

1 PRE/ADCOM/PreC/144-03G/PREXAD/ADCOM/04AC to JP(DIV)  
2  
3 144-04G A SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST PHILOSOPHY OF  
4 MUSIC

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6 VOTED, To approve as guidelines the document, A Seventh-day Adventist Philosophy of  
7 Music, which reads as follows:

8  
9 A Seventh-day Adventist Philosophy of Music

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11 God has woven music into the very fabric of His creation. When He made all things “the  
12 morning stars sang together and the angels shouted for joy.”—Job 38:7 The book of Revelation  
13 portrays heaven as a place of ceaseless praise, with songs of adoration to God and the Lamb  
14 resounding from all.—Rev 4:9-11; 5:9-13; 7:10-12; 12:10-12; 14:1-3; 15:2-4; 19:1-8

15  
16 Because God made humans in His image, we share a love and appreciation for music with all  
17 His created beings. In fact, music can touch and move us with a power that goes beyond words or  
18 most other types of communication.<sup>1</sup> At its purest and best, music lifts our beings into the very presence  
19 of God where angels and unfallen beings worship Him in song.

20  
21 But sin has cast blight over the Creation. The divine image has been marred and well-nigh  
22 obliterated; in all aspects this world and God’s gifts come to us with a mingling of good and evil. Music  
23 is not morally and spiritually neutral. Some may move us to the most exalted human experience, some  
24 may be used by the prince of evil to debase and degrade us, to stir up lust, passion, despair, anger, and  
25 hatred.

26  
27 The Lord’s messenger, Ellen G White, continually counsels us to raise our sights in music. She  
28 tells us, “Music, when not abused, is a great blessing; but when it is put to a wrong use, it is a terrible  
29 curse”.<sup>2</sup> “Rightly employed, . . . [music] is a precious gift of God, designed to uplift the thoughts to high  
30 and noble themes, to inspire and elevate the souls.”<sup>3</sup>

31  
32 Of the power of song, she writes: “It is one of the most effective means of impressing the heart  
33 with spiritual truth. How often to the soul hard-pressed and ready to despair, memory recalls some  
34 word of God’s,—the long-forgotten burden of a childhood song,—and temptations lose their power,

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<sup>1</sup>“It [music] is one of the most effective means of impressing the heart with spiritual truth” (*Education*, p. 168).

<sup>2</sup>*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 497. She also states that in the future, “just before the close of probation,” “there will be shouting, with drums, music, and dancing. The senses of rational beings will become so confused that they cannot be trusted to make right decisions. And this is called the moving of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit never reveals itself in such methods, in such a bedlam of noise. This is an invention of Satan to cover up his ingenious methods for making of none effect the pure, sincere, elevating, ennobling, sanctifying truth for this time” (1 *SM* 37).

<sup>3</sup>*Education*, p. 167.

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1 life takes on new meaning and new purpose, and courage and gladness are imparted to other souls! . . .  
2 As a part of religious service, singing is as much an act of worship as is prayer. Indeed, many a song is  
3 prayer. . . . As our Redeemer leads us to the threshold of the Infinite, flushed with the glory of God, we  
4 may catch the themes of praise and thanksgiving from the heavenly choir round about the throne; and as  
5 the echo of the angels' song is awakened in our earthly homes, hearts will be drawn closer to the  
6 heavenly singers. Heaven's communion begins on earth. We learn here the keynote of its praise.<sup>4</sup>  
7

8 As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe and preach that Jesus is coming again soon. In our  
9 worldwide proclamation of the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12 we call all peoples to  
10 accept the everlasting gospel, to worship God the Creator, and to prepare to meet our soon-returning  
11 Lord. We challenge all to choose the good and not the bad, to "say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly  
12 passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the  
13 blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ."—Titus 2:12, 13  
14

15 We believe that the gospel impacts all areas of life. We therefore hold that, given the vast  
16 potential of music for good or ill, we cannot be indifferent to it. While realizing that tastes in music vary  
17 greatly from individual to individual, we believe that the Scriptures and the writings of Ellen G White  
18 suggest principles that can inform our choices.  
19

20 In this document the phrase "sacred music"—sometimes referred to as religious music—  
21 designates music that focuses on God and on biblical and Christian themes. In most cases, it is music  
22 composed and intended for worship service, evangelistic meetings, or private devotion and may be both  
23 vocal and instrumental music. However, not all sacred/religious music may be acceptable for an  
24 Adventist. Sacred music should not evoke secular associations or invite conformity to worldly  
25 behavioral patterns of thinking or acting.  
26

27 "Secular music" is music composed for settings other than the worship service or private  
28 devotion. It speaks to the common issues of life and basic human emotions. It comes out of our very  
29 being, expressing the human spirit's reaction to life, love, and the world in which the Lord has placed us.  
30 It can be morally uplifting or degrading. Although it does not directly praise and adore God,  
31 nevertheless it could have a legitimate place in the life of the Christian. In its selection the principles  
32 discussed in this document should be followed.  
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#### 34 Principles to Guide the Christian

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36 The music that Christians enjoy should be regulated by the following principles:  
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<sup>4</sup>*Education*, p. 168.

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1           1.       All music the Christian listens to, performs or composes, whether sacred or secular, will  
2 glorify God: “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”—1  
3 Corinthians 10:31 This is the over-riding biblical principle. Anything that cannot meet this high standard  
4 will weaken our experience with the Lord.

5  
6           2.       All music the Christian listens to, performs or composes, whether sacred or secular,  
7 should be the noblest and the best: “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is pure, whatever is  
8 right, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”—Phil  
9 4:8 As followers of Jesus Christ who hope and expect to join the heavenly choirs, we view life on this  
10 earth as a preparation for, and foretaste of, the life to come.

11  
12           On these two foundations—glorifying God in all things and choosing the noblest and the best—  
13 depend the other principles listed below for the selection of music by Christians.

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15           3.       It is characterized by quality, balance, appropriateness, and authenticity. Music fosters  
16 our spiritual, psychological, and social sensitivity, and our intellectual growth.

17  
18           4.       It appeals to both the intellect and the emotions and impacts the body in a positive way.  
19 It is wholistic.

20  
21           5.       Music reveals creativity in that it draws from quality melodies. If harmonized,<sup>5</sup> it uses  
22 harmonies in an interesting and artistic way, and employs rhythm that complements them.

23  
24           6.       Vocal music employs lyrics that positively stimulate intellectual abilities as well as our  
25 emotions and our will power. Good lyrics are creative, rich in content, and of good composition. They  
26 focus on the positive and reflect moral values; they educate and uplift; and they correspond with sound  
27 biblical theology.

28  
29           7.       Musical and lyrical elements should work together harmoniously to influence thinking  
30 and behavior in harmony with biblical values.

31  
32           8.       It maintains a judicious balance of spiritual, intellectual, and emotional elements.

33  
34           9.       We should recognize and acknowledge the contribution of different cultures in  
35 worshipping God. Musical forms and instruments vary greatly in the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist  
36 family, and music drawn from one culture may sound strange to someone from a different culture.

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<sup>5</sup>We acknowledge that in some cultures harmonies are not as important as in other cultures.

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2           Seventh-day Adventist music-making means to choose the best and above all to draw close to  
3 our Creator and Lord and glorify Him. Let us rise to the challenge of a viable alternative musical vision  
4 and, as part of our wholistic and prophetic message, make a unique Adventist musical contribution as a  
5 witness to the world regarding a people awaiting Christ's soon coming.