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## John Milton's Conception of Music

Lotys Benning

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JOHN MILTON'S CONCEPTION OF MUSIC

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of Butler University  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Arts

by

Lotys Benning



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CHAPTER I

RELATION OF POETRY TO MUSIC



The nature of music has been defined as the uttering and arousing of emotions by successions and combinations of regulated sound, that of poetry as the representation or arousing of emotions by means of verbal signs arranged with musical regularity. Thus it will be seen that the two arts, having the same purpose, are closely allied, and may be considered interdependent. In fact, fine poetry might be termed a succession of melodious notes.

In the Greek language, the poetic art was first called "singing", a term which might still be applied to the best of poetry. Many recognized poets depend a great deal on music, either directly in the use of sounds, whether of nature, or of the voice, or of an instrument; or indirectly and more subtly through har-

mony of thought and words, and rhythm. The romanticists-Shelley, Wordsworth, Keats, Coleridge, Byron-all employed music in their poetry in both these senses, but the poet who most closely combines the arts of music and poetry is the classicist, John Milton, whose whole work is ennobled by music. While we remember Milton as the author of the greatest epic ever written in the English language, we always think of his poetry in the Greek sense of singing, for it has all the majesty of solemn music. Tennyson recognized this quality in Milton, for in his ode to him, he mentions the music of his work first:

"O mighty-mouthed inventor of harmonies,  
O skilled to sing of Time or Eternity,  
God-gifted organ-voice of England,  
Milton, a name to resound for ages."  
(Milton, 11.1-4)



In an essay of this sort, it is my  
 intention to present a history of the music of  
 Milton's life. This will be done by tracing the  
 steps of his education, and the influence of  
 his family, friends, and teachers upon his  
 development as a musician.

**CHAPTER II**

**MILTON'S MUSICAL TRAINING**

The first of the steps in Milton's  
 musical training was his education at  
 St. Paul's School, London. It was here  
 that he learned the rudiments of  
 music, and the principles of  
 composition. He was particularly  
 fond of the organ, and played  
 it with great skill. His  
 teachers were of the highest  
 order, and he received the  
 best instruction that could  
 be given. His progress was  
 rapid, and he soon became  
 a distinguished musician.

In an essay of this sort, it is not necessary to go into a lengthy perusal of the facts of Milton's life. That he lived in the seventeenth century, went to Cambridge University, served as Latin secretary under Cromwell, and, losing his eyesight, retired to write, may be of interest, but has no bearing on this subject. There are some facts about his early life, however, which merit consideration, for they contribute to the development of his conception of music.

Milton had a sound musical education. His father, also named John Milton, was a scrivener with an avocation for music, and a composer of sufficient merit to be mentioned in contemporary books. He is best remembered as being one of twenty-five who set to music a series of madrigals in honor of Queen Elizabeth: The Triumphs of Oriana. He imbued his son with a love of music, and supervised his training in that art. In his

house in Bread Street was an organ on which the young Milton learned to play with skill and power. A Puritan, and hence essentially religious, Milton would naturally have a great love for the organ, the instrument so closely associated with sacred music. He also played the bass viol. All through his life his interest in music never failed. When he was living in seclusion in Horton, the only time he ever left his quiet country home was to go to London to learn music. Even when he was a blind old man, he had a good organ in his house, on which he is said to have played by the hour.

In school as well as at home, he received training of a cultural kind. The philosophy of ancient Greece attracted him--in fact he has explained in Paradise Regained how it was difficult for him to choose between the Greek ideals of life and the Hebrew, and how he finally, with reluctance, accepted the Hebrew. However, many of his poems evince that he was acquainted with and influenced by the precepts of Greek philosophers; and among the Greeks, music and poetry were closely allied. From the Pythagoreans, who compared the lyre of seven strings with the planetary system, he adopted the concept of the harmony of the spheres

which he uses in the Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity. Through his study of Plato, his conception of music was strengthened. According to the Platonic idea, the pleasure that beauty yields is intellectual as well as sensuous. Following this precept, Milton holds that beauty gives sensuous and intellectual pleasure, and also has an ethical value. It is "an idea to be known in the soul by him who seeks for it among the beautiful objects of the world of sense; its pursuit is an intellectual quest of a philosophic mind"<sup>1</sup>. Applying this to the realm of music, we find that Milton represents beautiful sound as pleasing to the ear and to the mind, while he considers the appreciation of harmony an intellectual pursuit.

1 Platonism in English Poetry---J.S.Harrison---p.41

CHAPTER III

ASPECTS OF MUSIC IN MILTON'S POETRY

While all poets employ music in their writings in the sense of rhythm, few draw on it so directly as Milton does. For him it is a medium for creating moods, for enhancing the charm of a beautiful picture, or for bringing about a state of spiritual unity. It was an integral part of his own cultural background, and he makes it a background for his poetry. No scene is thrilling to him without sound, no great event complete without song, no understanding possible without harmony.

Melody, a rhythmical and otherwise agreeable succession of tones, implies a simple music, one of great beauty and descriptive power. This aspect of music plays a very important part in Milton's poetry, for in it one may include his use of songs, and the sounds of nature and of musical instruments.



NATURAL MELODY

Perhaps the first connotation of the word music is sound; of sound, the audible aspect of natural phenomena. That Milton appreciated the beauties of nature is evinced in some of his lovely bits of description, but in every instance this visual beauty is enhanced by the melodious sounds of nature by which he was impressed. The charm of his description is not purely a visible thing, for he mingles sounds with scenes.

When he is describing Paradise in the fourth book of Paradise Lost, his vivid picture of cool and sensuous beauty is enhanced by the sounds produced when "murmuring waters fall"(l.260), when "the birds their quire apply"(l.264), and when "the airs attune the trembling leaves"(l.266).

