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NEW AGE MUSIC: ISSUES OF HISTORY, PERCEPTION, AND REALITY

BY

LEANNE BROOKE KING

A THESIS

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

NEW AGE MUSIC: ISSUES OF HISTORY, PERCEPTION, AND REALITY

By

Leanne Brooke King

This thesis examines issues relating to the history, perception, and reality of New Age music within popular and academic cultures of Western society. Chapter one focuses on the history and ideology of the New Age movement of the 1970s with respect to religion, science, and philosophy. New Age music, a result of New Age ideals and a growing interest in New Age materials, is then discussed in terms of its purpose, musical influences, style, and listeners. Chapter two explores New Age music in a postmodern context and illustrates how it is reshaping the concepts of musical identity and musical authenticity. Technology and music sampling are particularly important issues within these discussions. Chapter three examines Hearts of Space, a New Age radio program and record label created by Stephen Hill in the early 1970s, in terms of its history, radio and internet programming, albums, and listener responses to demonstrate the presence and perseverance of New Age music in the early 21st century. This study concludes that music scholarship must adapt to the changing roles of composers, musicians, and listeners and to the changing ideas of musical identity and musical authenticity brought about by New Age music.

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Preface

New Age music is both a process and a product. It is a process because it thrives on continuing developments within technology and changing ideas within music. It is a product because it is marketed to and consumed by listeners who have been, and who remain, the centerpiece of this music. Recognizing the primary role of New Age listeners, and consequently the secondary role of composers and performers, presents challenges to many established traditions in Western art music. In dealing with these challenges, the research presented in this thesis will reveal historical, cultural, ideological, and postmodern perspectives specific to New Age music as well as broader issues within contemporary music such as musical identity, musical authenticity, and the use of technology.

The chapters are presented chronologically, from the historical background of New Age music in chapter one to the present status of New Age music within the commercial music industry in chapter three. Chapter two discusses issues along the way that often deter the study of New Age music, while offering alternative perspectives to dealing with those issues.

This project presented several challenges, the most obvious being that academic resources on New Age music are scarce. Questions still remain. There is no question, however, that New Age music has a strong presence in the contemporary music scene. The information presented in the next three chapters will show that New Age music can and should be embraced by the field of musicology by nature of its past, present, and, arguably, future place within culture, society, and music.

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Album Cover of Enigma's *The Greatest Hits*

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Images in this thesis are presented in color.

CHAPTER ONE

THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT AND THE ORIGINS OF NEW AGE MUSIC

The New Age has been described by a diverse assortment of terms: cultural, spiritual, religious, philosophical, optimistic, disorganized, and eclectic.¹ Despite these variations in descriptions, a significant amount of research has been done on the history and ideology of the New Age and the New Age movement in the past 20 to 30 years. Yet in all this research, music scholars have remained quite skeptical about approaching the topic of New Age music in any serious way.

A number of explanations for this skepticism can be suggested. Compared to other, more established, forms of music, New Age music lacks a unified discourse, and therefore it is more loosely defined. It also lacks formal structures. The issue of musical authenticity is brought up because New Age music borrows or samples a variety of music from other sources. In general, New Age music is seen as an alternative kind of music that does not fit into the other, more clearly defined, genres of Western music. These characteristics make it difficult to approach and work with New Age music.

However, there are relevant topics that need to be addressed, and they can be successfully approached from a musicological point of view. First, New Age music is rooted in an historical movement that is integral to its understanding. Second, an awareness of the ideals and beliefs associated with the people of this movement will illustrate why New Age music was created. Third, a knowledge of New Age artists and

¹ Richard Kyle, *The New Age Movement in American Culture* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1995), 1-11.

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of a new educational program on the learning outcomes of students. The program, which was developed by a team of experts, aims to enhance the understanding and application of mathematical concepts through a series of interactive activities and projects. The study was conducted over a period of six months, during which the program was implemented in a classroom setting. The data collected from the students' performance on various tests and assignments were analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the program. The results of the study indicate that the program had a positive impact on the students' learning outcomes, particularly in the areas of problem-solving and critical thinking. The students who participated in the program showed a significant improvement in their scores on the tests and assignments compared to those who did not. This suggests that the program is an effective tool for enhancing the learning experience of students in mathematics. The findings of this study have important implications for the design and implementation of educational programs. It highlights the importance of using interactive and project-based learning methods to engage students and promote their learning. The results also suggest that the program can be adapted to other subjects and grade levels, making it a valuable resource for educators. Further research is needed to explore the long-term effects of the program and to identify the specific factors that contribute to its success. This study provides a foundation for such research and offers valuable insights into the effectiveness of the program.

Methodology

The study was conducted using a quasi-experimental design. The participants were divided into two groups: an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group received the new educational program, while the control group received the traditional curriculum. The data was collected through a series of tests and assignments. The results were analyzed using statistical methods to determine the significance of the differences between the two groups.

audiences can provide information about the artistic quality and ongoing interest in New Age music. With these topics in mind, this chapter will show how the history and ideology of the New Age movement have effectively shaped the foundations and audience appeal of New Age music.

Historical Predecessors of the New Age Movement

Many sources on New Age music have not explored the historical influences on the music prior to the 1960s. Richard Kyle's *The New Age Movement in American Culture*² is one of the more recent and comprehensive texts that addresses the historical influences on the New Age movement from ancient times through the 20th century in Western culture. It is of interest to look at 19th-century history in particular, because the information clearly illustrates that religion, science, and philosophy were the most significant influences leading up to the New Age movement.

Religious Influences

It is impossible to understand the New Age movement without first considering its religious influences. Although the New Age is by no means defined as an organized religion, the strong presence of spirituality in the movement is rooted in a number of pre-existing religious traditions, movements, and philosophies. For this reason, the New Age has been referred to as a quasi-religion; it is primarily an amalgamation of Eastern religions, Judeo-Christian traditions (with an emphasis on Christianity), and occult practices.

² The following historical information can be found in Kyle, *The New Age Movement*, 1-39.

The merging of Western and Eastern religions, specifically Greek, Egyptian, and Near Eastern philosophies, is apparent as early as 300 B.C. Religious pluralism has since continued to flourish, especially throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, encouraging an awareness of religious concepts and the formation of new religious groups. Not until after World War II did the integration of Eastern religions, primarily Buddhism and Hinduism, and Western thought culminate in the New Age movement.

Throughout Western society's history, Christianity has been a dominating force. However, the dramatic economic and social changes that took place during the 19th century inspired religious diversity. Nonconformists and cult groups continued to challenge the Catholic Church. A tendency toward secularism eventually laid the groundwork for the alternative religious and spiritual choices in movements like the New Age.

Occult practices are examples of alternative choices that permeated early cult groups and later the followers of the New Age movement. These practices include astrology, witchcraft, and magic, for example.³ The occult tradition is based on elements of Judaism, Christianity, and paganism. This juxtaposition of ideas did not fare well until an intellectual perspective was associated with occultism during the 19th century. Occultism then transformed into a philosophical movement that combined religion and science into its core meaning. From this point a strong connection from occultism to the New Age movement can be traced.⁴

³ Ibid., 47.

⁴ Ibid., 27-28.

Scientific Influences

As intellectual knowledge became more prominent through the 18th century, people were affected by advancements in the scientific world. Residency, employment, and religion were greatly influenced by progress in industrial development, technology, and academia. The discipline of psychology, developing in the later part of the 19th century, was one of the most significant influences. It changed how people analyzed thought and behavior, and it had a considerable impact on religious thinking following World War II. As the 20th century progressed, however, a loss of confidence in science accompanied the declining influence of Christianity, causing somewhat of a religious and secular crisis.⁵ Eventually, this left many people, namely those who became followers of the New Age movement in the 1960s, actively seeking intellectual and religious alternatives.

Philosophical Influences

A number of intellectual movements developed in the 19th century as a result of scientific advancements, alterations in religious practices, and an overall transition into the modern world. People began to view themselves and the world from a more spiritual perspective. Transcendentalism, for example, was a philosophy that stressed the spiritual and metaphysical over the material and empirical. Transcendentalists valued experience and looked to nature for spiritual guidance and truth. New Thought was a development of the late 19th century which focused on individual experiences with respect to one's completeness, well-being, and success. The New Thought movement was based on the

⁵ Daniel W. Hollis, "The Cultural Origins of New Age Cults," *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* Vol. 10 no. 1-2 (1998): 31.

concept of modifying one's inner thoughts to initiate changes in the physical world.

