

# Music and Relative Emphasis

ir. Emile M. Hobo – 2 December 2019

E-mail: e.m.hobo@hotmail.nl

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## Introduction

Music communicates emotion, which demands eloquence. In a nutshell that's the intent of the music we play, that sometimes does and sometimes doesn't support lyrics that mean to communicate a more specific kind of message.

When you read this, do you know what this really means?

Music is an art that makes use of rhythm, tones, rests, melodies, and harmonies to create a colorful landscape of sounds. It makes use of the interaction of an instrument with itself and other instruments, the instruments being an extension of their practitioners.

Communication means that you utter sounds, words, images, tastes, feelings, smells, and tangible experiences that reach people, catching their interest. In case of music, what you play should capture people's ears. Some people abhor the word 'catchy,' yet it very clearly communicates what music is supposed to do : if it doesn't catch your ear, how will people remember it and why would they listen to it?

Emotion is a word derived from the Latin word *emovere* which in turn was composed of the shorthand for *ex* and the verb *movere*. Together they form the verb that means 'move out' in English. As such, emotion is the movement of the soul in response to certain perceptions. Emotion isn't a state of mind, since a state is static and emotion dynamic : it's something you move through.

When you don't move through it, it's a state of mind, yes a feeling, and you need to find a way to cope with it in order to move through it and move on. That's a major difference with immediately coping with and handling it. Not coping with it and accepting it as is, that state of mind, causes problems not to be resolved and people to for instance take drugs and alcohol to numb their feelings, because they don't know how to handle it.

You need to handle it.

Eloquence is the ability to clearly and reasonably express an idea in such a way that it logically ties together illustrating your thoughts and emotions. Everything you play or say is connected and responds to what was played or said before. Together it communicates a story and it works, because you play it together and not at random.

Some people learn to play instruments, they learn other people's 'cool' licks that have 'proven themselves,' and put them together as if it were a new song, not realizing that they aren't even related. It's like taking cool sentences from a book and just randomly putting them together : they worked in context, but not randomly.

Licks or musical phrases don't prove themselves, neither do spoken phrases, only the larger story establishes something and this applies to music also. You need to be eloquent, which is something that can be noted in musicians also.

Successful musicians aren't only good at playing their instruments, although their words may not always be that decent, they do know how to clearly communicate their ideas, thoughts, and emotions.

If they don't it also shows through drugs and alcohol abuse. If they hadn't gotten into that or when they get out of it again, the difference is night and day. They may not want to communicate some messages to you and they have a right not to, but what they communicate, once again, they communicate clearly.

And they should be listened to and taken seriously, much like anyone else should be. We all have some degree of responsibility, especially when we take up functions to assume said responsibility. You're not in charge, you serve.

## Forms of Music and Relative Degrees

Different kinds of music place an emphasis on different kinds of stories.

Blues music focuses on daily struggles : love, health, and employment, the three things that drive our very existence as reasonable human beings, drive the conflict as we witness it in the emotions and also lyrics as conveyed by the Blues. Gypsy music presents us with a reality clouded by mystery, suspense, veiled attraction, and more.

No form of music is strictly limited to what we associate it with most. It's when we break free from the stereotype that we get to see the full highly dimensional essence of every kind of music as we know it, but we need to allow ourselves to be opened up to these different angles as well, instead of forcing music into a specific niche.

Playing in major or minor? Light blues, light gypsy, dark blues, gypsy'n'roll? Why not?

When you play blues, not every note you play has to be a part of the blues scale, it's about bluesy patterns, meaning that the emphasis is on the blues scale. As long as through your playing you make it clear that the emphasis is on the blues scale, that's what flavors your music, but how do you emphasize a blues scale?

The blues scale reads in scale degrees :  $1\frac{1}{2}$   $1$   $\frac{1}{2}$   $\frac{1}{2}$   $1\frac{1}{2}$   $1$ ; or minor third, major second, minor second, minor second, minor third, major second.

When you look at the techniques employed in playing blues, in hindsight the one dead giveaway that tells you what emphasis means is the slide : sliding from one note on the blues scale to the next, hitting every note in between to create a quick run. By playing it accurately it feels really fast, but that's not the most important feel you get from it...

The most important part of every syllable, every word, every phrase, and every song uttered in blues or any other kind of music, is that it's clearly tied together establishing a clear through line. The slide from one note to the next joins the first note with the last and it doesn't feel broken up.

If you actively play the first note of the blues scale, making your way up to the minor third by actively strumming or hitting every minor second in between, and clearly end on the minor third, it also feels tied together. That way, it's all blues.

The beginning and the end is blues without intermissions. There's no reason you shouldn't have intermissions, but those won't be blues : you'd be switching musical styles and as such emotions. You can change from playing blues to something in major and back.

On the mouth harp, when you switch from the bottom, to the middle to the top octave, playing in say the first or second position, the blues scale isn't available everywhere.

Even in third position, only the simplified blues scale used in rock-music : the pentatonic blues/rock scale, is available running all the way up and down the harp. The double minor second is only limitedly available in some octaves, the mouth harp only offering the major second instead in others.

When the blues scale isn't fully available also, sometimes it's best to stick as close to a scale as possible that sort of mimics the feel of the blues, but isn't exactly the same. As such where you play also changes the playing style you employ.

Playing in the second position high octave on the mouth harp often but not always leads to faster playing, because then the fact that it isn't really the blues scale than makes way for the excitement these high tones combined with fast playing have to offer. It's a different kind of music that breaks from the blues but in the end reinforces it through the excitement and contrast it has to offer.

So, does the first tone of a run always have to be on the blues scale and the last tone too? Maybe. You be the judge, but why should it always be a run with only ascending or only descending minor seconds? What about a drunk stagger swagger, jabber-dagger?

Sometimes you might play a tone, say the prime followed by the minor third, play the next tone a minor second up, play the same minor third as before, and then a minor second down, the same prime again immediately followed by the same minor third as an end to the open-ended phrase.

These minor seconds, they aren't on the blues scale, they aren't a part of a slide. They aren't a part of a clearly denoted idea. Instead they communicate the feel of a search for the kind of emotion we mean to communicate and the conclusion or maybe resolution is blues.

What's blues? It's what you look for and return to. It's what you walk through. It's life continuing.

What's gypsy? Adventure, disguise, longing, pain. But can't blues be gypsy too? And can't gypsy be blues? It's all blues? It's all gypsy? That depends on what you return to : plot and subplot. The main plot says it's either all-blues or all-gypsy, but at the same time, all of the intermediate styles denote it's all of these other things as well.

## Conclusion

It's not all-blues unless the foundation is blues, even with other types of music being mixed into it. It's all blues when that's the feeling and emotion the music ends up communicating. There is no form or formula other than previously agreed on structures that allow musicians to improvise, but even then, you still have melodic freedom to a very large degree.

What is music? What is form? It should communicate and you should be eloquent in the way you communicate, because if people don't get it, if it doesn't register, if it isn't catchy – which doesn't mean it can't be heavy – it won't reach people, which is exactly what we mean to do with our music.

It isn't about us, it's about what we have to say and how we mean to not drug, not sedate, but elevate the people that listen to what we play. *Don't sedate, elevate.* Forget about the wall of sound and how you don't have to communicate anything clearly. It isn't *just* a feeling, it's emotion, which means change.

Play.