The inhabitants of this Paradise, praying to their Maker after Eve has dreamed of the temptation, call on natural phenomena to add their music to the praise of God:

"Fountains and ye, that warble, as ye flow,  
Melodious murmurs, warbling tune his praise.  
Join voices, all ye living Souls. Ye Birds  
That, singing, up to Heaven-gate ascend,  
Bear on your wings and in your notes his praise.  
Ye that in waters glide and ye that walk  
The earth, and stately tread, or lowly creep,  
Witness if I be silent, morn or even,  
To hill or valley, fountain, or fresh shade,  
Made vocal by my song, and taught his praise."  
(Paradise Lost, Book V, 11.195-204)

Most important of all natural sounds for Milton was the song of birds, to which we find many references. The nightingale, it seems, was his favorite bird, the one he associated with love, melancholy, and the stillness of night. In a sonnet to it, in which he bewails his own failure in love, he says of it:

"Thy liquid notes that close the eye of day...  
Portend success in love."  
(To the Nightingale, 11.5,7)

In Il Penseroso, he asks for its song to smooth "the rugged brow of night", and praises it as :

"Sweet bird that shunns't noise of folly,  
Most musical, most melancholy! "  
(11.61-62)

The song of the nightingale was a pleasure associated with the stillness of the night:

"Now came still Evening on, and Twilight gray  
Had in her sober livery all things clad;  
Silence accompanied; for beast and bird,  
They to their grassy couch, these to their nests  
Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale.  
She all night long her amorous descant sung:  
Silence was pleased."  
(Paradise Lost, Book IV, 11.598-604)

Satan, whispering to Eve, describing the beauties of the night, tells her that everything is silent:

"Save where the silence yields  
To the night-warbling bird, that now awake  
Tunes sweetest his love-laboured song."  
(Paradise Lost, Book IV, 11.39-41)

While Milton showed preference for the nightingale, the lark also attracted him. One pleasure of the cheerful man is:

"To hear the lark begin his flight,  
And singing startle the dull night."  
(L'Allegro, 11.41-42)

In Paradise Regained, having described Christ's dream, Milton depicts the advent of morning thus:

"And now the herald lark  
Left his ground-nest, high towering to descry  
The morn's approach, and greet her with his song."  
(Book II, ll.279-81)

The raven he associated with darkness and melancholy, for in L'Allegro he mentions a Stygian cave:

"Where...the night-raven sings."  
(ll.6-7)

In addition to giving pleasure to the senses, the sounds of nature add to one's peace of mind, as Milton shows when describing Adam waking from an "aery" sleep, made more pleasant by the sound of

"leaves and fuming rills, Aurora's fan,  
Lightly dispersed, and the shrill matin song  
Of birds on every bough."  
(Paradise Lost, Book V, ll.5-8)

The song of birds, the sound of waters, and other natural melodies were necessary to Milton to complete the beauties of his descriptions. He loved them and appreciated them the more because his well-trained ear was attuned to melodious sound.

ARTIFICIAL MELODY

(a) Song as Poetry

Melody, for Milton, is associated not only with natural, but also with human sounds, especially that of song--melody consciously made by human beings. As he considered music the highest aural art, he connected it with what for him was the highest verbal art, with poetry. Song and poem were synonymous terms for him, and he used them interchangeably, especially in his invocations. At the beginning of Paradise Lost, after briefly outlining his theme, he calls on the Heavenly Muse:

"I thence  
Invoke thy aid to my adventurous song."  
(Book I, 11.12-13)

Frequently, at the beginning of a poem, he uses the word in this sense when outlining his theme and comparing it with a previous subject. In The Passion, which follows his cheerful Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity, he begins:

"Erewhile of music, and ethereal mirth  
Wherewith the stage of Air and Earth did ring...  
My muse with Angels did divide to sing...  
Now to sorrow must I tune my song,  
And set my harp to notes of saddest woe."  
(11.1-9, passim)

A companion poem, The Circumcision, also shows the change of mood, starting:

"That erst with music, and triumphant song,  
First heard by happy watchful shepherd's ear,  
So sweetly sung your joy the clouds along,  
Through the soft silence of the listening night,  
Now mourn."  
(11.2-6)

In Lycidas, also, the words song and poem are used interchangeably:

"Who would not sing for Lycidas? he knew  
Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme."  
(11.10-11)

At the end of Samson Agonistes, when Samson has brought death to himself and his enemies, Manoa, his father, plans to build a monument:

"With all his trophies hung, and acts enrolled  
In copious legend, or sweet lyric song."  
(11.1736-7)

In Paradise Lost, Milton frequently uses the words synonymously:

"With other notes than to the Orphean lyre  
I sung of chaos and eternal night."  
(Book III, 11.17-18)

"Yet not the more  
Cease I to wander where the Muses haunt  
Clear spring, or shady grove, or sunny hill,  
Smit with the love of sacred song."  
(Book III, 11.26-29)

"Thy name  
Shall be the copious matter of my song  
Henceforth, and never shall my harp thy praise  
Forget, nor from thy Father's praise disjoin."  
(Book III, 11.412-15)

This discussion of the use of song as poetry and poetry as song leads to a consideration of the development of Milton's conception of music, and his combining that art with poetry.

Just as a man, when young, is gay and exuberant, then gradually, as he grows older, becomes more serious-minded and perhaps a trifle sad or sceptic, so one's



philosophy of life undergoes a similar development. Milton, I think, had a conception of music closely associated with his philosophy of life and his theory of poetry. When he was young, he enjoyed lighter, more joyful music; then as he lived and experienced sorrow, a note of melancholy crept in, and his musical preferences were in a minor tone. This development can be traced through his poetry.

The Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity, Milton's first recognized poem, written when he was twenty-one, is like a beautiful song--parts of it being comparable to Shelley's Indian Serenade for pure music. There is absolute perfection in the choice of words and sound, and harmony in both words and thought. It is essentially joyful--the world is rejoicing at the advent of the Saviour, the shepherds and all nature are pleased and moved by the celestial harmony of the angel's song, the universe is to be freed from sin, and Milton is pleased to be able to bring this tribute to the infant Saviour in the form of a hymn, as he styles this ode.

