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Music – our universal gift

Are you listening to music as you read this? Quite possibly. Because surely there has never been a time when we have had better access to music. With tablet computers and smartphones, you don't even need a record or CD collection any more, just a playlist with a choice from millions of songs and pieces from all over the world. And live music is thriving too. Music festivals are part of the annual pattern of many people's lives. Resources for learning to play can be found in abundance, as well as opportunities for composers and performers to get their work heard. Has there ever been a better time to love listening and playing to music, old and new?

Beethoven said that music is the mediator between the spiritual and the sensual life. So in our generation our senses and spirits ought to be better connected than ever! The Church and Christian faith have historically been great drivers and patrons of music, and some of the most sublime and uplifting music can be found in Mass settings, Anglican chant, anthems, spirituals and gospel music. But spirituality can be found across the board, and many modern "secular" songs are profoundly spiritual. Sometimes it seems that the musical world in general is doing better than the Church at putting us in touch with our spiritual side, through expressions of love, loss, protest, yearning, questioning, joy and delight. For the Christian, music is perhaps something more, a vehicle for worship and praise. But music is one of God's beautiful gifts to all of us, and I for one rejoice that it is so universal and reaches every corner of our lives.