Theosophy, another late-19th-century movement, emphasized that the individual was part of a larger entity. Theosophical thought suggested that humanity had reached a new age, and that humans were collectively part of an evolutionary process in which perfection was attainable.⁶ The New Age draws and expands on these philosophical concepts with respect to the influences of religion and science.

The New Age Movement

The 1960s

The years between 1960 and 1975 are referred to as the Counterculture or “the sixties.” Political, social, cultural, and religious tensions escalated to a new level during this time. Concerns for environmental preservation, peace, gender and racial equality, and political reform, combined with a desire for religious alternatives, transformed the Counterculture into the New Age movement. According to Kyle’s interpretation: “The advance of science, technology, and urban growth depersonalized human relationships, creating a thirst for intimacy and community that some fringe religions would fill.”⁷ The majority of people trying to fill this void were America’s youth, now referred to as the baby-boom generation, because they were willing to make extreme changes in their lifestyles and ways of thinking.

The astrological Age of Aquarius was an important concept within the counterculture. The Aquarian Age is described by James D’Angelo as:

⁶ Kyle, *The New Age Movement*, 28-36.

⁷ Ibid., 50.

... an expanded shift in the consciousness of increasing numbers of people concerning their inner purpose and direction. It involves a dissolution of materialistic thinking, out-worn institutions, scientific reductionism and arid artistic works in favor of a rebirth of the human spirit through the new impulses infusing science, the arts, and even religion. Its endpoint would be a singular, universal knowledge.⁸

New Age followers called this shift in consciousness a “paradigm shift,” which was first referred to by Thomas Kuhn in 1962 in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.⁹ In a New Age context, the term reflects the idea that changes in thought, society, culture, and science are evolving and undergoing drastic changes.

The 1970s

The New Age movement solidified in the 1970s and became a part of popular culture. Networks of people had begun to form organizations, write books, introduce journals, create music, and market paraphernalia associated with the New Age.¹⁰

Attention from some scholars, the media, and a portion of the public helped society as a whole acknowledge and understand the presence of the New Age as a legitimate movement.

The most significant event of the 1970s was the occult revival. The increase in awareness of the New Age movement brought occultism to a more prominent place in American culture. Renewed interests in self-awareness, unity, and mysticism also

⁸ James D'Angelo, “Towards a New Sound in the Age of Aquarius.” *Contemporary Music Review* Vol. 15, no. 3-4 (1996): 121.

⁹ Cf. Kyle, *The New Age Movement*, 78.

¹⁰ Further discussion can be found Ibid., 65-74.

contributed to the revival of occult activities.

The science of psychology continued to develop alongside the new spiritual consciousness of the 1970s. For example, humanistic psychology and transpersonal psychology focused on self-realization and personal transformation, respectively. As a result, many psycho-religions and self-help groups developed during the New Age movement.¹¹ The holistic health movement flourished in the mid 1970s along with the New Age movement. The idea of treating the mind, body, and spirit of a person is reflected in the healing and religious practices of many Eastern cultures and was appealing to many New Age followers by nature of the alternative approach.¹² In conclusion, occult practices, psychology, and Eastern spirituality merged in the 1970s to form the values most closely associated with the New Age movement.

Introduction to New Age Music

As an interest in New Age ideals grew, so did the production and consumption of New Age materials. In a recent study about the consumers of New Age products, Daniel Mears and Christopher Ellison suggest that the products are a natural result of the ideas and practices associated with the New Age movement.

Given the clear emphasis of New Age movements on a wide variety of teachings, and the absence of a unified or organized New Age church, it is logical to expect that to a large extent the success of any New Age movement would rest upon the

¹¹ Ibid., 37.

¹² Ibid., 64.

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of a new educational program on the learning outcomes of students in a high school. The program, which was implemented in the 2023-2024 academic year, aims to improve students' understanding of mathematics and science through a combination of traditional classroom instruction and interactive learning activities.

The study was conducted in a high school in the city of Istanbul, Turkey. The sample consisted of 120 students, who were randomly selected from the 10th and 11th grades. The data was collected through a series of tests and surveys, which were administered at the beginning and end of the academic year.

The results of the study show that the new educational program had a positive effect on the learning outcomes of students. Students who participated in the program showed significantly higher scores in mathematics and science tests compared to those who did not participate. Additionally, students reported higher levels of motivation and engagement in the classroom.

The findings of this study suggest that the new educational program is effective in improving students' learning outcomes. However, further research is needed to determine the long-term effects of the program and to explore the factors that contribute to its success. The results also highlight the importance of using a combination of traditional and interactive learning methods to enhance student learning.

The study was limited by several factors, including the sample size and the duration of the study. The sample size was relatively small, which may have affected the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study was conducted over a short period of time, which may not have allowed for the full implementation of the program.

Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of the new educational program. The results suggest that the program is a promising approach to improving student learning outcomes in mathematics and science. Further research is needed to explore the program's impact on other subjects and to identify the factors that contribute to its success.

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dissemination of relevant materials.¹³

One of the relevant materials with the ability to bring together the thoughts and feelings associated with the New Age movement was music. New sounds were believed to have resulted from the New Age; these sounds were also believed to have a direct or indirect impact on the physical body and psyche. According to D'Angelo, properties of this new music "might become objective such that people will choose music according to specific physical, emotional, mental, and even spiritual needs."¹⁴ This line of thinking developed into what is known as New Age music.

The remaining sections of this paper will discuss New Age music as an entity, considering its purpose, musical influences, style, and listeners, while illustrating how these topics relate to the previously mentioned information about the New Age movement.

Purpose

The New Age movement of the late 1970s has recently been described as "an ideology based on the belief in the ultimate cultural evolution of human societies through the transformation of individuals."¹⁵ It is understood that New Age music was created for the individual to satisfy the desire for a contemplative and personal listening experience. The purpose of New Age music is not to dictate that experience, but to create an environment in which listeners can reflect on their thoughts and determine their own

¹³ Daniel P. Mears and Christopher G. Ellison, "Who Buys New Age Materials? Exploring Sociodemographic, Religious, Network, and Contextual Correlates of New Age Consumption," *Sociology of Religion* Vol. 61, no. 3 (2000): 290.

¹⁴ D'Angelo, "Towards a New Sound," 121.

¹⁵ Diane Schreiner, "New Age," *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy [cited September 2004] Available at <http://www.grovemusic.com>.

experiences. Without the simplistic connotation of background music, it is reasonable to suggest, as one author does, that “New Age music characteristically resides at the margins rather than at the center of one’s attention.”¹⁶ The ambience, then, becomes fundamental to any of the experiences related to New Age music.

The purpose of New Age music, therefore, can most appropriately be associated with one’s personal development. Personal development is most directly related to psychological and emotional growth, and it is a concept closely associated with the New Age movement. The effects of New Age music allow people to contemplate, meditate, reflect, and relieve stress. Essentially any task that calls for an atmosphere of relaxation, concentration, or isolation can be accompanied by New Age music. Some of these activities include, but are not limited to, meditation, exercise, healing, and studying. All of these actions can be considered part of a personal learning process or transformation. The process of individual experiences through New Age music is well summarized by Stephen Hill, founder of the New Age record label and radio program, Hearts of Space.

The attention is both personal and “holistic”- an awareness of individual emotional response as well as the quality of the enveloping ambience being created. This music is experienced primarily as a continuum of spatial imagery and emotion, rather than as thematic musical relationships, compositional ideas, or performance values.¹⁷

¹⁶ Dennis Hall, “New Age Music: A voice of liminality in postmodern popular culture,” *Popular Music and Society* Vol. 18, no. 2 (1994): 15.

¹⁷ From Stephen Hill’s 1986 paper, “New Age Music Made Simple.” [cited September 2004] Available at <http://www.hos.com/simple.html>. The current URL is http://timelessmedia.net/hos/n_word.html.