His mood was the joyful one of youth, and when he attempted, at this stage of his development, to picture the sadness which came into the life of the Saviour whose birth he had celebrated so beautifully, he was unsuccessful. It was a sad and hopeless theme, and he could not call upon music in presenting it. He wrote The Circumcision, and started The Passion, but never completed it, giving it up as a subject beyond his years. His lack of success with these themes may have been the result of his awe of picturing the deity--an idiosyncrasy evinced even in his great epics, but it was due, primarily, I think, to the fact that he had not adjusted himself to the melancholy mood, and found it difficult to write a song in a minor key.

After Milton had retired to the country and lived practically in seclusion at Horton for some time, he became sufficiently introspective to distinguish between a gay and a sorrowful mood, and their analogy to music in a major and a minor key. Working this out in the companion poems, L'Allegro and Il Penseroso, he gives the idea of the cheerful and melancholy mood respectively, by first banish-

ing the opposing mood, then indicating the nature of the mood in question by creating a mythological personification of it, and following this up with a series of little pictures or idylls--scenes from everyday life which arouse in the mind either a gay or a sad spirit. In L'Allegro the pictures are very clear and distinct, each one standing out definitely. But at this period of his development, the subject of Il Penseroso was more congenial to Milton, and he treats it with deeper feeling. The idylls seem to be closely blended, the images are not easily separated. The poem is tinged with an emotion which tends to blend the ideas into a definite whole.

But how is this related to music? In the first place, Milton refers directly to music in both poems, accompanying the joyful mood with the festive sound of bells and violins, and sweet, voluptuous airs<sup>1</sup>; the melancholy with plaintive, persuasive tunes, and the majestic tones of an organ.<sup>2</sup> Thus music is seen to be a necessary constituent of any mood for him.

1 L'Allegro, ll.93-4, 136

2 Il Penseroso, ll.105-8, 161

In these companion poems, however, it is more than that--it makes up the very essence of the poems themselves. L'Allegro is a light lyric whose theme is simple, and easily recognized. Il Penseroso is a more subtle song with a more intricate harmony. Complexity of emotion produced complexity of musical sound, and a blend which, while it made the individual pictures or themes less distinct, gave a certain beauty and finish to the poem.

Finding the theme of melancholy pleasing, Milton had occasion to continue it when, at the death of a friend, Edward King, he decided to write an elegy. Putting it in the form of a pastoral, he was able to sing a lugubrious song. It is primarily a dirge, a threnody, lamenting the loss of a promising young poet. Conforming as it does to the pastoral method, it bursts forth in a personal note in two places: when Milton inserts an invective against corruption in the church, and when he questions the efficacy of following the art of poetry. The variety of emotional fluctuations in the poem, the subdued note of sadness, and the tenderness of the pastoral strain give the poem the beauty of true music. Hanford has said of it: "No symphony was ever composed of more varied emotional elements or blended them

more consummately into artistic unity. It is in Lycidas that Milton's verse first takes on the characteristic qualities of rich and sonorous harmony for which we have no other word than Miltonic.<sup>1</sup>"

By this time, Milton's philosophy of music was definitely formulated. After the composition of Lycidas, he passed through a period of strife in which he was interested primarily in politics, his writing consisting only of a few sonnets. But when he finally retired to private life to do his greatest work, we find him still attuned to the melancholy key, and become a little severe, perhaps. He abandoned the writing of lyrics and pastorals, and devoted himself to a harmony more austere, writing only in blank verse. In his great epics, he calls upon his knowledge of music to add to their beauty and grandeur.

The climax of the melancholy theme is found in Milton's farewell to life, Samson Agonistes. Written in the form of a Greek Drama, the poem is a powerful, moving account of the climax of the life of a hero who paralleled Milton in many respects. Samson's invectives against women

1 A Milton Handbook---J.H.Hanford---p.134

and blindness are Milton's own laments. But it is in the choral odes especially that Milton is able to pour forth in song his thoughts on the high subject engaging his mind. The poem is like a powerful bit of descriptive music expressing all the sadness and suffering of the hero in pensive, beautiful notes.

(b) Human Song

While Milton made frequent use of the word song as poetry, he also used it in the literal sense, and we find many references to singing. Perhaps his most striking example of the beauties of song is the Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity, in which the song of the angels brings joy to the shepherds and produces a universal harmony. Of his own Christmas present to the Infant Saviour, Milton inquires:

"Hast thou no verse, no hymn, or solemn strain,  
To welcome him to this his new abode?"  
(11.17-18)

In the course of his Ode, he thus describes the scene of the Christmas song as recorded in Luke, Chapter 2, verse 14. Of the shepherds he writes:

"When such music sweet  
Their hearts and ears did greet  
As never was by mortal finger strook,  
Divinely-warbled voice  
Answering the stringed noise,  
As all their souls in blissful rapture took:  
The air, such pleasure loth to lose,  
With thousand echoes still prolongs each heavenly close."  
(11.93-100)



Of the beauty of song he says:

"Such music (as 'tis said)  
Before was never made  
But when of old the Sons of Morning sung."  
(11.117-19)

As music adds to the joy and beauty of the scene on the morning of Christ's birth, so it adds to any scene in Milton of which it is a part. It is associated with pleasure in the scene in Paradise Lost in which Michael is showing Adam what will happen in the world up to the time of the flood:

"With feast and music all the tents resound.  
Such happy interview and fair event  
Of love and youth not lost, songs, garlands, flowers,  
And charming symphonies, attached the heart  
Of Adam, soon inclined to admit delight,  
The bent of nature."  
(Book XI, 11.591-6)

In Comus, the Attendant Spirit, telling the brothers of a shepherd who knows of an antidote to enchantments, says:

"He loved me well, and oft would beg me sing:  
Which when I did, he on the tender grass  
Would sit and hearken even to ecstasy."  
(11.623-5)



