



## SCIENCE & YOU *Visible creation showing the invisible God*

### The Sound of Music

Is there more to it than meets the ear?

The arrival and passing of summer in the central plains of North America is marked by characteristic sounds. The call of chorus frogs means the spring rains have awakened eggs laid last year. The distinctive call of the western meadowlark signals the beginning of an annual search for a mate. The heat of summer brings the pulsating buzz of the cicada from the branches above. Late summer is heralded by the noisy, intermittent buzz and clicks of mature grasshoppers and katydids.

There is purpose in each of these distinctive calls or sounds. They help male and female of the same species find each other. They signal danger. Others are claims of territory or threats before a fight. But can any animal sounds really be called music in the sense that humans understand music?

In my town, summer is marked by weekly concerts of the city band in a tree-shaded park. The events draw hundreds of listeners of all ages. And for an hour the audience is swept away by the music. Yet, though all hear the same music, each person feels its effect differently. The beauty and power of music is undeniable. Surely music can do all that the limited, rudimentary sounds of frogs, birds and insects can do. Communicate a sense of danger. Energize for a fight. Even claim territory – think of your national anthem. But it can also move one to tears or rouse the spirit to the pinnacle of joy. It can calm the heart or trigger lost memories. Music is the language of emotion and there is no true parallel in the animal world.

But why should this be so? Believers in the philosophy of naturalism have no answer for why humans would spend time and energy to write, perform and listen to music. After all, such behavior in what they see as the human “animal” has no survival advantage and so

makes no evolutionary sense. It is here that the reductionist thinking of those committed to naturalism runs afoul of reality – they respond to music in the same ways as believers in Christ. As human beings, they are haunted by the reality of the beauty and power of the sound of music, even as their naturalism forces them to reject such thoughts as only illusion created by purposeless chance and natural selection.

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Meaning is not found in music by reducing the sounds to the mechanics of their production. This is seeing the world wrong side out. Instead, the mechanics is the basis to express meaning and emotion which are part of the image of God within us.<sup>1</sup> Just as our own logic and reason reflect God’s intellect and consistency, and the existence of moral standards reflects God’s character, the sound of music touches the remnant of God’s image within us as emotion. To appreciate the power of logic, the security of morality and the emotion of music but reject the ultimate source of these gifts is to embrace only a fading shadow of reality. 📌

—MICHAEL G. WINDHEUSER, PH.D.

1. Josh McDowell, Thomas Williams. *In Search of Certainty*. Green Key Books. Holiday, Florida. 2003.