Musical Influences

Many authors will agree that New Age music, like the New Age, is difficult to organize and define. New Age music is not a genre that has evolved specifically from any one form. It has developed as an alternative to what already exists. Classical, popular, contemporary, world, jazz, religious, and folk music are only some of the influences that give New Age music its eclectic character.

This eclecticism is also due, in part, to the diversity of the artists who create the musical works as well as their reception of and appreciation for a wide range of music. According to one author, there are two generations of New Age artists. The first generation, beginning around 1976, came from a school of thought that opposed the musical development of post-industrial society. Their goal was to create an intimate and meditative music that was not, as they perceived, already provided by the music industry. Musicians of this generation often lacked classical training. Members of the second generation of New Age artists, prominent in more recent recordings, are often classically trained, hold college music degrees, and have explored areas such as ethnomusicology and jazz studies before adopting the sounds and ideas of New Age music. Their music is characterized by complex colors, rhythms, harmonies, and orchestration, while maintaining qualities of some of the earlier New Age music.¹⁸

Technology is a key influence, and it cannot be ignored. New Age music relies on technology for both its production and consumption. In the recording studio, sounds are synthesized, manipulated, distorted, sequenced, and expanded at the artist's discretion to

¹⁸ Helfried C. Zrzavy, "Issues of Incoherence and Cohesion in New Age Music," *Journal of Popular Culture* Vol. 24, no. 2 (1990): 35-36.

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1. The following table shows the results of a survey of 100 people about their favorite color.

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create individual sounding works. As a result of these methods of production, listeners are obligated to find some electronic venue, compact discs, the radio, or the internet, for example, in which to consume this music. Consequently, New Age music is most commonly consumed in a private setting, usually in one's home.

Style

The diverse musical influences explain why it has been said that New Age music “transcends stylistic categories.”¹⁹ There is little agreement among sources as to the precise labeling of New Age subcategories. Terminology such as electronic, meditative, ambient, trance, contemporary instrumental, ethnic, and space surface in many forms in a seemingly endless number of New Age descriptors. Music is placed into these and other groups based on the instrumentation, the atmosphere or mood intended, and the electronic, musical techniques used to create various sounds and effects.

Conversely, descriptions of the music's overall style and lack of formal structure tend to be quite similar. For instance, New Age music is primarily instrumental. If there are voices, they are abstract sounds, such as chanting, as opposed to discrete lyrics. With that said, it is customary for New Age music to adopt the vocal and instrumental sounds of non-Western music. New Age music is created in the absence of prescribed phrase structures, therefore illustrating that sonorities take precedence over formal organization. Harmonies are static and often inconsequential. Rhythms are not clearly defined. Within a given piece, there is a lack of extreme contrasts in tempos, dynamics, and melodies, and

¹⁹ Ibid., 34.

The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the progress of the work during the year. It is followed by a detailed account of the various projects and the results achieved. The report concludes with a summary of the work done and the plans for the future.

The second part of the report deals with the financial aspects of the work. It gives a detailed account of the income and expenditure for the year, and shows how the funds have been used. It also includes a statement of the assets and liabilities of the organization at the end of the year.

The third part of the report deals with the personnel of the organization. It gives a list of the staff and their duties, and also a list of the volunteers who have helped in the work. It also includes a statement of the training and development of the staff.

The fourth part of the report deals with the public relations of the organization. It gives a list of the public relations activities carried out during the year, and also a list of the media coverage of the organization. It also includes a statement of the public relations budget.

The fifth part of the report deals with the future plans of the organization. It gives a list of the projects planned for the next year, and also a list of the resources needed for these projects. It also includes a statement of the public relations budget for the next year.

repetition is abundant.²⁰

The stylistic elements of New Age music reflect the ideals of the New Age movement; an intimate environment is created through simplicity and repetition to encourage listeners to concentrate and to assess the experience independently. It is important to understand that New Age music thrives less on the individual goals and expectations of the artists than on the experiences and interpretations of the listeners.

Listeners

New Age thought suggested that people would either be inspired by the possibility for spiritual development and receptive to the new sounds being created, or they would resist both the new ideology and sounds.²¹ Those who accepted the new sounds sought emotional, psychological, and physical alterations during their listening experiences.

In the mid 1980s, New Age music became a commercial success. Although many people were listening to New Age music for essentially the same reasons, it became more accepted within the music industry, and its audience broadened. Within the past 20 years, research has shown that the New Age audience is primarily white, from urban areas, college-educated, professionals between the ages of 25 and 40, and students between the ages of 18 and 25.²² This demographic shift suggests that the marketing has become more successful, more people are receptive to contemporary types of music, the music is adapting to the popular styles of the time in which it is created, or that more people have embraced the ideology associated with the New Age movement.

²⁰ Hall, "New Age Music," 14.

²¹ D'Angelo, "Towards A New Sound," 122.

²² Richard Garneau, "Ritual and Symbolism In New Age Music," *Pacific Review of Ethnomusicology* Vol. 4 (1987): 61 and Zrzavy, "Issues of Incoherence," 38.

Conclusion

Musical study and practice are always adapting to the changing tastes, resources, and sounds that evolve over time. New Age music is a part of an evolution or transition involving new roles and demands of listeners, musicians, and music scholars. Despite existing apprehension, it is clear that a better understanding of New Age music and its relationship with society, culture, and history can be gained if it is accepted. Although studies have shown a decline in the number of followers of the New Age movement,²³ the music persists, and, therefore, it is necessary to acknowledge that New Age music is being created within a culture that is still receptive to its production. The following chapters will deal with the perceptions and realities of New Age music within the contexts of both academia and popular culture.

²³ Kyle, *New Age Movement*, 2.

CHAPTER TWO

MUSICAL IDENTITY AND AUTHENTICITY IN NEW AGE MUSIC: A POSTMODERN PERSPECTIVE

When considering the processes of creating and using New Age music, a number of areas can be explored: production methods and techniques, resources, styles, performance mediums, and purposes, for example. Within discussions of these topics, music sampling often becomes synonymous with New Age music. Paul Théberge calls sampling an “art of appropriation... linked, through discourse, to a process in which musical identities are transferred, adopted, or remade.”¹ To apply Théberge’s statement to New Age music, first, the focus is transferred from the artist to the listeners. Second, new musical ideas and methods are adopted by New Age composers and musicians while some old ideas are rejected. Third, sounds are remade from existing samples and new material as a result of technology, creativity, and the embracing of cultural diversity. It can be said that through music sampling and other processes, New Age music opposes the traditional, Western interpretations of musical identity and, subsequently, musical authenticity. Théberge concludes:

In (world) music sampling, “identity” is a mobile construct, influenced by the ever-shifting surfaces of fashion and personal taste... This (global) mix has relatively little to do with those who produced the original sounds but everything to do with those who consume them.²

¹ Paul Théberge, “Ethnic Sounds: The Economy and Discourse of World Music Sampling,” In *Music and Technoculture*, ed. René T.A. Lysloff and Leslie C. Gay, Jr. (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2003), 102.

² Ibid., 106.

If the association between New Age music and music sampling is acknowledged, then Théberge's concept of identity can be transferred to New Age music. This chapter will argue that the identity of New Age music can be understood, in general terms, as a product of postmodern thought and, more specifically, a product of the experiences and expectations of New Age listeners. In addition, I will suggest that through these experiences and expectations, as well as characteristics relating to postmodernism, New Age music can be viewed as a process of reshaping, not resisting, the concept of musical authenticity.

Describing and Identifying Postmodern Music and Composers

Postmodernism is an infamous term that has been used in the studies of philosophy and aesthetics to refer to aspects of contemporary culture, art, literature, and music since the 1960s.³ Within the greater discussions and debates surrounding postmodernism, music scholars have struggled with ways to apply the term postmodern to music.⁴ This suggests, in part, why New Age music has not been explored by more music scholars. New Age music can be examined under the postmodern aesthetic for two main reasons. First, it began to take shape during the 1960s and 1970s. Second, the music and its composers exhibit many of the characteristics commonly associated with postmodern music and composers, which will be identified in the following paragraphs.