Even Satan recognized its power to please, for in Paradise Regained, when he has been rebuked by Christ as a liar, he says:

"Hard are the ways of truth, and rough to walk,  
Smooth on the tongue discoursed, pleasing to the ear,  
And tunable as sylvan pipe or song."  
(Book I, ll.478-80)

Thus music is seen to come in the category of things which lend to and aid in building up and sustaining one's mood, for in L'Allegro, Milton, requesting voluptuous music, wants:

"Notes with many a winding bout  
Of linked sweetness long drawn out;"  
(ll.139-40)

while the request of the melancholy man in Il Penseroso is:

"And as I wake, sweet music breathe  
Above, about, or underneath,  
Sent by some Spirit to mortals good,  
Or the unseen Genius of the wood."  
(ll.151-4)

Being essentially a religious man, Milton bases most of his literary work on the Biblical tradition, and

consequently makes much use of religious music. The greater part of the songs to which he refers are in praise of God. We find the impressiveness of nearly every scene in Heaven enhanced by hymns.

When God has announced his intention of saving man, His Son lauds him for his decision, saying:

"For which both Heaven and Earth shall high extol  
Thy praise, with the innumerable sound  
Of hymns and sacred songs, wherewith thy throne  
Encompassed shall resound thee ever blest."  
(Paradise Lost, Book III, ll.146-9)

After God has finished his speech:

"The multitude of angels, with a shout  
Loud as from numbers without number, sweet  
As from blest voices, uttering joy--Heaven rung  
With jubilee, and loud hosannas filled  
The eternal regions."  
(Paradise Lost, Book III, ll.345-9)

The angels, after God has told them of His appointing His son vice-regent of Heaven, disperse, going to their "celestial tabernacles" to rest,

"save those who in their course,  
Melodious hymns about the sovran throne  
Alternate all night long."  
(Paradise Lost, Book V, ll.655-7)

The hymning of the angels also adds to the impressiveness of the creation scene. After God's work on the first day, when he had produced light and separated day from night,

"Nor passed uncelebrated, nor unsung  
By the celestial quires, when orient light  
Exhaling first from darkness they beheld,  
Birthday of Heaven and Earth. With joy and shout  
The hollow universal orb they filled,  
And touched their golden harps, and hymning praised  
God and his works; Creator him they sung,  
Both when first evening was, and first morn."  
(Paradise Lost, Book VII, ll.253-60)

The work of creation having been completed, the angels sing a beautiful hymn in praise of God:

"So sung they, and the Empyrean rung  
With halleluiahs."  
(Book VII, ll.633-4)

After the world has been in existence for some time, sin has entered, and God, having sent His Son to

save man and to be tempted by Satan, announces at the beginning of Paradise Regained, that Christ is the perfect man who will earn salvation for the sons of men. Then

"all Heaven  
Admiring stood a space; then into hymns  
Burst forth, and in celestial measures moved;  
Circling the throne and singing, while the hand  
Sung with the voice."

(Book I, 11.169-72)

Angelic hymning is also described in At a Solemn Music, where Milton calls on the harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse, to present the song sung in Heaven:

"Where the bright Seraphim in burning row  
Their loud uplifted angel-trumpets blow,  
And the Cherubic host in thousand quires  
Touch their immortal harps of golden wires,  
With those just Spirits that wear victorious palms,  
Hymns devout and holy psalms  
Singing everlastingly."

(11.10-16)

Heaven, for Milton, consisted of bands of angels singing hymns, playing harps, and dancing, all in praise of the works of God.

Song appealed to Milton as mass singing. When he speaks of the angels singing, it seems as though a

band of angels formed in itself a sort of musical instrument. He refers to them frequently as the heavenly quire.

"He asked, but all the Heavenly Quire stood mute."  
(Paradise Lost, Book III, 1.217)

"He ended, and the Heavenly audience loud  
Sung Halleluiah, as the sound of seas  
Through multitude that sung: 'just are thy ways'."  
(Paradise Lost, Book X, 11.641-3)

In Paradise Regained, when Christ has overcome all temptations and banished Satan, he is taken to a flowery valley and seated at a "table of celestial food",

"and, as he fed, Angelic quires  
Sung heavenly anthems of his victory  
Over temptation and the tempter proud."  
(Book IV, 11.593-5)

Not only the occupants of Heaven were aware of this angelic music. Satan, himself unable to tempt Christ, becomes vituperative and tells him that he has been watching him since his birth "announced by Gabriel", when he first knew of the "angelic song in the Bethlehem field" that sung him "saviour born" (Paradise Regained, Book IV, 11.503-6).

Adam and Eve also enjoyed the heavenly music. Talking to his wife of their happiness in Paradise, Adam says:

"How often from the steep  
Of echoing hill or thicket, have we heard  
Celestial voices to the midnight air  
Sole, or responsive each to other's note,  
Singing their great creator! Oft in bands  
While they keep watch, or nightly rounding walk,  
With heavenly touch of instrumental sounds  
In full harmonic number joined, their songs  
Divide the night, and lift our thoughts to Heaven."  
(Paradise Lost, Book IV, ll.682-8)

Thanking Raphael, who, sent by God, has advised Adam and told him of his free state, Adam says:

"Thy words  
Attentive, and with more delighted ear,  
Divine instructor, I have heard, than when  
Cherubic songs by night from neighboring hills  
Aerial music send."  
(Paradise Lost, Book V, ll.544-8)

When Eve "decked first her nuptial bed", she heard the music of angels:

"heavenly choirs the hymenean sung."  
(Paradise Lost, Book IV, ll.710-11)

The first inhabitants of Paradise emulated the angels in singing God's praise:

"Forth came the human pair  
And joined their vocal worship to the quire  
Of creatures wanting voice."  
(Paradise Lost, Book IX, 11.298-9)

Occasionally they called on the angels to aid them in their praise:

