

Comparing And Evoking Architecture With Music

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Abstract :

Architecture pleases the eye while music pleases the ear and the very interesting part is that music and architecture have extreme similarities. The principles of architecture resemble with that of music. Whether it is music or architecture both needs an artistic mind to create. Architecture is said to be a frozen music while music is said to be liquid architecture. This paper aims to look at similarities between music and architecture and provide a different platform for appreciation of architecture, not only directly, but also spiritually and in a holistic way.

Keywords: rhythm, texture, harmony, proportion, dynamics, timeline

Introduction

Architecture is one of the basic needs of human beings as it fulfills the requirement of shelter. Compared to the animals, humans are weak to sustain forces of nature and need shelter for physical safety. For the safety against these forces of nature and other species of wild animals, the humans took shelter of caves. When this safety was confirmed, caveman engaged himself in drawing pictures of day to day affairs. This probably was the first art form he has performed. Later on as the evolution of human species took place, other art forms viz. painting, sculpting, dance, singing, music etc. also have been invented and practiced. As one of the oldest art form, music is said to be in existence since 50000 years and has been an integral part of various cultures around the globe, including the most isolated tribal groups. It therefore can be said that music has been a special part of human life. Music in due course of time did not only remain in the instruments and voices of people, but was also reflected in architecture, which is interesting to note. Architecture itself in some of the cases is so developed, so near to perfection that it is termed as frozen music. This is how music and architecture are blended with each other both at physical and lateral levels. This has become possible because of similarities between principles of music and architecture.



Figure 1: Cave painting in The Serra da Capivara National Park in northeast Brazil

The similarities

The terms such as rhythm, texture, harmony, proportion, dynamics and articulation refer both to architecture and music. These are the main principles of music and architecture.

Rhythm

Rhythm is strong, regularly repeated pattern. Rhythm in music is patterns of sounds in relation to a beat, whereas repetition of elements, openings, shapes, structural bays establishes regular or irregular rhythm in architecture.

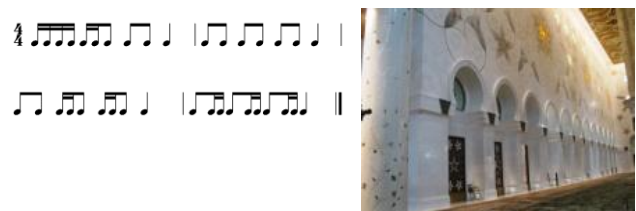


Figure 2: Rhythm in music and architecture

Texture

Texture is the feel, appearance, or consistency of a surface or a substance. In music it refers to layers of sounds and rhythms produced in different instruments and in architecture textures appear in different materials we use for the construction purpose.

Period	Graphic representation	Type
400 - 1450		Monophonic Texture
1450-1750		Polyphonic Texture
1750-1950		Homophonic Texture
1950-		Holophonic Texture



Figure 3: Texture in music and architecture

Texture, both in music and architecture, helps in understanding emotional and physical spaces. For example, differently textured surfaces can help in recognizing different physical and emotional spaces in a building. Similarly, differently sounding music also can help in recognizing different spaces within music.

Harmony

Harmony is an orderly or pleasing combination of elements in a whole. In music, it is said to be a balance between sound



and composition and in architecture it is a balance of elements together.

Figure 4: Harmony in music and architecture

Proportion

Proportion is the dimensional relation of one with the other. It is also the relation of part with the whole. Proportion in music is distance between notes or intervals. Also it is the relation between intensities of various sound frequencies. Proportion in architecture is meant to be relationship between elements together.

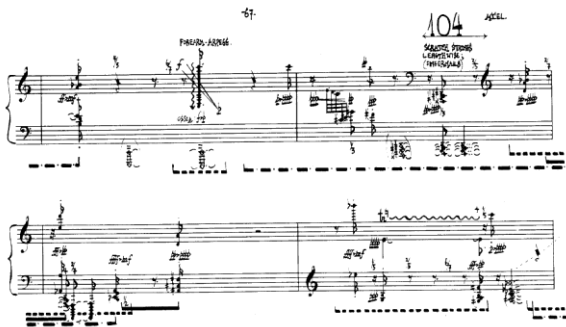


Figure 5 : Proportion in architecture

Dynamics

Dynamics is the motivating or driving forces, physical or moral. It is the quality of action in music. It means how loud or quiet the music is. Dynamics in architecture is expressed through a sense of energetic movement and action. It is better understood through building's facades or mass.

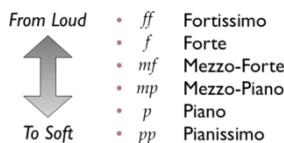


Figure 6 : Dynamics in music



Figure 7 : Dynamics in architecture

Music in architecture

Music in architecture can be understood at two levels-physical and mental (spiritual). Relation between music and architecture is best explored in Vitthal Temple at Hampi, Karnataka, where musical pillars are constructed. This is a unique feature and has become a major area of attraction. The efforts and skill of the architects and the craftsmen bringing it to reality can be considered to be at its peak. The temple pillars are composite pillars, with each individual pillar made up of many smaller and slender pillars. The Eastern Hall of the Mahamandapa is the Hall of Musical Pillars. Each of these pillars is carved with figures of musicians, musical instruments, and dancers.



Figure 8: Musical pillars of Vitthal Temple, Hampi



Figure 9: Carvings from Vitthal Temple, Hampi

Architecture considered as music

This aspect of architecture can be understood – rather felt – at mental or spiritual level as one perceives architecture in his or her own special angle. There have been many classic examples throughout timeline of architecture where this aspect can be “felt”.



Figure 10 : Kailash Temple, Ellora, India and Falling Water, Pennsylvania, USA

Architecture as backdrop for music

Architecture also can be supportive to music. A musical concert conducted in a precinct of architectural importance glorifies both music and architecture and attains a different dimension altogether. In this sense, architecture stands out as a backdrop for music resulting in to creation of an environment which reflects a distinct artistic character.



Figure 11: Architecture as backdrop of music

Music and spaces

Established by the emotional qualities, music and architectural spaces have particular relation with each other. Devotional music blends with religious buildings. Modern music (especially disco) goes well with places like discotheques. The character of music as a whole is in harmony with that of architecture. Character of a place is understood by typology of music and music is supported by character of architecture.

Conclusion

The experience of a wonderful building might in some way equate with the experience of a remarkable piece of music. The whole artistic experience is the change of perception. Music too has a same effect. After listening to a great piece of music it reminds of some feeling or event experienced in the past and also reminds the space within which that event had taken place. All arts deal with space and time. Music and architecture have both passed through stages of tangible and intangible development in response to their time. As abstract art forms based on rhythm, proportion, harmony, architecture and music share a clear cultural lineage. This is how music and architecture get blended together and felt physically and understood spiritually. It is rightly said by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe - ‘Music is liquid architecture; Architecture is frozen music.’

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