

# A Study of Music's Influence on the Course of History-Micro and Macro Scale

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this essay is to research about the relationship between music and history, and how music can shape history in different ways. From this research, connections and conclusions can be made about music's influence. All research for this topic are acquired from online websites. It has been concluded that from macro scales such as politics, religion, culture, and economy, music's lasting impact is evident. However, music also subtly impacts the world in micro scales like indoctrinating and harmonizing societies. From this we can see how pragmatic yet also subconscious music's influence in history is.*

**Keywords:** *Music's influence, historical change, music in history, micro scales*

## 1. Introduction

The nature of music is not mere entertainment; it is created for change. While a tool for relaxation or even hypnosis, music has also been created throughout history, intentionally and accidentally influencing people's psychology and global historical events. In different eras, music affects people's way of thinking, shaping economies, politics, cultures, and beliefs, and additionally deeply impacting individual and collective psychology [1]. These art pieces alter humanity's course.

## 2. Music's Influence on History in a Macro Scale

Our past story is told by people who act in a manner that spins off consequences for big events, which are spread over areas such as economics, politics, and culture. Such realms help us to make sense of epochal moments that reverberate around the world, ultimately becoming part of the historical record for humanity. Economics revolutions constantly fuel an entertainment industry, political upheavals alter perceptions, leading to more human rights, cultural expressions shape individuality, and religious wars redefine the rules governing societies. All these fields together constitute the fabric of history [2].

Music has multifarious effects on economics, particularly as it brings in a lot of money. A clear example of this progression is the transition from a physical medium like CDs to streaming platforms like Spotify. As such, people were given access to more convenient means of listening while earning revenue. Revenue was limited to initial purchases, unlike traditional sales where streaming platforms offer an ongoing income stream based on the number of streams, which can greatly increase potential earnings over time. The economy stays flowing through live performances since residents engage in some spending as they listen to music during these events. They make things flow by buying food from local kiosks following live festivals and concerts. In a way, what people eat are high-priced items including drinks whenever there is any performance, thus raising profits towards vendors and enhancing economic activity around them. Technological advances in music production and distribution have also provided new avenues for economic growth. The advent of digital audio workstations (DAWs) and digital platforms has transformed music creation and distribution processes into modernized ways that do away with traditional analog methods but instead embrace digital marketing, data analytics, and content creation amongst others that are more demanded now than ever before. Advancements as such has expanded job choices and diversity both within and beyond the music industry. Music's influence on consumers' preference and satisfaction has opened windows for the advancement of technological algorithms to personalize musical experience for users. Various streaming applications offer personalization in musical taste, created from big data or surveys to ask the users before they begin using the application or website [3]. It is the relationship between music and economy as such that influence the overall economic trends.

Music has been an indispensable tool in shaping political opinions through its use of repetitive melodies and expressive timbres to convey powerful messages that resonate across cultures as well as generations. In the past, music has been a powerful instrument of social change mobilizing the public's sentiment. During the American Civil War, for example, songs such as "John Brown's Body" became rallying points for abolitionists representing defiance against slavery and support for the union cause. Also, musicians like The Beatles and Bob Dylan have used their music to question societal values in order to promote equity. Both The Beatles' "Revolution" and Bob Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind" turned into anthems of the 1960s counterculture that criticized authority and called for reconciliation during a turbulent period (Rodgers, 2024) [4]. Moreover, artists like Woody Guthrie represented how music could be used as a weapon against fascism by inscribing 'This Machine Kills Fascists' onto his guitar while using folk songs to advocate workers' rights including equality among societies. There have even been entire genres of music that act as conduits for political expression and social change movements. For instance, rap music which falls under hip-hop genre is now a global phenomenon with artists utilizing lyrics to address racism, police brutality and income disparities in society at. From the socially conscious rhymes of Public Enemy to introspective storytelling of Kendrick Lamar, hip-hop artists have sparked important conversations and mobilized communities to demand change. Similarly, punk rock bands like The Clash and Rage Against the Machine have used their music to challenge political corruption and advocate for social justice, inspiring a sense of rebellion and activism among their audiences. Moreover, music's impact on politics goes beyond internal issues into international diplomacy and solidarity movements. For example during apartheid in South Africa, musicians like Miriam Makeba and Hugh Masekela employed their songs as awareness campaigns about the injustices taking place in their country thus rallying global support towards ending anti-apartheid. Not only did they sing about people under oppression but also motivated international censure of apartheid regime that led to its eventual downfall. In contemporary times, world celebrities including U2's Bono or Shakira from Columbia have scaled up their use of popularity by advocating for human rights, global health initiatives as well as environment conservation across borders thereby reflecting on music's capacity to bridge cultural gaps as well as inspire joint actions towards worldwide concerns at large. Furthermore, access to music has become more democratic with the growth of digital platforms and social media; this has increased its influence in political discussions. Platforms like YouTube and streaming services enable artists to reach global audiences instantly, bypassing traditional barriers of distribution and censorship. Social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram provide artists with direct channels to engage with fans, mobilize support for causes, and influence public opinion in real-time. This digital connectivity has empowered musicians to become influential voices in shaping political narratives and driving social change, whether by organizing online campaigns, fundraising for humanitarian causes, or participating in advocacy efforts.