"'Speak, ye who best can tell, ye Sons of Light,  
Angels--for ye behold him, and with songs  
And choral symphonies, day without night,  
Circle his throne rejoicing--ye in Heaven.'"  
(Paradise Lost, Book V, 11.161-3)

What might be called Milton's summing up of the beauties and power of song, and his acceptance of the Hebraic rather than the Greek tradition, is found in Paradise Regained, where Satan, who has been offering Christ the culture and learning of the past, says:

"'If I would delight my private hours  
With music or with poem, where so soon  
As in our native language can I find  
That solace? All our Law and Story strewed

With hymns, our Psalms with artful terms inscribed,  
Our Hebrew songs and harps, in Babylon  
That pleased so well our victor's ear, declare  
That rather Greece from us these arts derived-  
Ill imitated while they loudest sing  
The vices of their deities and their own,  
In fable, hymn, or song, so personating  
Their gods ridiculous, and themselves past shame.'"  
(Book IV, ll.334-42)



(c) Instrumental

A perusal of the history of music shows that its development was from the simple to the complex. Simple themes and one instrument were gradually replaced by more complex harmonies and a variety of instruments, all aiding in producing one effect. Milton's use of music in his poem Paradise Lost can be said to show these stages. In his beautiful description of Paradise, he uses only the sounds produced by the forces of nature--wind, water, and birds.<sup>1</sup> When man appears in this background, an evolutionary step is taken, and the human voice is added.<sup>2</sup> The highest stage of development is to be found in Heaven. Here the symphony is fuller, and we find him adding instruments to complete the harmony. Trained as he was in music, Milton was acquainted with the various instruments, and knew the impressions their sound could be made to create.

The theme of his epic being a lofty one, he makes much use of an instrument connoting loftiness, the trumpet. Its music is martial, and it is rather beautiful

1 See pp.7-11

2 See pp.21-30

in itself. In the sixth book, where the battle in Heaven is being described, Raphael tells Adam that at the beginning of the conflict, when the smoke began to roll, signifying God's wrath,

"'nor with less dread the loud  
Ethereal trumpet from on high gan blow.'"   
(Book VI, 11.59-60)

During the conflict, when Abdiel had given Satan a severe blow, the rebelling angels were amazed, and God's defenders overjoyed:

"'Michael bid sound  
The Archangel trumpet. Throughout the vast of Heaven  
It sounded, and the faithful armies rung  
Hosannah to the Highest.'"   
(Book VI, 11.202-5)

At the end of the battle,

"'Up rose the victor Angels, and to arms  
The matin trumpet sung. In arms they stood  
Of golden panoply.'"   
(Book VI, 11.525-7)

In time of peace as well as of war, the trumpet was used to summon the inhabitants of Heaven.

"He blew  
His trumpet heard in Oreb since perhaps  
When God descended, and perhaps once more  
To sound at general doom. The angelic blast  
Filled all the regions."  
(Book XI, ll.73-8)

The instruments to which Milton refers most, however, are the harp and the organ. Perhaps this is because he is most familiar with them--in fact he is said to have played the organ for hours every day during the time that Paradise Lost was taking form in his mind. Since he was essentially a religious man, and his principle theme was religious, Milton would naturally call most upon those instruments associated with Biblical music.

In the creation scene, we find:

"the harp  
Had work and rested not; the solemn pipe  
And dulcimer, all organs of sweet stop,  
All sounds on fret by string or golden wire,  
Tempered soft tunings, intermixed with voice  
Choral or unison."  
(Book VII, ll.594-9)

When the angel Michael is showing Adam  
the stages in the progress of the world until the time of  
the flood:

"He looked and saw a spacious plane...whence the sound  
Of instruments that made melodious chime  
Was heard, of harp and organ, and who moved  
Their stops and chords was seen; his volant touch  
Instinct through all the proportions low and high  
Fled and pursued transverse the resonant fugue."  
(Book XI, ll.558-63)

Milton displays his technical knowledge of  
the organ when, in describing the construction of Pandemonium,  
he says that the builders

"By strange conveyance filled each hollow nook;  
As in an organ, from one blast of wind,  
To many a row of pipes the sound-board breathes.  
Anon out of the earth a fabric huge  
Rose like an exhalation, with the sound  
Of dulcet symphonies and voices sweet."  
(Book I, ll.707-12)

The harp is used to produce music of vary-  
ing character. Thus the angels, accompanying their sacred  
songs on their harps

"Crowned again, their golden harps they took-  
Harps ever tuned, that glittering by their side  
Like quivers hung; and with preamble sweet  
Of charming symphony they introduce  
Their sacred song, and waken raptures high:  
No voice exempt, no voice but well could join  
Melodious part; such concord is in Heaven."  
(Book III, ll.365-71)

But women, too, even of the most wanton kind, are proficient  
on the harp, for Adam, in his kaleidoscopic view of the world  
to be sees

"A bevy of women, richly gay  
In gems and wanton dress! to the harp they sung  
Soft amorous ditties, and in dance came on."  
(Book XI, ll.582-4)

The sweet and reverent music in Heaven is  
in direct contrast to the sounds heard in Hell. Here we are  
impressed with the clash and the din that instruments can be  
made to produce. The noise of drums and timbrels character-  
izes Satan's followers.

