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MEDITATIVE MUSIC AS A MEDIUM FOR EMOTIONAL HEALING IN CONTEMPORARY UKRAINIAN MUSICAL CULTURE

Abstract. In the context of contemporary society marked by emotional fatigue and psychological tension, meditative music emerges as a powerful tool for psycho-emotional recovery. This article explores the therapeutic potential of meditative music, examining its structural elements – tempo, dynamics, harmony, rhythm, and timbre – and their influence on the listener's mental state. Drawing on philosophical, cultural, and psychological perspectives, the study highlights how meditative music fosters inner balance, spiritual renewal, and self-awareness. The role of the performer, the impact of digital technologies, and the integration of music therapy practices are also discussed. Particular attention is given to the non-verbal communicative power of music and its ability to evoke deep emotional responses and facilitate holistic healing. The article concludes that meditative music, rooted in both ritual and innovation, serves as a meaningful resource for addressing the challenges of modern life and enhancing well-being through artistic and therapeutic engagement.

Keywords: meditateness; philosophy of art; stylistic devices; semantic content; reflections; concept

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MUZYKA MEDITACYJNA JAKO ŚRODEK EMOCJONALNEGO WSPARCIA
WE WSPÓŁCZESNYM UKRAIŃSKIM PEJZAŻU MUZYCZNYM

Abstrakt. W kontekście współczesnego społeczeństwa, naznaczonego zmęczeniem emocjonalnym i przeciążeniem psychicznym, muzyka medytacyjna jawi się jako istotne narzędzie wspierające regenerację psychiczno-emocjonalną. Artykuł analizuje terapeutyczny potencjał muzyki medytacyjnej, koncentrując się na jej strukturze – tempie, dynamice, harmonii, rytmie i barwie dźwięku – oraz ich wpływie na stan psychiczny odbiorcy. Z perspektywy filozoficznej, kulturowej i psychologicznej ukazano, w jaki sposób muzyka medytacyjna sprzyja wewnętrznej równowadze, odnowie duchowej i samoświadomości. Omówiono również rolę wykonawcy, znaczenie technologii cyfrowych oraz zastosowanie praktyk muzykoterapeutycznych. Szczególną uwagę poświęcono niewerbalnej sile komunikacyjnej muzyki i jej zdolności do wywoływania głębokich reakcji emocjonalnych. W konkluzji podkreślono, że muzyka medytacyjna, zakorzeniona zarówno w tradycji, jak i innowacji, stanowi ważny zasób w radzeniu sobie z wyzwaniami współczesności i budowaniu dobrostanu poprzez sztukę i terapię.

Słowa kluczowe: medytacja; filozofia sztuki; narzędzia stylistyczne; zawartość semantyczna; refleksje; concept

In the context of contemporary society, marked by elevated stress levels, cognitive overload, and widespread emotional fatigue, the search for effective strategies to support psycho-emotional recovery has become increasingly urgent. One promising approach is music therapy – a multidisciplinary field that integrates the expressive power of sound with evidence-based methods aimed at promoting mental health and emotional well-being. Owing to its capacity to influence affective states, physiological responses, and cognitive processes, music serves as a potent medium for fostering internal balance and psychological resilience. Within this framework, meditative music emerges as a particularly noteworthy modality, potentially suitable for therapeutic application. This article explores how selected meditative components, embedded within musical structure, may contribute to the creation of a conducive environment for psycho-emotional restoration.

There is a common belief that meditation is a spiritual practice unique to the East. But this does not reflect its true historical roots. The word ‘meditation’ comes from Latin and means ‘to consider,’ ‘to ponder,’ ‘to prepare,’ ‘to contemplate,’ ‘to plan.’ In medieval and modern philosophical texts, for example, we can see the development of this concept. It evolves, expands its semantic boundaries and acquires a more philosophical orientation.

It is not surprising that meditation has become an important element in 20th century art, where reflection and immersion in the inner world have become key

themes. This need is consistent with an expanded understanding of the role of sound as a primary means of musical expression. It is also important to note that meditation grew out of rituals that served as a kind of 'repository' of sacred knowledge to be passed onto future generations.¹