The power of music to transcend language and culture, create deep feelings and provoke actions is what really underscores its significance as an agent of political opinion formation and social transformation. Music has always been a strong tool for creating dialogue, promoting unity and transforming societies in different parts of the world from its initial days as a form of protest to its current engagement in global activism. The long-lasting impact that it has had on politics and societal norms through being used by artists and audiences as both an outlet for expression as well as tool against domination cannot be taken away hence likely to shape future narratives. In addition to its political influence, music also plays a major role in changing cultural customs and traditions which are part and parcel of various traditional ceremonies held across different cultures. For example, among the Maasai people from East Africa, music serves more than just entertainment but also forms the basis of their rituals thus symbolizing respect for ancestors and bringing together all members (OldWorldGods, 2024) [5]. Similarly, the didgeridoo in Aboriginal Australian culture represents a sacred link with their land and spiritual practices which demonstrates how music acts as an outlet for preserving cultural heritage over many generations. This is manifested in the case of pop music which initially was not accepted by non-western societies as a result of global cultural tensions and shifts in the patterns of music consumption. Moreover, this function goes beyond mere entertainment to become a force that actively creates values and norms within society. Rather, it is an avenue through which communities can tell their stories using traditional folk songs which talk about their past or even modern protest anthems that question existing injustices among others. Music has also contributed to human rights dialogue, equality discourse and worldwide solidarity by amplifying silent voices hence transforming it from being just a source of fun into an instrument for social justice advocacy in society promoting empathy among different individuals with various experiences (David, 2023) [3]. Today in digital era platforms like YouTube and streaming apps have democratized access to music making it more political discussion tool globally. These platforms give instant access to global markets for artists without any prior barriers such as distribution networks or censorship acts. Social media platforms provide artists with direct channels to engage with fans, mobilize support for causes, and influence public opinion in real-time, empowering musicians to

become influential voices in shaping political narratives and driving social change.