In an effort to better understand the identity of New Age music, it is helpful to

³ The term postmodern has also been used as early as the 1950s to refer to designs in architecture. See Jane Piper Clendinning "Postmodern Architecture/Postmodern Music," in *Postmodern Music/Postmodern Thought* ed. Judy Lochhead and Joseph Auner. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 121.

⁴ Jonathan D. Kramer. "The Natural Origins of Musical Postmodernism," in *Postmodern Music/Postmodern Thought*, 13.

view it in terms of its postmodern qualities. According to Jonathan D. Kramer, there are a number of salient characteristics that can be used to identify postmodern music. In a broad definition, Kramer describes postmodern music as music that requires specific listening strategies and compositional practices as well as music that provides specific listening experiences.⁵ Kramer puts forth sixteen characteristics of postmodern music. He explains that most examples of postmodern music will fit some or many, but not all, of the characteristics. New Age music, for example, strongly fits five of the characteristics.

From the perspective of the postmodern aesthetic, New Age music: 1) challenges barriers between “high” and “low” styles; 2) considers music not as autonomous but as relevant to cultural, social, and political contexts; 3) includes quotations or references to music of many traditions and cultures; 4) considers technology not only as a way to preserve and transmit music but also as deeply implicated in the production and essence of music; 5) locates meaning and even structure in listeners, more than in scores, performances, or composers.⁶

In addition to the above musical characteristics, Kramer also lists reasons why composers choose to compose postmodern music. Based on the information presented in chapter one on the New Age movement and New Age materials, there are four characteristics that Kramer outlines that would seem to fit with the intentions of New Age

⁵ Ibid., 16.

⁶ Ibid., 16-17. According to Kramer, postmodern music also: 6) is not simply a repudiation of modernism or its continuation, but has aspects of both a break and an extension; 7) is, on some level and in some ways, ironic; 8) does not respect boundaries between sonorities and procedures of the past and of the present; 9) shows disdain for the often unquestioned value of structural unity; 10) questions the mutual exclusivity of elitist and populist values; 11) avoids totalizing forms; 12) embraces contradictions; 13) distrusts binary oppositions; 14) includes fragmentations and discontinuities; 15) encompasses pluralism and eclecticism; 16) presents multiple meanings and multiple temporalities.

music composers: 1) Some composers are motivated by a desire to close the composer-audience gap, created- they believe- by the elitism of modernism; 2) Some composers today know and enjoy popular music. While there were always “classical” composers who liked pop music, nowadays some composers who appreciate it see no reason to exclude it from their own stylistic range; 3) Some composers are acutely aware that music is a commodity, that it is consumable, and that composers are inevitably part of a materialist social system. Such composers understand postmodernism as an aesthetic, whose attitudes and styles reflect the commodification of art; 4) All composers live in a multicultural world. While some choose to keep the ubiquitous musics from all parts of the globe out of their own compositions, others are so enthralled by coming in contact with music from very different traditions that they accept it into their own personal idioms.⁷

The characteristics of postmodern music and postmodern composers that connect with New Age music are crucial to understanding the identity of New Age music. The next section of this chapter will apply these characteristics to well-known information about New Age music and composers.

The Postmodern Identity of New Age Music

Similar to the feelings that exist regarding the postmodern approach to music, many music scholars are apprehensive about approaching New Age music. A number of explanations can be suggested for this apprehension, as mentioned in the previous

⁷ Ibid., 22-23. Although important, the role of New Age composers is secondary to New Age music and New Age listeners.

chapter. It is difficult to discuss and define New Age music without a unified discourse. New Age music lacks traditional formal structures associated with music such as harmonic progressions and phrasing. It exists more to suit the needs of listeners than it does the needs of composers. Although these inherent qualities make it difficult to approach New Age music and define its musical identity, they begin to make sense when viewed within the context of the postmodern aesthetic.

The first concept to consider is how New Age music challenges the barriers between “high” and “low” styles. The fact that New Age music is not readily accepted as an area of academic study may identify it as a “low” style. In addition, if the composers are not classically trained musicians, New Age music may have a tendency to acquire an inferior status. On the other hand, New Age music may just as likely be characterized as a “high” style based on the facts that New Age music is a fusion of musical styles from classical, world, jazz, religious, and folk music, and a number of New Age musicians are classically trained.⁸ New Age music can also be considered a “high” style because New Age musicians are always on the cutting edge of technology. Thus, New Age music confronts the images of “high” styles of music as it simultaneously opposes the stigmas associated with “low” styles of music.

The assertion that New Age music is relevant to cultural, social, and political contexts is obvious. New Age music began to develop in the 1960s and solidified during the New Age movement of the 1970s. Followers of this movement were directly and indirectly commenting on the culture, society, and politics of the time. New Age music as

⁸ See chapter one, page 10.

a result of New Age mentality: a need for political reform and religious alternatives, a focus on individual experiences and inner purpose, concern for the environment, and a desire to achieve psychological and emotional growth.⁹

Another one of Kramer's characteristics that also applies to New Age music is the quoting or referencing of music from other traditions and cultures. In "New Age Music: A voice of liminality in postmodern popular culture," Dennis Hall describes New Age music as being "aggressively multicultural."¹⁰ This is a huge draw for composers who embrace the music of cultures other than their own. Music of Eastern cultures or the early music of Western cultures are most commonly sampled or imitated in New Age music. This is not only a common practice, but also a common criticism because it raises questions of musical authenticity, which will be discussed in more detail in the final pages of this chapter.

The fourth characteristic is the use of technology as a way to produce, preserve, and transmit music. Without technology, New Age music would not exist. It relies on technology for both its production and consumption. In the production process, technology allows the sounds to be digitized, reconstructed, and sampled to create music that reflects New Age ideals. It is most commonly consumed by New Age listeners, in a private setting, by way of radio or compact disc. This process can be viewed in one of two ways: 1) By commodifying art through the use of technology, composers are "selling out" to a culture that thrives on producing and consuming material goods; 2) Technology allows composers to work creatively in a relatively new environment and, in turn, music

⁹ See chapter one, page 5.

¹⁰ Dennis Hall. "New Age Music: A voice of liminality in postmodern popular culture." *Popular Music and Society* 18, no. 2 (1994): 17.

can be consumed in alternative ways. These views will also be explored later in this chapter.

Finally, at the core of New Age music, there is the idea that meaning and structure are found in listeners more so than in the written music, performances, or composers. This idea is supported not only in the purpose of New Age music, but in the marketing strategies of the music as well. For example, names and photographs of the artists are usually absent from the cover of a New Age album. The covers often feature a photograph or painting depicting a scene from nature, such as a landscape, or some type of abstract art.¹¹ Marketing techniques are of utmost importance. The New Age listening audience is increasingly monitored and taken into consideration, and, therefore, the music is constantly adapting to changes brought forth by New Age listeners.

Enigma: New Age and Postmodern

Enigma, a popular choice among New Age music consumers, has been known for its innovative, and at times controversial, methods of blending musical styles. For over ten years, Enigma has created its characteristic New Age feel through the synthesis of classical and world music, Gregorian chant, expressive flute and vocal writing, rhythmic grooves, and digital technology, while adapting to changing tastes and times. The following examples from Enigma's album, *The Greatest Hits*, exemplify what is considered to be characteristically New Age in music, while illustrating a postmodern, listener-oriented musical identity.

¹¹ Helfried C. Zrzavy. "Issues of Incoherence and Cohesion in New Age Music." *Journal of Popular Culture* 24, no. 2 (1990): 41.

First, consider the abstract cover art of the Enigma album.¹² (See Figure 1.) The dominant colors are gray and black, which is a common background color scheme of New Age album artwork. There are only four distinct images that appear: a head and face of a woman, a faceless head of a man, a pair of hands, and a small butterfly, which symbolizes change. The images, enclosed by some kind of frame or border with sparsely added color, appear to be floating. This is another common characteristic of New Age album covers because it suggests a delicate mood or atmosphere. The absence of the artists from the cover completes the overall New Age feel of the artwork. The abstract forms and ideas also convey the postmodern aesthetic because they remove the artist, both visual and musical, from the viewers and listeners to facilitate the individual experiences and interpretations of the audience.

