Functions and Benefits of
Music Education and Performance

Music’s Many Functions*

Anthropologist Alan P. Merriam (1964) presented what has become a classic outline of music’s many functions across cultures.

1. Emotional expression.
2. Aesthetic enjoyment.
3. Entertainment.
5. Symbolic representation (symbols within the text, notation, and cultural meaning of the sounds).
6. Physical response (dancing and other physical activity).
7. Enforcement of conformity to social norms (instruction through song and rhymes).
8. Validation of social institutions and religious rituals (use of music in religious services and state occasions).
9. Contribution to the continuity and stability of culture (music as an expression of cultural values).
10. Contribution to the integration of society (use of music to bring people together).