Religion has a long history, but music is its foundation. This has in turn influenced cultures of different societies and religious beliefs to great extent. Each religion comes with its own brand of musical traditions that are integral to religious ceremonies and rituals as they act as the conduits for spiritual expression and communal harmony. For instance, some hymns such as “Adoro te Devote” are essential in Catholicism and this is why they are sung during worship to preach theology, teach respect for God and fellow Christians among others. These sacred melodies which form part of Catholic canon not only foster devotion but also develop a sense of commonality amongst the believers [6]. Similarly, Islam incorporates this into its religious practices through recitation of Quran known as Tilawat al-Quran or Adhan melodic chant calling for prayer. Muslims perceive these acts of music crucial because it helps them get closer to God and also bring together all Muslims around the world where it originated from [7]. The rhythmic and melodious elements found in Islamic religious music contribute towards creating an atmosphere of quietness during prayers while promoting Islam’s ethical principles thus enhancing the community spirit [8]. Religious music is important in that its repetitive nature together with its power to inspire feelings plays a role in strengthening the bond between believers and their faith. The repetition of melodies of prayers and hymns enables one to participate actively in religious doctrine, thereby making theological beliefs and moral values part of consciousness. However, it is also a fact that various religions have had conflict situations that can be traced back to divergent doctrines as well as practices in relation to music. Religious differences have always compelled conflicts leading to wars that shape geopolitical landscapes as well as historical trajectories [9]. Music has been used effectively as a means for expressing religious conviction or influencing people towards holding onto diverse ideological positions. For instance, during medieval times Crusades were often accelerated by means of religious rhetoric which included the use of music stressing concepts like supremacy of religion and moral rightness [10]. Present day religious music continues to influence public discussions on social issues and political ideologies thus sometimes enhancing societal divides or regional tensions. The use of religious music in modern media and propaganda campaigns illustrates its role in shaping public opinion and influencing political agendas, both domestically and internationally. The manipulation of religious symbols and musical motifs can evoke strong emotional responses and foster allegiance to particular religious ideologies, contributing to social fragmentation and ideological conflict [11]. Moreover, beyond its role in conflict, religious music remains a dynamic force for cultural preservation and adaptation. Across centuries, religious communities have adapted their musical traditions to reflect evolving cultural norms and societal values, ensuring the continuity and relevance of their religious practices in changing times. The fusion of traditional religious melodies with contemporary musical styles and technologies illustrates the resilience and adaptability of religious music in meeting the spiritual and cultural needs of diverse global audiences.

### **3. Music’s Influence on the Course of History in a Micro Scale**

There is a lot of music about the world we live in, which plays a big role in telling stories about patriotism, indoctrination, and incitement to hatred. There are different ways through which music affects people that must be appreciated before looking at its historical impact. The emotional power of music comes from how it touches listeners with deep emotions. In every culture and across generations, love, sadness, happiness and anger have been expressed through music that delves deeply into the human experiences and feelings. This emotional connection allows for transcultural communication thus facilitating understanding between different people. Additionally, music has a significant effect on identity formation and promotes social cohesion. People identify with certain genres or artists whose songs reflect their own experiences or beliefs. These musical choices can determine their social network as well as cultural background besides politics thereby influencing how they view themselves within the society around them. Besides these affective issues associated with identity and emotionality, songs are used as vehicles for advocacy purposes while communicating to the masses about changes required in society; this can be seen from how some musicians use their talent to address political injustices on any platforms available to them. Songs with risqué lyrics or stories that are powerful can change the view of people, get them angry, and make some movements for social justice. Also, propaganda and ideological indoctrination have shown how music can influence public opinion and the collective attitude towards something. Time after time, governments, religious institutions and political movements have used music to inculcate specific ideologies, build up a national spirit or ignite hatred among people. Music is repetitive in nature creating catchy tunes and memorable rhymes which makes it a powerful instrument for maintaining cultural norms as well as pursuing political agenda. Moreover than this societal and political perspective, music also impacts individual behavior and cognitive processes. The research

shows that music enhances cognitive function while elevating moods thus reducing stress levels. Music therapy is applied in different therapeutic settings that help to alleviate various mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) which suggests that music may be helpful in promoting mental well-being as well as emotional resilience.

Human behavior has its root in physiological factors like biological urges and psychological reactions to stimuli. Scientifically speaking, music is a powerful auditory stimulus with profound emotional and behavioral implications on individuals. Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) using study techniques shows that music causes the activation of specified brain regions which are linked to emotions, memory and reward processing resulting in dopamine release, a neurotransmitter associated with pleasure and motivation. This brain response shows how music can influence human behavior biologically shaping personal experiences as well as societal dynamics. Also, outside of its neurological effects, music is critical in such psychological processes like mood regulation and cognitive function. The pace, beat, and tune of a song can cause relaxation or arousal states thereby affecting stress levels as well as how one thinks and understands things. Music therapy has thus been employed in clinical settings to relieve anxiety symptoms, depressive state, and facilitate pain management thus showing evidence for its mental health promotions [12].