The track that has the most eclectic combination of musical ideas is “Modern Crusaders” (Track 5). The most striking aspect of this music may be its use of lyrics. The majority of New Age music is instrumental, and if voices are used, they tend to be abstract sounds, not specific lyrics. The choice of lyrics must, then, have a distinct purpose. In this song, the lyrics advocate love, peace, and self-confidence, which are ideals associated with the New Age. It is interesting to note that the lyrics speak to listeners in a very generic way, allowing for a variety of interpretations. Regardless of the specific interpretations, the lyrics function as broad social, cultural, and political commentaries, which satisfy another one of Kramer’s requirements for postmodern music.

¹² Ibid. Information on and examples of New Age cover art can be found on pages 41-51.

Don't look back
The time has come
All the pain turns into love

We're not submissive, we're not aggressive
But they think we can't defend

Stand up, join us, modern crusaders alive
We have the power to face the future
Cause we are the fighters
Just fighting for our rights

They're accusing, like always without knowing
What is just fiction or what is the truth
They have no mission, they have no passion
But they dare to tell us what's bad and what's good!¹³

There are two quotations in “Modern Crusaders” that reference other works. This is another common characteristic of postmodern and New Age music. The first quotation is from the opening and finale of Carl Orff’s 20th century opera, *Carmina burana* (1936). The large chorus of “O Fortuna” is surrounded by percussive and synthesized beats in keeping with the New Age style. This particular work may have been chosen once again for the content of its lyrics. The text refers to life’s fortune, oppression, power, and poverty in the opening stanza.

O Fortuna
velut luna
statu variabilis,
semper crescis
aut decrescis;
vita detestabilis
nunc obdurat
et tunc curat
ludo mentis aciem,
egestatem,
potestatem

O Fortune
like the moon
you are changeable,
ever waxing
and waning;
hateful life
first oppresses
and then soothes
as fancy takes it;
poverty
and power

¹³ “Modern Crusaders.” [cited December 2004] Available at <http://www.enigmalyrics.com.ar/lyrics4.html>.

dissolvit ut glaciem.

it melts them like ice.¹⁴

The final quotation, somewhat unexpected, occurs at the very end of the song. As the final harmony lingers, the opening statement from J.S. Bach's *Toccatina and Fugue in D minor* for organ, transposed, is added. Perhaps it is included to suggest that the timeless ideals of peace and love within the lyrics are similar to music that has stood the test of time. Both quotations have the power to evoke from listeners very strong, but very different, musical and extra-musical associations.

The best example of ethnic or world music sampling on this disc is "Return to Innocence" (Track 7). The vocal samples of pre-recorded, non-Western music, which comprise the first melody, are interspersed with Enigma's original lyrics. The English words continue the theme similar to "Modern Crusaders." The song begins:

Love, Devotion
Feeling, Emotion
Don't be afraid to be weak
Don't be too proud to be strong
Just look into your heart, my friend
That will be the return to yourself, the return to innocence¹⁵

While Enigma's lyrics reflect the New Age ideals of introspection and individuality to appeal to listeners, the addition of world music suggests that the lyrics promote universal themes as well as a sense of cultural awareness and unity.

The use of Gregorian chant is also a prominent feature of Enigma's music. "Mea Culpa" (Track 13) begins with a chant, accompanied by a snare drum, before adding an entire percussive section, synthesizer, and other vocal and melodic lines. "Morphing Thru

¹⁴ "O Fortuna." [cited December 2004] Available at <http://www.classical.net/music/comp.lst/works/orff-cb/carmlyr.html>.

¹⁵ "Return to Innocence." [cited December 2004] Available at <http://www.enigmalyrics.com.ar/lyrics2.html>.

Time” (Track 17) also starts with an introductory chant, which prepares listeners for the movement into more contemporary sounds and lyrics.

Despite the presence of the postmodern aesthetic and the success of albums like Enigma’s among New Age consumers, New Age composers and musicians continually face challenges that have the potential to adversely affect their reputations. The most common of these challenges involves issues of musical authenticity.

Technology and Musical Authenticity

One of Kramer’s characteristics of postmodern music is that technology is imbedded in the process of producing, preserving and transmitting the music. To consider these processes, it is necessary to acknowledge that technology has simultaneously had positive and negative effects on the production and consumption of music. This twofold effect has become increasingly apparent in the last few decades. Technology has made possible the creation of certain sounds and combinations of distinctly different genres of music that would otherwise not exist. Through the use of technology, music media is able to be mass produced and sold to consumers all over the world. Technology has even made it is easier to find music by way of the internet, specifically through the use of programs that provide home computers with access to thousands of music downloads. Now, music is more accessible to individuals through compact disc and MP3 players, the internet, and satellite radio, so anyone can listen to their music of choice while enhancing ordinary tasks such as driving a car, walking across a college campus, or working at a desk. On the other hand, technology has made it more difficult to control the legal distribution of music. It has, to some extent, infringed on the art of live performance by

commodifying music. The most widespread negative effect, in intellectual circles, is that technology has caused people to question the authenticity of music that is electronically produced and consumed.

The term “technoculture” has been appropriately coined to reflect the idea that technology is part of cultural processes and that aspects of culture respond to the changes and advancements in technology.¹⁶ In the introduction to *Music and Technoculture*, editors René Lysloff and Leslie Gay, Jr. write:

An ethnomusicology of technoculture... is concerned with how technology implicates cultural practices involving music. It includes not only technologically based musical countercultures and subcultures but behaviors and forms of knowledge ranging from mainstream and traditional institutions, on the one hand, to contemporary music scholarship, on the other.¹⁷

The discussion of technology in contemporary music scholarship has become increasingly important, and debated, within a select group of music scholars. Those who are not a part of the discussions, or those who are not as prominent, are likely skeptical of the potential repercussions of legitimizing forms of music that other scholars may not consider to be authentic. Lysloff and Gay articulate an interesting predicament. There is a tendency toward a nostalgic view of what people accept as, or learn is, authentic and a hostile attitude toward technology when it is deemed invasive.¹⁸ For many music scholars, the

¹⁶ Leslie C. Gay, Jr. and René T. A. Lysloff, “Introduction: Ethnomusicology in the Twenty-first Century,” in *Music and Technoculture*, ed. René T. A. Lysloff and Leslie C. Gay, Jr. (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2003), 2. The term “technoculture” is adapted from Andrew Ross’s article “New Age and Technoculture” (1992).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

1. The first part of the document is a letter from the President of the United States to the Congress, dated January 3, 1862.

2. The second part is a report from the Secretary of the Treasury, dated January 3, 1862.

3. The third part is a report from the Secretary of the Interior, dated January 3, 1862.

4. The fourth part is a report from the Secretary of the Navy, dated January 3, 1862.

5. The fifth part is a report from the Secretary of the War, dated January 3, 1862.

6. The sixth part is a report from the Secretary of the State, dated January 3, 1862.

7. The seventh part is a report from the Secretary of the War, dated January 3, 1862.

8. The eighth part is a report from the Secretary of the Navy, dated January 3, 1862.

9. The ninth part is a report from the Secretary of the Interior, dated January 3, 1862.

10. The tenth part is a report from the Secretary of the Treasury, dated January 3, 1862.

11. The eleventh part is a report from the Secretary of the War, dated January 3, 1862.

12. The twelfth part is a report from the Secretary of the State, dated January 3, 1862.

13. The thirteenth part is a report from the Secretary of the War, dated January 3, 1862.

14. The fourteenth part is a report from the Secretary of the Navy, dated January 3, 1862.

15. The fifteenth part is a report from the Secretary of the Interior, dated January 3, 1862.

16. The sixteenth part is a report from the Secretary of the Treasury, dated January 3, 1862.

17. The seventeenth part is a report from the Secretary of the War, dated January 3, 1862.

18. The eighteenth part is a report from the Secretary of the State, dated January 3, 1862.

19. The nineteenth part is a report from the Secretary of the War, dated January 3, 1862.

20. The twentieth part is a report from the Secretary of the Navy, dated January 3, 1862.

latter attitude prevails, and this presents a problem for the study of New Age music.

