secret meaning but majority of music genres have a story to back up the lyrics. Whatever your background may be, the music related to your culture can reveal emotions and show how you feel about certain things to you that you never would have known. Music can tell a lot about society and how we are influenced by it. Music can evolve as we begin to expand social media or as we explore what kind of music we like especially while people grow up or while they are youth. Music is so important to the world cultures because no matter what genre you like, the message brought about by the lyrics can impact your life in a way you would never expect.

Work Cited

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