In the modern world, meditation serves to some extent as a means of preserving spiritual values. The ritual roots of the meditative state gives rise to various forms of expression that can be seen in the canvas of compositions. These tools include an increase in attention and concentration, and the weaving of coded symbols into the text to evoke associations. The details require special attention, the means of expression are minimised, the representation of actions and events is minimised and the role of silence increases. We can also observe a shift from linear to decentralised logic, the absence of specific details and a thinning of the sonic environment. The meditative aspect manifests itself in different ways in the work of each composer and cannot be strictly classified. In general, meditative music is a phenomenon associated with the needs of modern society to cope with the fast pace of life, constant stress, rapid technological changes, etc. This musical genre is important for the study of musical culture because it reflects modern trends and the realisation of society's spiritual needs through musical art. How can we describe contemporary meditative music? It usually has a simple melodic structure, a steady rhythm, a moderate tempo and the use of natural sounds. These musical elements help to create an atmosphere of calm, concentration and relaxation, thereby contributing to immersion in a meditative state and inner growth.² The connection between meditative music and scientific and philosophical concepts is an important aspect of the genre. Many scholars note that the emergence of meditative music is associated with the dominance of the Newtonian-Cartesian worldview. This is a trend characterised by a worldview that tends to perceive the world in a more mechanistic way, as well as the separation of subject and object. First of all, music characterised by meditation helps to create a harmonious and unified atmosphere and promotes the fusion of the subject with the surrounding environment.

In the context of Ukrainian musicology, meditation is defined as a process of mental activity aimed at concentration and self-improvement. This approach focuses on the listener's inner experience and response to the music. Music that helps one to enter a meditative state contributes to the expansion of consciousness,

¹ Liudmyla Parkhomenko, "New Faces in the Performing Culture," *Art History Studies*, no. 2 (2005): 501.

² Olena Tyshchenko, *Liturgy in Ukrainian Music of the Late Twentieth and Early Twenty-First Centuries (to the Problem of the Correlation of Rite and Genre)* (Kyiv: P. I. Tchaikovsky National Music Academy of Ukraine, 2011), 16.

calmness, and concentration. This effect is consistent with the concept of meditation as a tool for spiritual growth. In European culture, the main characteristics associated with a meditative state of contemplation are deep reflection, concentration on a particular state of consciousness, and focused mental activity. This statement differs from the concept of meditation in Eastern culture, especially the spiritual practice of yoga. There, the main goal of meditation is to merge with the divine, which is characterised by the conscious cessation of the thought process.³ Yoga gurus describe meditation as a state of quieting the mind, staying in pure reality, free from worry and sadness. It is also considered an art that awakens the human soul from the eternal sleep of illusion and intellectual slavery.

Because of the development of computer technologies, composers now have the opportunity to work directly with sound elements, creating musical material without the obligatory use of traditional notation. This allows for the deliberate omission of the notation stage, which is particularly relevant in the creation of meditative music, where sound recordings are used instead of written scores. This approach has its own specificity: the musical material becomes fixed, and the possibility of change or improvisation during performance is significantly reduced.

In this context, the influence of modern technologies on the compositional process is twofold. On the one hand, digital tools enhance the accessibility and diversity of musical content. On the other hand, they limit the variability of traditional musical means such as instrumentation, arrangement, and interpretation. This method of working with musical material represents an alternative to conventional compositional practice, shifting the focus from notational fixation to direct sonic experience.

Let's now analyse the musical characteristics that give the piece a meditative atmosphere. Like language, music is expressed through characteristics and elements such as tempo, dynamics, harmony, melody and rhythm.⁴ Again we can draw a parallel with language. Just as language conveys ideas and concepts through vocabulary and syntax, music creates a meditative atmosphere and expresses its inner meaning through various musical elements.

The sound characteristics of music have a strong influence on the listener's feelings and perceptions. Among these, tempo is one of the most important

³ Nataliia Liva, "Musical Minimalism in the Context of Western European Metaconsciousness," *Journal of the Tchaikovsky National Music Academy of Ukraine* 3, no. 40 (2018): 6-16.

⁴ Shuqi Dai, Huan Zhang, and Roger B. Dannenberg, "The Interconnections of Music Structure, Harmony, Melody, Rhythm, and Predictivity," *SAGE Open* 14, no. 4 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1177/205920432412347>.

parameters. It determines the speed at which musical samples are played. Meditative music is often slow and relaxing, allowing the listener to become immersed in the flow of sound. The slow pulsation subconsciously induces a slowing of breathing, which in turn slows the pulse and promotes deep relaxation of the whole body.

Another equally important feature is the dynamic picture of the piece. In meditative pieces the dynamics are usually moderate, calm, without sudden changes in volume, which helps to create an atmosphere of peace and harmony.

Another important parameter is the melody and the harmonic structure. In meditative pieces the harmony is often simple, logical and predictable, without complex structures and abrupt transitions. This also allows you to immerse the listener in an atmosphere of harmony and peace. A gently evolving or repetitively structured melody facilitates immersion in the musical texture, allowing the listener to maintain focus on personal introspection and emotional resonance.

Rhythm also helps to create a meditative atmosphere for the listener. A regular, monotonous rhythm creates a sense of flow, stability and comfortable predictability, which contributes to relaxation. Pauses and gaps in the sound create a sense of 'musical breathing,' encouraging the listener to spontaneously synchronise their own breathing.

The overall picture is completed by the use of timbres, intonations, tonalities, patterns, etc. to complement the sound and enhance the desired effect.