There is, of course, an underlying issue. Authenticity is a cultural construct embedded within societal values and expectations. Cultural norms determine what is authentic and who is equipped to judge the authenticity of objects, ideas, and sounds. These norms have a significant amount of power over the music that is created and accepted within a given culture. Lysloff states that the “evaluation of musical authenticity generally is informed by the need for both ethnographic legitimacy and aesthetic interest.”¹⁹ What is ethnographically legitimate and aesthetically interesting will obviously differ with perspective and will be influenced by cultural ideologies.

On a basic level, the origins of New Age music and the music’s relationship with technology do not coincide with the norms of Western culture and art music. New Age music challenges pre-existing music styles and the aesthetic opinions of many classically trained and educated musicians. There are more specific challenges regarding authenticity, however, that relate to the representations and interpretations of New Age music which will be addressed in the following paragraphs.

First, New Age music presents a challenge to the norms of Western art music through its representation of the music of other cultures. For many scholars, there are two main concerns: exploitation and misrepresentation. In his essay called “Ethnic Sounds: The Economy and Discourse of World Music Sampling,” Paul Théberge reveals the disruptive uses of world music sampling.

Much of the promotional emphasis associated with world music is placed on the

¹⁹ René T. A. Lysloff, “Mozart in Mirrorshades: Ethnomusicology, Technology, and the Politics of Representation,” *Ethnomusicology* 41 no.2 (1997): 210.

development of star performers, allowing certain individuals to come to the fore on the international music stage. The ethnic origin and perceived cultural integrity of the artist is taken as the primary guarantee of authentic music expression. Discourses in world music sampling, on the other hand, tend to downplay the identity of the sampled artists (performers are seldom identified at all in liner notes or promotional material) and are more often condensed around the figure of the musical instrument itself, its sounds regarded as the embodiment of musical culture.²⁰

Théberge addresses the typical concerns; sampled artists are rarely given credit for their work within the context of a compilation, and world music samples are too often stereotyped into a culture and too readily given the stamp of authenticity. René Lysloff articulates similar concerns, with slightly more anxiety, in an earlier article titled “Mozart in Mirrorshades.”

New technology has elevated sound reproduction beyond realism into a kind of audio hyper-reality. New digital recordings and editing techniques in fact now allow us to create acoustical environments that could not possibly exist in live contexts... It is no longer simply a matter of the impact of such media *on* the musical Other but also what media are taking *from* and doing *with* world music—that is, how media are *re*-presenting the Other.²¹

In the hands of Western culture, is musical technology as out of control as Lysloff

²⁰ Théberge, “Ethnic Sounds,” 99.

²¹ Lysloff, “Mozart in Mirrorshades,” 211-212.

suggests? Lysloff attempts to prove his assertions in the following example.

Deep Forest, a New Age music group popular in the 1990s, released an album that used digital technology to sample and sequence Pygmy music with New Age environmental sounds, as their title suggests. Lysloff is convinced that this was not the cross-cultural collaboration that Deep Forest listeners were buying into. He reprints the liner notes of the album which create dramatic, and somewhat sensational, images of mystery, magic, and harmony. Lysloff's concluding remarks are as follows:

The Pygmies are the recipients of post-colonial Western concern and munificence, the recording artists and producers gain fame and fortune, and the listener is transformed into a social activist through the simple act of consumption.²²

According to Lysloff, the music of Deep Forest is disingenuous in that it exists only to show how natural sounds can be made unnatural by the intervention of technology. Deep Forest is apparently no exception to other New Age recordings that also sample world music or environmental sounds.²³

Most New Age artists do not outwardly reveal the original sources of their samples, perhaps for their own copyright protection, and there does not seem to be a demand from the majority of the listening public for such information. Admittedly, this presents a major concern from an academic perspective. Because Lysloff chooses not to, or is unable to, find examples of New Age artists who create or represent more of an acceptable, "authentic" experience, he perpetuates the unfavorable opinions of New Age

²² Ibid., 214.

²³ Ibid., 215. Lysloff writes: "The pleasure of listening to recordings like these is not in cultural advocacy... nor is it to provide the listener with a kind of "authentic" aesthetic experience, as with many New Age compositions employing world musics and/or natural sounds."

music to other scholars and readers.

As a point of comparison, there is another scholar who has researched and documented the use of world music sampling in a well-known New Age recording. The track mentioned earlier in this chapter, “Return to Innocence,” is discussed at length by Timothy D. Taylor in “A Riddle Wrapped in Mystery: Transnational Music Sampling and Enigma’s *Return to Innocence*” in *Music and Technoculture*. In this essay, Taylor details the chain of events before, during, and after the musical process.

In 1988, a group of Taiwanese performers was brought to Europe by the French and Taiwanese governments to perform a series of concerts. Taylor cites two sources that said the participants had signed contracts knowing they would be recorded at some of their performances and that they were compensated accordingly. In 1992, several years after the recording had been archived, Enigma’s creator, Michael Cretu, came across *Polyphonies vocales des aborigènes de Taïwan* and was immediately drawn to the first track on the recording. Cretu’s publishing company paid the French Maison des Cultures du Monde approximately \$5,300 for use of the recorded track, and half of the money was given to the Chinese Folk Arts Foundation. Two years after the release of Enigma’s single “Return to Innocence,” one of the voices on the sampled recording was identified by an original performer and accusations were made against Enigma for violating human rights. A lawsuit soon followed. In 1999, an out-of-court settlement was ultimately reached. Critics and fans spoke out with statements of disapproval and support, respectively.²⁴

²⁴ A detailed account of these events can be found in Timothy D. Taylor, “A Riddle Wrapped in Mystery: Transnational Music Sampling and Enigma’s *Return to Innocence*,” in *Music and Technoculture*, 61-71.

Taylor writes the following evaluation of Enigma's music with respect to the use of technology.

Enigma doesn't manipulate the Ami song at all, save for the addition of a little reverberation. The fact that Enigma leaves this music largely unchanged points to their usage of it as a kind of artifact, not as something to be ripped apart and scattered throughout their track, as has happened in other cases. The Ami music we hear in "Return to Innocence" is clearly used not as "material" or as "local color" but rather as a largely intact sign of the ethnic/exotic unspoiled by technology or even modernity.²⁵

According to Taylor, Enigma's use of the sample does not exploit or misrepresent the original artists or their music. This evaluation describes more of an effort, on the part of Enigma, to preserve what is considered authentic and historical while adapting to changing technology. This obviously contrasts Lysloff's idea that media is *re-presenting* a cultural other. By drawing attention to the legal and ethical ramifications of Enigma's musical process, Taylor is not making an effort to reject New Age music, but he is illustrating the severity of what is at stake for New Age artists.

The second challenge that exists for New Age artists is affected by the preconceived notions of the appropriate responsibilities and goals of Western musicians. The concepts of artists and compositions are completely redefined in New Age music. The creative processes of New Age artists not only involve the art of composing music,

²⁵ Ibid., 76.

but the knowledge of a variety of musical styles and genres and the ability to juxtapose these ideas with technological finesse. The process also involves an awareness of the New Age music audience and a willingness to adapt to change. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it involves distance between the artists and the music for the sake of the listeners and their experiences. Unfortunately, these issues are seldom addressed by New Age critics.

Conclusion

If it is understood that New Age music and its artists have attitudes, goals, and results that differ from what may be expected, New Age music can be viewed as expanding and redefining the concepts of musical identity and musical authenticity. By looking at Kramer's characteristics of postmodern music and composers as a template for New Age music, and viewing Enigma's music as supporting evidence, Lysloff's arguments expose his failure to consider, or his dismissal of, evidence that illustrates the centrality of listeners in New Age music. Whereas Lysloff abandons the possibilities of reinterpreting the notions of musical identity and musical authenticity in New Age music, Taylor finds an opportunity to do just the opposite.

New Age music places composers, artists, and listeners into new roles. New Age music relies on technology, the culture industry, and marketing techniques for its survival. It pushes the musical envelope through choices in lyrics, cover art, sampled music, original music, and electronic techniques. Although New Age music reflects and accepts the past, it persists because it does not remain in the past. Therefore, the concepts of musical identity and musical authenticity must take on new meanings in the present.