Music serves a significant role in social bonding psychologically as well as cultural identity formation. People who have shared musical interests or cultural backgrounds find it easy to form social connections through shared musical experiences which promoted group cohesion; therefore defining belongingness amongst them. Moreover, music is typically used in cultural rites since it helps maintain cultural values while also passing down historical data from one generation to the next besides preserving traditions [13]. However, music's psychological influence is not solely positive; it can also evoke negative emotions and behaviors depending on context and individual interpretation. Certain musical genres or lyrics may provoke feelings of aggression, sadness, or nostalgia, influencing mood states and behavioral responses in listeners. Moreover, the commercialization and widespread dissemination of music through digital platforms have amplified its cultural influence, shaping global trends in fashion, language, and consumer behavior [14]. Music often serves as a potent vehicle for subtly instilling ideologies and shaping societal attitudes. Lyrics and melodies can effectively convey messages of animosity, prejudice, or patriotism, subtly influencing listeners' perceptions and beliefs over time. For instance, John Lennon's song "Imagine" has been interpreted as expressing disdain towards certain societal norms and cultural divisions, influencing how listeners perceive and respond to these themes (Doty, 2024) [6]. The repetitive exposure to such messages through music can gradually reinforce negative stereotypes or promote nationalistic fervor, impacting individuals' attitudes and behaviors. In the context of Chinese patriotic songs, such as the national anthem and songs like "I Love You China" by Qu Cong, music plays a pivotal role in promoting national identity and unity. Schools and homes often have these songs sung on a variety of occasions and during national holidays, thus inculcating patriotic feelings right from childhood (Rabinowitch, 2020) [12]. These musical expressions are repetitive, much like the daily acts that foster nationalism. They can therefore have a significant impact upon a person's subconscious as they grow up and develop their own culture while playing different societal roles. Furthermore, music can be employed to manipulate emotions towards certain political standpoints. For instance, Nationalistic songs are likely to elicit emotional responses leading to unity among its citizens hence supporting government policies or military action. At the same time, it is possible for music that criticize or questions established beliefs to incite mass movements leading to social upheavals against what is seen as unfairness or any form of differentiation. Nevertheless, there has been a debate over whether music has influence on people's thoughts and deeds. It has also been argued by critics that since music encourages prejudices through arousing biased emotions, it can lead to separation between individuals whenever deployed by proponents of exclusionary narratives. The pervasive influence of music in shaping cultural norms and political discourse underscores its role as a potent tool for both social cohesion and dissent, reflecting broader societal values and power dynamics.

Throughout human history music has been a powerful weapon of propaganda, affecting beneath the surface and reshaping experience collectively. Not only is the repetition of song lyrics effective in helping to put ideas into our minds, but it can help push people toward beliefs. And set to music, lyrics become a potent vehicle for the transmission of messages and ideas. Artists like The Beatles have used this power to communicate their musical abilities as well as the beliefs and ideas of society. These musicians are often heroes to the generations of fans paying attention and over time, only seem set to grow in audience size on a global scale with regard to listening and interpreting their messages. The persuasive power of music, with its affecting emotional resonance is intensified. A good song has the ability to spark long-dormant feelings, and to make us feel closer to one another. An emotional appeal of this kind serves to make the lyric-content stronger and thus hit harder, either more directly or by way of specificity. By

exploiting this emotional bridge, artists can sway public perspective in favor of or against political ideas and issues around social justice to create new standards of morals and values.

Moreover, the relationship between artists and their fans plays a crucial role in the dissemination and reception of ideological messages through music. Fans often look up to musicians not only as entertainers but also as cultural icons and influencers whose views and values they admire and emulate. This dynamic interaction between artists and their audience creates a symbiotic relationship where artists use their platform to advocate for causes and ideologies they believe in, while fans validate and amplify these messages through their support and engagement. However, the use of music as a tool for ideological indoctrination raises ethical considerations regarding the manipulation of public opinion and the propagation of biased or harmful ideologies. Furthermore, music's role as a cultural artifact and a form of collective memory underscores its enduring impact on shaping societal attitudes and historical narratives. Songs can serve as time capsules, reflecting the emotions and values of their era while also influencing future generations' perceptions of historical events and societal issues. Through music, artists contribute to the ongoing dialogue on social change, challenging norms, and advocating for justice.