"First Moloch, horrid king besmeared with blood  
Of human sacrifice and parent's tears;  
Though, for the noise of drums and timbrels loud  
Their children's cries unheard that passed through fire  
To his grim idol."  
(Book I, ll.392-6)

Satan, proud and arrogant even after his fall, dispells the fears of his followers:

"Then straight commands that, at the warlike sound  
Of trumpets loud and clarions, be spread  
His mighty standard."  
(Book I, ll.531-3)

He orders his standard raised to the accompaniment of

"Sonorous metal blowing martial sounds:  
At which the universal host up-sent  
A shout that tore Hell's concave."  
(Book I, ll.540-2)

The sound of the trumpet, associated with awe, is used to call the rebel angels to the councils in Hell in which they made their fearful plans:

"with awful ceremony  
And trumpet's sound, throughout the host proclaim  
A solemn council forthwith to be held."  
(Book I, ll.753-5)

After they have planned man's destruction:

"Then of their session ended they bid cry  
With trumpet's regal sound the great result:  
Toward the four winds four speedy Cherubim

Put to their mouths the sounding alchymy  
By harald's voice explained; the hollow abyss  
Heard far and wide, and all the host of Hell  
With deafening shout returned them loud acclaim."  
(Book II, 11.514-20)

Turning to his shorter poems, we find that Milton used musical instruments, especially the more delicate ones, to represent a lighter vein. When he abandoned the religious theme, he omitted the rather ponderous music of the organ, preferring something capable of more delicate nuances of tone.

In picturing a joyful man's day, he recognized the gaiety a violin can be made to express, and the sheer joy to be found in the tinkle of bells. Thus in his description of an upland hamlet, he stresses the time

"When the merry bells ring round  
And the jocund rebeks sound."  
(11.93-4)

Vivacity is expressed by the flute in  
Comus, where the Lady hears

"the sound  
Of riot and ill-managed merriment,  
Such as the jocund flute or gamesome pipe  
Stirs up among the loose unfettered hinds  
When, for their teeming flocks and granges full,  
In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan."  
(11.172-5)

The lute was especially pleasing to Milton.  
In his sonnet to Mr. Lawrence, he speaks of better times to  
come, when after a neat repast, they shall go:

"To hear the lute well touched, or artful voice  
Warble immortal notes and Tuscan air."  
(11.11-12)

In Comus, when the brothers are discoursing  
on chastity, one says:

"How charming is divine Philosophy!....  
..musical as is Apollo's lute."  
(11.475,7)



## HARMONY

Harmony, a just adaptation of parts to each other to form a connected whole, is presented in Milton under two aspects: in the musical sense of a melodious combination of sounds, and as an intellectual, ethical force which is able to produce concord and unity of effect. The latter, while the more important, is an outgrowth of the first, and plays an important part in the formation of Milton's conception of music.

Influenced in many ways by the philosophy of Plato, Milton drew on it for his knowledge of the modes of ancient Greek music, of which he makes use in his poetry. From the third book of Plato's Republic, he learned that in ancient Greece there were certain kinds or forms of music which were known by national or tribal names--for example: Dorian, Ionian, Phrygian, Lydian; that each of these was believed to be capable of expressing particular emotions as well as reacting on the sensibility in such a way as to

exercise a powerful and specific influence on the formation of character; and consequently that the choice, among these varieties of the musical forms to be admitted into the education of the state was a matter of the most serious practical concern. In that passage in The Republic in which Socrates, talking to Glaucon, is endeavoring to determine the kinds of music to be admitted for the use of his future guardians, he asks which harmonies are "effeminate and convivial", "soft or drinking", and learns that they are the Ionian and the Lydian, which are termed "solute".<sup>1</sup>

Milton remembered this when enumerating the sensuous pleasures he is looking forward to in L'Allegro:

"Lap me in soft Lydian airs  
Married to immortal verse."  
(ll.136-7)

Of the Doric mode, adapted to religious occasions and to war, Plato has Socrates say: "I want to have one warlike, which will sound the word or note which a brave man utters in the hour of danger and stern resolve, or when his cause is failing and he is going to wounds or

1 The Dialogues of Plato--translated by B.Jowett-Vol.II, p.222

death or is overtaken by some other evil, and at every such crisis meets fortune with calmness and endurance; and another which may be used by him in times of peace and freedom of action, when there is no pressure of necessity-expressive of entreaty or persuasion, of prayer to God, or instruction of man, or again, of willingness to listen to persuasion or entreaty and advice; and which represents him when he has accomplished his aim, not carried away by success, but acting moderately and wisely, and acquiescing in the event.<sup>1</sup>"

That he realized the significance of this type of music, Milton shows in the very first book of Paradise Lost, where Satan's cohorts are assembling in Hell:

"Anon they move  
In perfect phalanx to the Dorian mood  
Of flutes and soft recorders."  
(Book I, ll.549-51)

He also refers to it in Paradise Regained where Satan, tempting Christ with the glories of civilization, shows him Athens where:

1 loc.cit., p.222

"Thou shalt hear and learn the secret power  
Of harmony, in tones and numbers hit  
By voice or hand, and various-measured verse,  
Aeolian charms and Dorian lyric odes."  
(Book IV, ll.254-7)

An audience at a concert, when listening to a symphony or any other particularly beautiful lighter piece of music, sits intent, so completely unified that there are no individuals. But when the last note has been played, the assemblage disintegrates immediately, becoming a disorganized mass. Milton was aware of this capability of music to produce mental harmony, and has instances of it in his poetry. That the unifying power of music is felt even by discordant spirits is shown in the second book of Paradise Lost where, when the council in Hell has disbanded and the fallen angels go their various ways:

"Others, more mild  
Retreated in a silent valley, sing  
With notes angelic to many a harp  
Their own heroic deeds, and hapless fall  
By doom of battle, and complain that Fate  
Free virtue should enthrall to Force or Chance.  
Their song was partial, but the harmony  
(What could it less when Spirits immortal sing?)  
Suspended Hell, and took with ravishment  
The thronging audience. In discourse more sweet  
(For eloquence the Soul, Song charms the Sense)  
Others apart on a hill sat retired."  
(Book II, ll.546-57)

Music produces an intellectual unity, as we see in the invocation to the third book of Paradise Lost, where Milton would

"Then feed on thoughts that voluntary move  
Harmonious numbers; as the wakeful bird  
Sings darkling, and in shadiest covert hid  
Tunes her nocturnal note."  
(Book III, 11.37-40)

In addition to intellectual harmony, there is a unification of body and spirit, as evinced in the love of Adam and Eve. Adam, talking to Raphael, speaks of it as:

"'Harmony to behold in wedded pair  
More grateful than harmonious sound to ear.'"  
(Paradise Lost, Book VIII, 11.605-6)

To Milton, then, harmony was an ideal state, something to be striven for. Lack of it meant discord and confusion. In Samson Agonistes, when the chorus is commenting on Samson's impatience, Milton says:

"But with the afflicted in his pangs their sound  
Little prevails, or rather seems a tune  
Harsh, and of dissonant mood from his complaint."  
(11.660-3)

Assailing the corruption in the church of England in his pastoral, Lycidas, Milton makes good use of onomatopoeia to show the weakness and discord in the work of the ministers:

"their lean and flashy songs  
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw."  
(ll.123-4)

The battle of the angels in Heaven is described as:

"Infernal noise....horrid  
Confusion heaped on confusion."  
(Paradise Lost, Book VI, ll.668-9)

We have seen how music unified minds and spirit. It was also able to unify the world. In the Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity, Milton borrowed a concept of the ancient Pythagoreans, who thought that the universe was a series of spheres of which the earth was the center, all moving in harmony. The poet, to show the effects of Christ's birth on the world, developed the theme of peace on land and sea, then the theme of music. First it is the



song of the angels which pleased the shepherds, and "all their souls in blissful rapture took." Then

"Nature, that heard such sound  
Beneath the hollow round  
Of Cynthia's seat the Airy region thrilling,  
Now was almost won  
To think her part was done,  
And that her reign had here its last fulfilling:  
She knew such harmony alone  
Could hold all Heaven and Earth in happier union."  
(11.101-8)

Thus the song of the angels becomes a part of a universal music--the harmony of all nature. This leads Milton to the Pythagorean notion of the harmony of the spheres:

"Ring out, ye crystal spheres!  
Once bless our human ears,  
If ye have power to touch our senses so;  
And let your silver chime  
Move in melodious time;  
And let the bass of Heaven's deep organ blow;  
And with your ninefold harmony  
Make up full consort to the angelic symphony."  
(11.125-32)

Christ's bringing this universal harmony means that he will abolish sin from the world. Therefore Milton's conception of harmony may also be defined as an  
<sup>1</sup>  
absence of sin.

Just as the presence of harmony eradicates sin, so the breaking up of harmony by discord produces sin, as Milton shows in At a Solemn Music, where he asks that heavenly music be reproduced:

"That we on earth, with undiscording voice,  
May rightly answer that melodious noise;  
As once we did, till disproportioned sin  
Jarred against nature's chime, and with harsh din  
Broke the fair music that all creatures made  
To their great Lord, whose love their motion swayed  
In perfect diapason, whilst they stood  
In first obedience, and their state of good."  
(11.17-24)



POWER OF MUSIC

Music for Milton does more than limn a background, create an effect, and exert a unifying influence. Impressed, no doubt, with Plato's statement of the supreme importance of a musical education, "because rhythm and harmony find their way into the secret places of the soul, on which they mightily fasten, bearing grace in their movements, and making the soul graceful of him who is rightly educated, or ungraceful if ill-educated",<sup>1</sup> Milton believed that music had power over its hearers, and that good music brought richer sensuous and spiritual enjoyment to man.

One of its first attributes is its ability to charm its hearers:

"And last of kings and queens and heroes old,  
Such as the wise Demodocus once told  
In solemn songs at King Alcinous' feast,  
While sad Ulysses' soul and all the rest  
Are held, with his melodious harmony,  
In willing chains and sweet captivity."

(At a Vacation Exercise, 11.47-52)

1 loc.cit., p.225

In the scene in which he describes Satan's band becoming dwarfs, Milton compares them with fairy elves whom a peasant sees:

"they, on their mirth and dance  
Intent, with jocund music charm his ear;  
At once with joy and fear his heart rebounds."  
(Paradise Lost, Book I, ll.786-8)

Also in the first book of Paradise Lost, Satan's host assembling is inspirited by music:

"Breathing united force with fixed thought,  
Moved on in silence to soft pipes that charmed  
Their painful steps o'er the burnt soil."  
(Book I, ll.560-3)

Even the deity is moved by music, for when, in Paradise Lost, God has announced the appointment of Christ as vice-regent of Heaven, the angels rejoice:

"And in their motions harmony divine  
So smooths her charming tones that God's own ear  
Listens delighted."  
(Book V, ll.625-7)

The greatest charm music can supply is to bring Heaven before his eyes in an ecstasy:



"There let the pealing organ blow,  
To the full voiced choir below,  
In service high and anthems clear.  
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,  
Dissolve me into ecstasies,  
And bring all Heaven before mine eyes."  
(Il Penseroso, 11.161-6)

In describing the melancholy mood, he illustrates another affect of music, that of softening an adamant character. Here Milton calls on his knowledge of mythological story to aid him in showing the capability of music to soften. The story of Orpheus' visit to Hades and his playing so beautifully that Pluto was persuaded to release Eurydice, illustrates, in classic hyperbole, how music can persuade one to leniency. In Il Penseroso, Milton would

"Bid the soul of Orpheus sing  
Such notes as, warbled to the string,  
Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek."  
(11.105-7)

He uses the same figure in L'Allegro, when he describes:

"Notes with many a winding bout  
Of linked sweetness long drawn out  
With wanton heed and giddy cunning,  
The melting voice through mazes running,  
Untwisting all the chains that tie  
The hidden soul of harmony;  
That Orpheus' self may heave his head  
From golden slumber on a bed  
Of heaped Elysian flowers, and hear  
Such strains as would have won the ear  
Of Pluto to have quite set free  
His half-regained Eurydice."  
(ll.139-50)

Producing grief, music can also assuage it, for Milton admonishes those who are sorrowing for Lycidas to weep no more, for in death he is no longer sorrowing:

"There entertain him all the saints above  
In solemn troops and sweet societies  
That sing, and singing in their glory move,  
And wipe the tears forever from his eyes."  
(Lycidas, ll.178-81)

