

MUSIC – A Language Without Borders

Grace Hsu (許慧伶)

Music plays an important role in our lives. Music—pop, blues, New Age music, new wave, folk songs, classical music, or whatever— can be used both as a therapy for the mind and as the relief of stress. A clever composer can express peace or anger in a piece of music more effectively than a writer can. Besides, music says more to lovers than words. Therefore, when being in love with someone, we can dedicate a song to him or her so that our message will probably be gotten across.

Modern inventions like tape recorders and videos have made music a powerful form of international communication. Take Lin Chiang's (林強) albums "Marching Forward" (向前走) or "The Entertainment World" (戲夢人生) for example. Music lovers will find them combining Taiwanese lyrics with rock or heavy metal. The following are some popular kinds of music from America. How many ones are you familiar with? Let's have a look at them in order of time.

JAZZ

Jazz was created by black Americans. It is a combination of West Africa's religious music and the work songs that the slaves sang. Jazz has gone through a number of changes. It was first dance music and was played in big dance halls. As it became more complex, it was mostly for listening. Jazz gained its popularity during the ten years or so after the First World War. The 1930s and '40s in the States was a new kind of jazz called swing, which was the preferable music of World War II. Jazz bands now play in bars, live jazz clubs and concert halls in many places of the southern US, especially New Orleans, an international seaport where jazz and blues began.

ROCK-AND-ROLL

Rock'n'roll grew out of the mixture of blues, black rhythm, and white country music in the 1950's. It has strong dance beat, too. Great rockers, like the king of rock and roll Elvis Presley, play the electric guitars and music that is loud, fast and rhythmic. American rock'n'roll from the late '50s to early '60s became very popular in Europe, particularly in England. It inspired the next wave of rock'n'roll, including such British bands as the Beatles and the Rolling

Stones. Then at the end of the late 1970s, young people began listening to more experimental types of rock-and-roll, for instance, punk rock. Today, rock and roll is much richer and more vivid than it was decades ago.

HEAVY METAL

With its pounding drums and screaming guitar sound increased by electronic instruments, heavy metal is not exactly soothing to the ear. The lyrics can be even harsher than its strong-beat loud rock music. The young male fans of heavy metal identify with the performers' open disaffection from mainstream society. In the last two decades, musical trends like punk rock and disco have come and gone, but heavy metal has proven to be durable. In 1991, many metal bands produced million-selling Number One albums. Some of them also scored hit singles. However, most people in the States associate heavy metal with evil or drugs. It is because long-hair heavy metal musicians tend to have a wild living, drug abusing and anti-social image. The most famous heavy metal group now in Taiwan is Assassin.

RAP

Rap started as the fierce music of the black underclass and became very popular in the 1980s. It is possibly the most successful American export that dominates worldwide youth culture. The teens admire black people and their music because they are "cool." This skillful fast street talk is full of strong rhythm and slang-heavy lyrics. Rappers in Taiwan, like L.A. Boyz and the Black List, use local dialects "Mandarin" and "Taiwanese" in their rap talking music. Even if you do not understand the lyrics, you can feel the energy.

In fact, both American music and Japanese style influence Mandarin and Taiwanese songs. Musicians all over the world have become more concerned about global problems like the environment and starving people. Perhaps in the near future, music, the melodious language, not only brings the world residents together but also makes it a better place.

Annotations of Words and Expressions

1. border n. the dividing line between two countries 邊境; 國界
2. New Age music n. phr. spiritual and mystical music appearing in 1980s 新時代音樂

3. new wave n. phr. the pop music of the late 1970s, using a strong beat and expressing social opinions 新浪潮
4. therapy n. the treatment of illness of the mind or body, esp. without drugs or operation 治療(由指不用藥物或開刀)
5. relief of stress n. phr. act of relieving pressure 解除壓力
6. composer n. a person who writes music 作曲家
Beethoven and Mozart are both great classical composers.
7. dedicate v. to mention one's name when a song is played 點歌
8. combination n. the act of combining 結合; 聯合
A combination of parties formed the new government.
9. religious adj. about or obeying the rules of religion 宗教的; 虔誠的
She is a very religious woman.
10. the concert hall n. a public building where concerts are played 音樂廳
The National Concert Hall is located inside Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall.
11. swing n. Jazz music of the '30s and '40s 搖擺爵士樂
Swing has a regular beat and usually played by a big band.
12. mixture n. a combination of different types of things 混合(物)
Orange is a mixture of yellow and red.
13. beat n. time in music or poetry 節拍
Every member of the band must follow the beat very closely.
14. rhythm n. the happening at regular periods of time 節奏; 韻律
rhythmic adj. rhythmical; having rhythm 有節奏的; 有韻律的
I enjoy the exciting rhythms of African drum music.
The dancing is rhythmic.
15. inspire v. to give a feeling of power 給於靈感; 激發; 導致

A good teacher will inspire self-confidence in students.

16. experimental adj. connected with experiments 實驗的
It is still in an experimental stage.
17. punk rock n. a style of rock played very fast and loud with often violent and offensive words, popular in '70s 龐克搖滾
18. vivid adj. lifelike; full of force 有朝氣的; 傳神的; 栩栩如生的
Richard has a vivid imagination.
19. decade n. a period of ten years 十年
Prices have risen steadily during the past decade.
20. pounding adj. striking heavily 重擊的
21. soothing adj. making comfortable or calm 舒適的; 撫慰的; 悅耳的
Put on some soothing music.
22. lyrics n. the words of a song 歌詞
23. harsher (comparative of harsh) adj. more unpleasant to the senses 更刺耳的
24. instrument n. an object which is played to give sound 樂器
What musical instruments can you play?
25. identify with v. to feel sympathy for someone 認同; 感同身受
He couldn't identify with other people's troubles.
26. performer n. a person that performs 表演者
The superstar is indeed a gifted performer.
27. disaffection n. the act of disaffected 政治上的不滿; 背(叛)離
28. mainstream n. the main way of thinking or acting in a subject 主流
Nowadays, credit cards and IC cards seem to go mainstream.

29. durable adj. long lasting 持久的; 耐用(穿)的
30. album n. a record which has about 25 minutes of music 唱片專輯
31. associate with v. to connect in one's mind 聯想
We associate moon cakes with Mid-Autumn Festival.
32. drug abusing and anti-social image phr. using drugs improperly & the general idea of someone disliking to mix with others 濫用藥物和反社會的形象
33. rap n. a type of music in which words are not sung but are spoken in a rapid, rhythmic way 饒舌歌
34. Assassin n. a heavy metal group in Taiwan 刺客合唱團
35. fierce adj. very great and energetic 強烈(勁)的
36. dominate v. to get the upper hand 佔上風; 支配; 控制; 居主位
Women are no longer dominated by the men in their relationships.
37. local dialect phr. a variety of language in a certain place 地方方言
38. Mandarin n. the official form of Chinese language 國語; 北平(官)話
39. global adj. concerning the whole world 全球的
Is global warming the same as greenhouse effect?
40. resident n. a person who lives in a place 居民
41. melodious adj. sweet-sounding 悅耳的