We are in a perpetual state of cultural evolution prostrating not on reacting to societal opinions but contributing existential insights. While we can all easily point to the fact that changing cultural and societal undercurrents have played a large role in shaping musical trends, it is equally true that music has had a transformational reciprocity with society. An example is the slow, peaceful themes of a Romantic period being rocked by angry and introspective hip-hop genres (Michael 2022)[8]. This change instituted a cultural shift where music was less about escapism and more of an outcry for drinking back the right to stand up, speak out. The confrontational nature of hip-hop has helped to define a generation through its lyrics and narratives concerning social justice. In this way, artists who fall into the genre have used their platforms to address issues of systemic injustice and structural inequality that they might see in the world at large, pushing listeners towards such values as critical thinking and direct action (Michael, 2022) [8]. Its power to elevate voices and rally neighborhoods is behind some seismic cultural modifications, transforming the musical landscape in addition to attitudes toward race, identity as well as social justice. On the other hand, electronic dance music (or EDM) has grown to become a global force of nature that transcends cultural barriers and unites all those who have ever danced or sung together with others around its infectious beats. Matters of collective joy like music festivals, nightclub events and all else that falls under EDM have always held together diverse communities. By orienting around unity and inclusivity, the genre bolsters a culture of camaraderie; amongst its participants it grows connection through shared experiences that transcend physical boundaries -even on a global level. The evolution of these musical genres is also fundamentally intertwined with technological advancements and the development of digital technologies that have democratized music production and dissemination. Streaming platforms and online communities have empowered artists to reach global audiences independently, bypassing traditional industry barriers and allowing for experimentation with new sounds and styles. This democratization has fueled a creative renaissance in music, enabling genres to evolve rapidly in response to changing societal needs and cultural trends [15].

#### 4. Conclusion

Music's profound influence on history is unmistakable, evident in its multifaceted role in shaping economic trends, political movements, and cultural practices globally. From ancient rituals to modern-day revolutions, music has consistently served as a catalyst for societal change and unity. It has the power to evoke emotions, inspire movements, and reinforce cultural identities, making it a cornerstone of human expression and communication. Economically, music drives consumer behavior and shapes industries. The shift from physical formats like CDs to digital streaming platforms like Spotify has revolutionized how music is consumed and monetized, impacting revenue streams for artists and reshaping business models within the music industry. Live performances, festivals, and merchandising have also become significant economic drivers, contributing to local economies and tourism sectors worldwide. Politically, music has been a powerful tool for mobilizing public opinion and rallying support for social causes. Historical examples abound, from protest songs during the civil rights movement in the United States to anthems of resistance during anti-colonial struggles across Africa and Asia. Music has the ability to galvanize communities, challenge authority, and advocate for political change, making it a potent force in shaping democratic discourse and civic engagement. Culturally, music serves as a repository of collective memory and cultural identity. It also maintains customs, ceremonies and storytelling as avenues for communities to honor their traditions and articulate their beliefs. Like who here thinks that traditional music genres such as folk songs and indigenous music is not important for the preservation of culture, transmission of intergenerational knowledge. The legacy of music extends far beyond simple

entertainment; it serves as a method to divide through subtle forms of inspiration and propaganda. Music can be used as a method to evoke raw emotions, promote nationalistic ideals and bring about civil unrest during war times or in the absence of conflict. The potential for reinforcing stereotypes, supporting extremist ideologies or otherwise gaslighting cultural prejudices about a person based on their musical beliefs and taste demonstrates an ethical dilemma in its use as a persuasion or influence tool. The implementation of ideologies and values through the usage of lyrics and musical melodies is another reason why music makes indoctrination easier. Music incites us and plays with our emotions while also confirming culturally defined norms. This capability for ideological transference in equal measure reveals the promising future and troubling past associated with music as a cultural conduit. Overall, the power of music to influence history illustrates how it remains an agent for change in various economic, political and cultural scopes around the globe.

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