

Boethius and the theory of music for readers of the 6th Century

Boethius' full name was Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius; he was a Roman consul, senator, magister, philosopher, and officiorum of the early 6th century. He had a particular interest in music, and came up with a theory of music for readers in the 6th century.

The theory of Boethius concerning music resonates with the idea that "human beings are

✓ attracted to music in the most natural of ways"; as such, this gives music the potential to

produce both great and evil. Music that is harmonious and orderly can assist individuals to be

more prudent and logical whereas music that is violent and chaotic has only the capacity to

lead individuals to immoral ways of thinking and behavior. This essay presents several

premises regarding why this famous Roman made the deductions he did about music

(Papadopoulos, 42).

The essence of Boethius' theory of music is a manifestation of how he viewed music

under difficult times ~~that he was placed in~~. It must be considered that Boethius wrote his

theory when he was in prison convicted of an unfair sentence by Theodoric. In fact, he was

imprisoned because he simply differed in opinion with Theodoric regarding the role of the

state and religion in Rome. It must have been music that comforted him in prison and such

music, according to Boethius, is the right kind of music that inspires good. Boethius tried to

convince others around him that music could be misused for evil purposes. During his time,

violent music was used for incitement; to inspire aggression and promote immorality.

Regarding the historical timeline, it is evident that Boethius bore witness to the thirst Rome had for blood and the promiscuity that had dismantled families. Such actions were being promoted by composers, poets, and most importantly musicians who sang in praise of violence. For example, those who wrote songs glorifying the Colosseum and the inhumanity that slaves and prisoners of war faced were predisposed against the evidence that bad music promoted the progression of vile thoughts and behavior (Walden, 88). According to Boethius, music could also promote good since "music was the only instrument that could be used to help individuals understand instruction". He believed that the best way to reach the temple of a human being was through the ear. For human beings to listen they must find something to be interesting and catchy; this could only be done using music and musical composition. Music helped Boethius avert stress while in prison, and through his personal experience he affirmed that music could be therapeutic. For instance, Tempander and Arion of Methymna made use of music to heal the people of Ionia and Lesbos from a very serious disease. Another good that Boethius saw music doing is the fact that it was used by Pythagoreans to help them master their daily cares. With consideration that Boethius was in prison and feeling resentful towards his aggressors, he must have seen those that imprisoned him to be under the influence of negative ideas passed to them using music (Deutsch, 68).

During the time of Boethius, much was happening in Rome and the world at large.

Rome was in ruins, and the Middle Ages were fast approaching. In the middle of rapid

change, the philosophical Roman took a look back at the importance of harmony, aesthetics and arithmetic. Humanity was going through a lot of change, and it is for this reason that Boethius attempted to “preserve Greek theories of music.” Upon reading his theory and philosophy on music, any keen audience can see that Boethius saw music as a solution to many of his personal as well as the world’s problems. He wanted to promote music as the solution to the socio-political crisis in Rome, but his confinement in prison made it difficult. For this reason, he chose to write essays to reach those that could heed to his call regarding music and its potential (Denny-Brown, 55).

In conclusion, Boethius was a proponent of music because he saw music as a therapeutic aid to getting through difficult times. Given the fact that he lived during a time when his beloved Rome had fallen and the Middle Ages had begun, it is evident that Boethius used music to calm his spirit and relieve stress. Boethius created a revolution using the musical theory that he presented to the readers of the 6th Century.

*clear – fully developed – too many sources –
I trust that a lot of this is from sources –
not as much from you –
but it's clear –*

Works Cited

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Boethius lays out his theory of music for reader

Intro: Boethius was Roman consul, senator, magister, philosopher, and officium.

Thesis: It resonates idea that "human beings are attracted to music in the most natural of ways."

This gives music the potential to produce both good and evil.

Body 1: Boethius theory on music regarded how he viewed music in difficult times that he was in.

2. These aspects of Rome were being promoted by composers, poets, and importantly musicians.
3. Music promote good.

Body 2: Music period

During that time, a lot was happening. Roman was in ruins, and middle Ages were fast approaching.

Humanity at large was going through a lot of change, and it is for this reason that he was attempting to get back and "preserve Greek theories of music."

Conclusion: He was a proponent of music.

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