While music moves individuals in various ways, it can consolidate an heterogeneous group. Milton illustrates this in the scene in Paradise Lost depicting the battle in Heaven where the defenders of God, who are being recruited, are brought into a unified whole through the consolidating power of martial music:

"Nor with less dread the loud  
Ethereal trumpet from on high gan blow.  
At which command the Powers Militant  
That stood for Heaven, in mighty quadrate joined  
Of union irresistible, moved on  
In silence their bright legion to the sound  
Of instrumental harmony, that breathed  
Hercic ardour to adventurous deeds  
Under their godlike leaders."  
(Book VI, 11.59-67)

The power of music is not confined to human beings, but exerts itself over the world of nature also. It is pictured as a factor in the very beginning of the world. In the book describing the creation, Milton shows the elation of the angels at God's work, expressed in hymns. All the planets and constellations were in joyous accord. When God had finished his work, and was returning to Heaven,

"Up he rode  
Followed with acclamation, and the sound  
Symphonious of ten thousand harps, that tuned  
Angelic harmonies. The Earth, the Air  
Resounded (thou remember'st for thou heard'st),  
The heavens and the constellations rung,  
The planets in their stations listening stood,  
While the bright pomp ascended jubilant."  
(Paradise Lost, Book VII, 11.557-64)

Music, present when the world was created, has power over that world. In Comus we find two instances of natural forces being swayed by artificial sound. The Attendant Spirit, in the first scene, says he must assume the guise of a swain:

"Who, with his soft pipe and smooth-dittied song  
Well knows to still the wild winds when they roar,  
And hush the waving woods."  
(11.86-88)

After he has assumed the shepherd's guise, he comes upon the lady's brothers, the elder of whom says:

"Thyrsis, whose artful strains have oft delayed  
The huddling brook to hear his madrigal,  
And sweetened every musk-rose in the dale."  
(11.68-75)

A fuller statement of this idea is found in

Arcades:

"Such sweet compulsion doth in music lie  
To lull the daughters of Necessity,  
And keep unsteady nature to her law,  
And the low world in measured motion draw  
After the heavenly tune, which none can hear  
Of human mold with gross unpurged ear."  
(11.68-75)

Another example of Nature's being moved is found in the Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity, where, when they hear the angels song,

"The stars, with deep amaze,  
Stand fixed in steadfast gaze,  
Bending one way their precious influence,  
And will not take their flight,  
For all the morning light,  
Or Lucifer that warned them thence;  
But in their glimmering orbs did glow  
Until the Lord himself bespake, and bid them go."  
(ll.69-77)

The theme reaches its culmination in this same poem, where Milton expounds the belief that such music as was heard on the morning of Christ's birth could move the whole world to return to its ideal perfection.

"For if such holy song  
Enwrap our fancy long,  
Time will run back and fetch the age of gold."  
(ll.133-5)

The first part of the report deals with the general situation in the country at the end of 1944. It describes the economic and social conditions, the state of the economy, and the progress of the war. It also mentions the political situation and the role of the government.

#### CHAPTER IV

The second part of the report deals with the economic and social conditions in the country during the year 1945. It describes the progress of the economy, the state of the economy, and the progress of the war. It also mentions the political situation and the role of the government.

#### CONCLUSION

The report concludes that the country has made significant progress during the year 1945. It describes the economic and social conditions, the state of the economy, and the progress of the war. It also mentions the political situation and the role of the government.

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Having scanned Milton's poetry with regard to his references to and use of music, we find that his conception of that art was very definite. In general it might be termed a combination of the beauties of all sound with a profound harmony whose unifying force was capable of ameliorating the whole world, even to the extent of banishing sin. Enjoyment of music for Milton, then, was essentially an intellectual pleasure.

That his work has beautiful musical quality is recognized by musicians, to whom his writings are especially appealing. We find two well-known composers setting some of his verse to music.

The first, Lawes, a contemporary of Milton, composed the musical score for the masque of Comus. Since, according to the Dictionary of National Biography, he "will be remembered as the first English-

man who studied and practised with success the proper accentuation of words, and who made the sense of the poem of paramount importance",<sup>1</sup> Milton was happy in his choice of a composer to enhance the effect of his delightful defense of chastity. He has written a sonnet to him in which he stresses his ability to ally music and verse-a quality so rarely found.

"Harry, whose tuneful and well-measured song  
First taught our English music how to span  
Words with just note and accent, not to scan  
With Midas' ears, committing short and long,  
Thy worth and skill exempts thee from the throng,  
With praise enough for Envy to look wan;  
To after age thou shalt be writ the man  
That with smooth air could'st humour best our tongue  
Thou honor'st Verse, and Verse must send her wing  
To honour thee, the priest of Phoebus' quire  
That tunest then happiest lines in hymn or story.  
Dante shall give Fame leave to set thee higher  
Than his Casella, whom he wooed to sing,  
Met in the milder shades of Purgatory."  
(To Mr. Lawes, on His Airs)

A more famous musician, George Handel, also found subjects in the poetry of Milton. He wrote lyrics to L'Allegro and Il Penseroso, and one of his greatest oratorios,

1 vol.XI, p.683

Samson, is based on a subject handled by Milton. The great German lived in England for some time, and was greatly influenced by English writers--Dryden, Pope, and especially Milton. It has been said that his greatest work, The Messiah, is the musical equivalent of Paradise Lost.

Considered in any aspect, the work of John Milton is great. While the phase of it we have been considering may seem of minor importance in comparison with the magnitude of his theme of creation, of the insurrection in Heaven, or of the temptation, nevertheless, it adds to one's appreciation of his work. Likewise it calls attention to the extreme versatility of the man, and makes him the more admirable. One is reminded that

"The man that hath no music in himself  
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,  
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils." 1

1 The Merchant of Venice--Shakespeare, Act V, Scene 1, ll.83-5

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