CHAPTER THREE

MUSIC FROM THE HEARTS OF SPACE: THE PRESENCE AND PERSEVERANCE OF NEW AGE MUSIC IN THE 21ST CENTURY

To understand the contexts of New Age history, ideology, and the use of technology, activity and developments within the New Age music industry must be considered. It has already been established that New Age music continues to achieve commercial success. There has been a demographic shift, but not a decline, of New Age listeners over the years, as mentioned in chapter one. This is a direct result of successful marketing, consideration of listener appeal, and adaptation, which will become more apparent throughout this chapter.

There has also been a shift in the New Age “acoustic community,” a term coined by Murray Schafer in “The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World” (1994).¹ An “acoustic community” refers to a community of people linked by acoustic space. In the context of New Age music, New Age listeners are linked by the auditory means used to disseminate New Age music, such as the radio, compact discs, and the internet. To remain successful in the commercial music industry, New Age music continues to find new acoustic spaces, and ultimately new acoustic communities are created.

The prominent place of New Age music within the commercial music industry can largely be credited to the work of Stephen Hill. Hill created *Music from the Hearts of*

¹ Cf. Tong Soon Lee, “Technology and the Production of Islamic Space: A Call to Prayer in Singapore.” In *Music and Technoculture*, ed. René T. A. Lysloff and Leslie C. Gay, Jr. (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2003), 115.

Space, a weekly New Age radio program in the early 1970s, and the program continues to flourish in many forms today. Hearts of Space is a testament to the endurance and perseverance of New Age music. What began over thirty years ago as both a passion and hobby of creator Stephen Hill has transformed into a nationally recognized and successful musical entity that continues to fulfill the needs of a diverse group of listeners. This concluding chapter will look at Hearts of Space as a valuable source of New Age music and information in terms of its history, radio and internet programming, albums, and listener responses in order to demonstrate the continuing presence of New Age music in the early twenty-first century.²

History

The Hearts of Space radio program emerged as a response to the New Age ideology and musical trends of the 1970s. In 1973, a weekly late-night radio program, *Music from the Hearts of Space*, began broadcasting in Berkeley, California. Ten years later, this program reached national syndication on thirty-five stations through National Public Radio. *Hearts of Space Records* soon followed in 1984 and achieved great success from its early releases. The company expanded its facilities in 1996 to include a studio for radio production and another for CD mastering and internet audio, as well as a graphics studio for the design and production of packaging, marketing materials, and the Hearts of Space website. From 1996 to 2001, the Hearts of Space radio program was broadcasting on the internet through NetRadio and WiredPlanet. In August of 2001, audio streaming

² "Hearts of Space: Slow Music for Fast Times." [cited March 2005] Available at <http://timelessmedia.net/hos/index.html>. The internet citations that follow are links through this home page.

the first of these is the fact that the system is not a closed system.

The second of these is the fact that the system is not a closed system.

The third of these is the fact that the system is not a closed system.

The fourth of these is the fact that the system is not a closed system.

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The twenty-second of these is the fact that the system is not a closed system.

The twenty-third of these is the fact that the system is not a closed system.

The twenty-fourth of these is the fact that the system is not a closed system.

on the internet became accessible to listeners, for a fee, with a dialup modem or broadband access. Since January of 2002, the program has been broadcasting on XM Satellite Radio on the “Audio Visions” channel. It is projected that sometime in 2005 the Hearts of Space website will offer an expanded section for downloading and internet streaming.³

Radio and Internet Programming

Within three years after national syndication began, *Music from the Hearts of Space* was being broadcasted on 200 stations throughout the United States. Currently, the hour-long program is broadcasting on approximately 250 NPR affiliate stations, usually Saturday or Sunday nights, anytime between 9 p.m. and 12 a.m.⁴ The music is continuous, uninterrupted by commercials, to facilitate the best possible musical experience for each listener. Through the Hearts of Space website, listener’s may subscribe to free e-mails that will contain weekly play lists. In addition to the artists and musical works on the current week’s program, each e-mail includes the following information: a brief introduction relating to the theme of that week’s program, the start time and duration of each work, a link to purchase the albums of each artist, and a link to websites containing information such as artist biographies, album information, and listener reviews.⁵

In addition to conventional radio broadcasting, the Hearts of Space archive is available through internet streaming audio. Subscribers may choose from several plans

³ <http://timelessmedia.net/hos/company.html>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Subscriptions can be made by sending an e-mail to playlist-request@hos.com.

monthly access. Regardless of the plan chosen, listeners have access to Hearts of Space programming from 1983 to the present. Within the near future, the subscription service will include additional features such as album streaming and downloading and more choices in service plans.⁶

The most recent method employed to reach Hearts of Space listeners is XM satellite radio. The program began broadcasting only twice a week, and now the program can be heard nightly throughout the week by listeners who subscribe to satellite radio.⁷ XM radio, in addition to internet streaming, illustrates the shift in “acoustic community” mentioned earlier and offers a valuable alternative for New Age listeners.

Albums

Hearts of Space Records began as a single, independent record label in 1984. Hearts of Space artists came from all over the world, including the United States, Canada, England, France, Spain, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, New Zealand, and Japan. Eventually, the single label transformed into five: *Hearts of Space* (Electronic Space, Classical, New Age); *Hearts O’Space* (Celtic); *Fathom* (Dark Ambient, Archaic Revival); *World Class* (Native American, Flamenco, Indonesian, Indian, Ethno-Classical, Klezmer); and *RGB* (World/Pop Electronica). In 2001, the record label division of Hearts of Space was sold to Valley Entertainment in New York, where the extensive catalogue of music is kept and new recordings are released.⁸

⁶ http://timelessmedia.net/hos/signup/04_access_plans.htm.

⁷ http://www.xmradio.com/programming/channel_page.jsp?ch=77.

⁸ <http://timelessmedia.net/hos/history.html>.

Currently, there are thirty albums archived on the Hearts of Space website. The albums range in release date, from 1986 to 2001, and represent a variety of genres within New Age music: Ambient/Trance/Techno, Celtic, Contemporary Instrumental, East Indian, Electronic Space, Ethno/Ambient, Native American, Orchestral/Chamber, and Sacred Choral. Visitors to the Hearts of Space website can view the artist, title, genre, label, track list, album review, and artist biography of every archived album.⁹ The purpose of the following paragraphs is to provide a representative sample of some of the music put forth by Hearts of Space and to reflect the concepts of postmodern music and artists as discussed in chapter two.

Kevin Braheny's album *The Way Home* (1987), originally titled *Perelandra*, was the first release on the Hearts of Space label in 1984. Before studying composition at Vandercooke College of Music in Chicago, Braheny already had performing experiences in classical music, big band, jazz, funk, and rock. He became skilled in sound engineering and constructing instruments, many of which he uses on his recordings. *The Way Home* is classified as Electronic Space music; Braheny uses synthesizers and woodwinds to give the music its electronic and celestial characters. The album is described as "expressive, tender synthesizer music that communes with the deep human yearning for inner peace and contentment."¹⁰

Hearts of Space released Robert Rich's Ambient/Trance/Techno album, *Strata*, in 1990. At the early age of thirteen, Rich began building analog synthesizers. Ultimately earning a degree in Psychology, Rich also studied computer music at Stanford. In addition

⁹ <http://timelessmedia.net/hos/php/albumsByArtist.php>.

¹⁰ <http://timelessmedia.net/hos/php/showAlbum.php?albumID=1849>.

to a number of recordings greatly influenced by Middle Eastern, Asian, and European sounds, Rich has published articles on microtonality and computer music for publications such as *Music Technology*, *Keyboard*, and *Electronic Musician*. He has done much for the electronic music industry by designing sounds for manufacturers of electronic instruments, writing computer software, and developing a system of microtuning for synthesizers. As a result of the collaboration with another New Age artist on the Hearts of Space label, Steven Roach, *Strata* is a combination of polyrhythms, North African and world music influences, and sounds only achievable by contemporary, electronic techniques.¹¹

In 2000, Hearts of Space released a Contemporary Instrumental album by Bill Douglas. *Eternity's Sunrise* is a compilation of Douglas's most popular works from six other Hearts of Space albums. Douglas grew up in Ontario, Canada where he learned to play bassoon, piano, guitar, and ukulele. He earned a bachelor's degree in music from the University of Toronto and continued his studies at Yale, earning a dual Masters degree in music performance and composition. Since 1977, Douglas has taught at the Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado. He teaches classes in general musicianship and music history classes that include topics based on musical styles such as European, jazz, Latin American, and gamelan. Perhaps Douglas's music is best known for its orchestration of woodwinds, percussion, and voice and its use of lyrics from English classical poetry. In addition to his characteristic orchestration, listeners of *Eternity's Sunrise* will hear piano, bassoon, and synthesizer, the voices of the Ars Nova singers, and the poetic texts of

¹¹ <http://timelessmedia.net/hos/php/showAlbum.php?albumID=1348>.