Other sound techniques can also be used to enhance the meditative effect, such as resonance, reverberation enhancement and various sound modification techniques.

We can see that, in the context of meditation, music has much in common with language. And a careful consideration of the elements that create a meditative atmosphere allows us to add to our understanding of another facet of this art form. An artist can use melody, harmony, tempo, rhythm and various sound effects to have a very profound effect on the listener. Through music, he or she can help you immerse yourself in your own feelings and tune into inner harmony.

A very important and special feature of music is that it goes beyond verbal expression. It can evoke emotions without entering into specific images described in words. In the context of meditation, this effect can greatly expand the impact on a person, as everyone has their own associations that are appropriate for them.

As for the role of the performer, it is very important in meditative music. To create a meditative atmosphere, musicians choose performance techniques that enhance the meditative effect. These include precise intonation, soft sound attack and soft sound production. When it comes to vocal elements, correct articulation and breathing will also be important, and chain breathing is often used.

With these tools you can achieve perfect homogeneity and fullness of sound. Such musical images will deeply immerse the listener in their content, bringing him emotionally and meaningfully closer to the Divine. This approach allows us to create a conducive environment for entering a meditative state of spiritual renewal and growth.

Culture, in its various manifestations, is an environment with a powerful potential for human development. Meditative music, with its powerful tools, occupies a special place in this context.

Music in general combines different aspects of universal and national experience, introducing us to ideas, meanings and experiences that have been relevant to different cultures and epochs.

Meditative music can create an environment that promotes the development and growth of human consciousness, regulates internal and external activities, and establishes communication with oneself and the world.

Incidentally, music therapy as a separate branch of psychotherapy, which is still actively developing, uses meditative music as one of its important tools. After all, this musical tradition carries the potential that has been laid down by different cultures over the centuries of human history. Music therapy can be seen as part of art therapy, i.e. healing through art.

How does music therapy work? The art of music is a unifying element that works with feelings, perceptions, experiences and ways of thinking in a non-verbal way, without the barriers of time and space. It is used in the therapeutic relationship because it takes into account cultural, national, regional and even individual characteristics and serves to achieve the individual goals of the patient.

In general, music therapy can be defined as individual or group work that may involve the creation and creative 'reading' of specific musical works by individuals or groups. It involves listening to, reflecting on and creating music to achieve a therapeutic goal.

Music therapy, in which the use of meditative music is an important tool, plays an important role in the development and improvement of a person's physical, psychological and moral state. It can be seen not only as a means of self-realisation, but also as one of the tools for correcting a number of mental states, treating various diseases and helping in difficult life situations.⁵

The basis of musical meditation is specially selected musical material which, when listened to and played, contributes to the harmonisation of the inner world, self-development and a balanced attitude towards oneself and the environment.

⁵ Viktor Frankl, *The Will to Meaning: Foundations and Applications of Logotherapy* (New York: Plume, 2014).

Musical meditation has a special power to change the state of human consciousness. Thanks to it, a person leaves the trance state of everyday life and gains a clearer and deeper sense of himself and the world around him. Meditation is known to be one of the most versatile ways to change the way we see ourselves and the world around us. It is increasingly being added to the list of practices in modern education, as part of personal and professional practice.

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Meditation is known to be one of the most powerful ways to change the way we view ourselves and the world, and as a practice that promotes both personal and professional development, it is increasingly being incorporated into modern educational practice.

However, in order to harness the full potential of this tool more effectively, it is important to understand how it works and how it affects us. This is why the phenomenon can and should be studied.

Studies by existentialist psychologists have shown that a person's experience of happiness, well-being, trust in themselves and the world does not depend on the presence or absence of achievements, successes, limitations or problems.

For a person, music and singing, with their inspirational potential, often produce peak experiences. In particular, A. Maslow noted that spontaneous 'peak' experiences, which have a positive mood, often have a strong tendency towards 'self-actualisation.' This is the so-called 'above normal' category of experience.

The greatest disharmony in the modern world today is the disharmony in human relationships, the endless struggle between good and evil. This is a manifestation of misunderstanding, rejection, dishonesty and inaccuracy. The overall goal of psychotherapy is to reach the maximum level of consciousness or, in other words, a higher state of consciousness.

In these circumstances, music serves, among other things, as a means of professional self-realisation. It requires a full and deep awareness of what it brings to a person and what it should be for him or her, because when people listen and play, sing alone or with a choir, they sometimes do not understand the real possibilities of music, its ability to transcend the limits of the usual tools of understanding themselves and the world, to reveal and speak in the human essence. Making music together contributes significantly to understanding 'transpersonality,' to

experiencing and realising it, and to unleashing the enormous spiritual and therapeutic potential of the holotropic mode of consciousness.⁶

An important point on this path is to live and feel unity with other people, to be in a certain common activity. Choral singing is one of the examples of such unity, because at the moment of choral music performance the colours of polyphony, the instruments of polyphony, are revealed as a dialogue reflecting the multiplicity of relationships between people. Choral singing is a vivid manifestation of the singers' peculiarities, above all their interpersonal sphere, their willingness and ability to establish contact, a certain altruism or even egoism. With the help of meditative music, the harmony of world and life energies was achieved, chaos was levelled, and the so-called social, psychological and even cosmic order was established.

