

MUSIC AND MOVEMENT

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Do you sing in the shower or dance in your kitchen? I do, because I need to rehearse for upcoming concerts for Women in Harmony, and I also like creating new choreography for my Essentrics® classes offered by Community Services. No one can hear or see me until I get it right. It's perfect. However, perfect is the enemy of good. Don't go for perfect. When music moves you, your gyrations, hip circles, knee lifts, and toe taps might be a bit offbeat and spastic, but don't despair. Your brain and body love and need music. Just do it. When I hear "Benedictus" performed by 2 Cellos or "Alleluja" sung by k.d. Lang, I feel desperate, melancholy, yet peaceful. If I need a pick-me-up, I cue up "Stayin' Alive" or "Hello Dolly". So how do I choose the music for our fitness classes? More importantly, how does the music played when you attend class affect you, the participant?

In *The Mozart Effect*, the author Don Campbell (not our Don Campbell) explains how tapping into the power of music can heal us and unlock the creative spirit. You may recall that he claimed that playing Mozart for infants makes them smarter. While this one claim has been disputed and diluted, his book convinced me that music is medicine. Like all medicine, the right mix for you is not the same for me. So again, how do I choose music that will move you? The first principle is entrainment, which means being in sync with the music. I use songs with a gradual change in rhythm and emotional content so that we can leave one emotional state and enter another without losing our entrainment. My classes have enjoyed Ravel's "Bolero", and Dukas's "The Sorcerer's Apprentice," both cited by Campbell. These songs reflect another music therapy principle I use—the iso principle—no abrupt change in tempo or tone that will disrupt our flow. Of course, the diversion principle is what I'm often incorporating into our workouts. I hope to lift your spirits and divert your attention from dark to light.

Most of us are intrigued that we can sing an old favorite song but can't remember our car license plate. The research into memory and music is robust. In *This is Your Brain on Music*, Daniel Levitin cites research that suggests that the teen years are the point at which songs are most remembered. The theory is that our amygdala and neurotransmitters act in concert to tag the music memories as something important. At about age 14, we are in a period of self-discovery and extreme emotions, and the songs we hear are linked to all those important emotions, good and bad. Of course, most of us recall many songs throughout our lives, but the theory holds that the more emotions there are hooked to a song, the more likely you'll remember it. Other fascinating research shows that when people try to sing a song they remember, they are very close to singing it in the right key and tempo. We are brilliant! I bet there's a song you've heard in a Cape fitness class that reminds you of too many lunges! When class members bring me a song suggestion, I love it. A recent one was Farewell Stromness. Quite a story behind that song! Scotland. Uranium. As they say, "Look it up!"