Tennyson, Yeats, Traherne, Shelley, and Shakespeare. As evidence of his success, Douglas's works have been performed by many chamber ensembles and orchestras around the world.¹²

One of the most recently archived albums is David Darling's Contemporary Instrumental work, *Cello Blue* (2001). Darling is a classically trained musician known for his work as a performer, recording artist, conductor, composer, and educator. Darling received college and post-graduate educations and began his career as a band and orchestra conductor, specializing in cello and bass. Throughout his early career, he worked diligently to create a more diverse role for the cello. Darling has performed and recorded in the genres of jazz, pop, rock, country western, and New Age. He traveled the United States and Europe extensively before recording *Cello Blue*. The album was composed, performed, and produced in his own studio with little assistance. Track titles such as "Serenity," "Solitude," and "Prayer" appear to reflect the personal process of creating and experiencing *Cello Blue*. Darling uses cellos, electric cello, piano, environmental sounds, and voice to create the contemplative album. One listener comments: "Darling's use of the piano and his usual sensitive cello transport you to a higher realm, out of the psychosis of the 'modern' world and into a place of harmony and peace. Great for meditation, for musing, for painting, for writing, or just intensely listening."¹³

These descriptions convey a sense of diversity in the training, influences, and musical styles of New Age artists. They also highlight the multiple roles of New Age

¹² <http://timelessmedia.net/hos/php/showAlbum.php?albumID=2834>.

¹³ <http://timelessmedia.net/hos/php/showAlbum.php?albumID=2402>.

artists, their breadth of musical and intellectual knowledge, and their interests in changing the stereotypical roles of certain instruments and genres.

Listener Responses

As a radio program and record label, Hearts of Space is very aware of its audience and encourages questions and comments. Website visitors are able to send e-mails directly to the company and can view pages worth of comments submitted by other Hearts of Space listeners. This section of the chapter will look at who is listening, when and why they are listening, and how they are listening to Hearts of Space programs to determine what New Age listeners value about Hearts of Space programming and New Age music.¹⁴

Responses range from a simple thank you to personal stories of how individuals have benefited from the Hearts of Space programs. Comments come from new listeners as well as loyal fans who have been listening for ten, fifteen, even twenty years. A longtime listener writes:

I'm amazed that you have been able to maintain the quality, diversity and freshness of your programming for such a significant period. Bringing the entire catalog to the Web will be a continuing legacy and- for us long-time listeners- an extraordinarily exciting prospect.

The Hearts of Space audience is comprised of many graduate students and professionals. Many people find the music helpful in getting through long hours of studying or working.

¹⁴ All listener comments can be viewed at http://timelessmedia.net/hos/what_users_say.htm.

the first of these is the fact that the system is not a simple one, and that the results are not always the same. The second is that the system is not a simple one, and that the results are not always the same.

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One listener comments:

I am a fifty-year-old management consultant/PhD student working on my dissertation, and having HOS music playing on my computer all day while I sit here researching and typing is a blessing... timing couldn't be better.

Another listener says:

I can now have a calming background to my sometimes hectic and troubling days at work. I am streaming through our network and find the music helps me remain calmer, more contemplative and reasoned. It is an invaluable resource in dealing with all sorts of people issues everyday.

Several listeners comment on the accessibility and sound quality of the music available online and by satellite. They appreciate the ability to listen to the music anytime, but especially during the earlier hours of the day. For many listeners, the internet and satellite radio provide their only link to Hearts of Space music. One thankful listener writes:

I want you to know how important this service is to me. I've been a devoted fan for 10 years and was very upset when my local station moved the program to their AM station in 2001... I thought I was destined to be HOS-less until this service came along.

Another enthusiastic listener says:

I love your show a great deal. The archive is my favorite feature. If I'm at my desk and programming (as is the case most hours of the workday), I'm listening to an archived show. With so many shows to choose from, and so many remarkably different genres, it never gets old. The sound quality is the best- each high note

hits my headphones with crispness and clarity, each low drone rumbles like a train... Thanks for all your hard work.

In addition to inspiring individual experiences, listener comments, then, tend to focus on the positive new directions Hearts of Space is taking: internet streaming and archiving, satellite broadcasting, increasing diversity in programming, and higher sound quality.

Conclusion

The success of Hearts of Space is due in part to the function of technology. The artists and engineers not only use technology to invent new sonic environments, but to find new ways to reach New Age audiences when old ways become ineffective or obsolete. Because many NPR stations no longer broadcast *Music from the Hearts of Space*, the program required another venue. Without technology and the options it presents, the number of Hearts of Space listeners would forcibly and drastically decline.

The presence of and responses from listeners is also evidence of the program's continuing success. The profiles of Hearts of Space listeners and their comments regarding personal listening experiences remain compatible with the characteristics outlined in chapter one. In addition, the number of subscription options, online streaming programs, and archived works illustrate an ongoing demand for New Age music.

The efforts to archive albums and document background information not only show the integrity of Hearts of Space, but the efforts show a respect for the music, the artists, and the listeners as well. Many Hearts of Space artists have been recording a number of albums on the Hearts of Space label since the 1980s, and many listeners have been loyal to the music and programs for just as long. This level of respect must be a

contributing factor to the company's success and longevity.

Looking toward the future, Hearts of Space has goals to expand and improve their services and subsequent relationships with their listeners. This illustrates the continuing importance of the role and influence of New Age listeners in the New Age music industry. Hearts of Space is clearly influential in establishing and changing listening trends and patterns within New Age music. Based on its roughly thirty years of success, it can be argued that Hearts of Space is in a position of authority in terms of the recording and programming of New Age music. With that said, the information presented in this chapter cannot and should not be overlooked in future studies of New Age music with respect to its past and present existence.

Afterword

New Age music is a living music. It has the remarkable ability to retain inherent characteristics that make it distinguishable from other forms of music while it has the ability to change and adapt with the passage of time. The most significant changes reside in music sampling and acoustic communities. As demonstrated, technology facilitates and hinders the production and consumption of New Age music. Its powerful meanings within cultural and academic spheres should not be underestimated.

To be realistic, there is not enough information documented in reputable sources about New Age artists and their music. This is not to say that efforts are not being made, but they are not actively promoted. The debates about the uses of technology and definitions of musical authenticity prolong this reality. This does not deter listeners from listening to New Age music as much as it prevents some scholars from taking New Age music seriously.

On the timeline of music history, New Age music is just beginning. Perhaps it is too early to predict the direction New Age music will take in the years to follow. It is not too early, however, to predict that the presence of New Age music in musically educated circles will remain misrepresented and misunderstood, decline, or even disappear, if the people within these circles remain committed to preconceived notions of musical identity, musical authenticity, and intellectual authority.

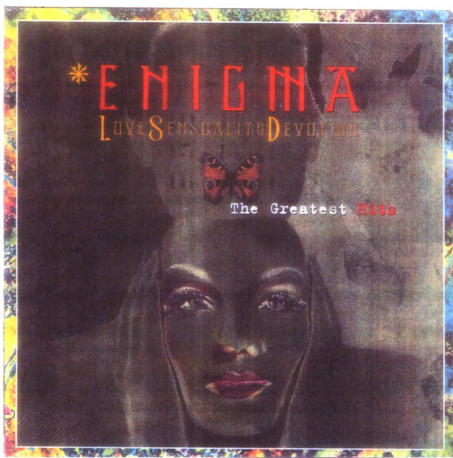


Figure 1.
Album cover of Enigma's *The Greatest Hits*.

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