It is advisable that musical meditation should contribute to the search for ways of an independent spiritual life, leading to dialogue rather than monologue. Meditation is the liberation of consciousness from semantic constraints, it is the liberation of spontaneity.⁷

E. Daribazon notes that "meditation allows [...] confusion to manifest itself, gives a person the opportunity to be in it, instead of trying to get out of it, as is done in therapy, in order to solve the real problem of human existence and achieve the well-being necessary for a person in his totality."⁸

If, in the past, meditative music has always had a certain religious content, today,⁹ especially since the first half of the twentieth century, it is not only traditional music or religiously confessional; the music of some contemporary composers, who do not take any position and do not belong to any traditional religious denomination, perhaps still sharing certain aesthetic values or spiritual trends, is declared "meditative" or meditative.

⁶ See Anna Lunina, "Victoria Polyova: 'Music Is a Journey, the Way I Walk...,'" *Music*, no. 3 (2014): 54-59; Oleksandr Marach, "Actualisation of the Regional Choral Art of Ukraine in the Activity of the Khmelnytskyi Municipal Chamber Choir: Based on the Interview with Maestro Ihor Tsmur," *Scientific Notes of Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University. Series: Art History*, no. 2 (2012): 36-42; Evheniia Pakhomova, "Synthesis and Synesthesia in the Works of Ukrainian Composers of the Second Half of the Twentieth and Early Twenty-First Centuries," *Journal of the Tchaikovsky National Music Academy of Ukraine* 34, no. 1 (2017): 101-112.

⁷ See Joseph Jordania, *Why Do People Sing? Music in Human Evolution* (Tbilisi: Logos, 2011); Abraham Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (New York: Wiley, 2014).

⁸ Jordania, *Why Do People Sing?*, 32.

⁹ Yeshaya David M. Greenberg, "From the Sacred to the Ordinary through the Lens of Psychological Science," in: *Music and Spirituality*, ed. George Corbett, and Sarah Moerman (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2024), chapter 7, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0403.07>.

In this way, making music together as a component of music therapy serves as a catalyst for spiritual life, development and dialogue between peoples and cultures. And whatever the cause of anxiety or suffering, whether violent trauma or serious illness, music therapy can be a very effective tool.

It is in musical meditation that the most transformative effect is achieved: listening to or performing instrumental music, songs and chorales, especially together with others, can lead to a deeper and more complete revelation of self and life. Through music, a suffering person communicates with his or her inner power and with the world, which, in moments of creative insight, transforms a person and his or her attitude towards himself or herself and the world. There is also a speciality called 'musical rehabilitation,' which is the restoration of health after injury and the treatment of body and mind through singing and music.

The practice of turning to meditative music in modern society today has an extremely high potential for both personal growth and the maintenance of mental and physical health. Music therapy based on meditative music is an effective means of self-development, balancing relationships with oneself and the world, as well as a tool for correcting various life difficulties and pathologies. With the help of meditative music, you can achieve a state of deep inner peace and concentration, which will help you solve problems and open up new opportunities for self-expression and self-realisation. In today's world of opportunity and innovation, meditative music is a safe resource for supporting mental health and self-development.

After a thorough analysis of the music, we feel the variety of compositional techniques and elements that evoke different emotions in the listener, special moods that evoke feelings of fear or suffering, pain and empathy. Such music 'touches' everyone deeply, but the understanding and experience of it is different for everyone. We certainly understand the ability of music to influence the mental and emotional state and are looking for ways to apply and practice meditation in today's difficult world. The dominant factor here is the aesthetic and power of sound music.

In general, in the context of meditative experiences, there is a close interaction between the listener and the music as a meditative experience; it is a kind of holistic process that requires taking into account various aspects, namely: performance methods and historical context, socio-cultural factors and musical language. There is a need to accumulate a variety of effective artistic approaches. We are talking about history, music theory and sociology. Only criteria such as the type of performance, the complexity of the genre and the peculiarities of the musical language can ensure that all needs are met. Therefore, the most important thing in the perception of music is its context, its specificity and the details

of the performance, in order to create a ‘listening experience’ as a meditative one. This is a kind of corrective and developing model for the ability of external and internal immersion, a kind of self-communication and self-immersion.

It is important to understand that the perception of music depends on a number of factors, including the musicality of the work, its context and the specifics of the performance, which together create a unique experience for the listener, which can be meditative.

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