



What is Music?

What is Music Anyway? What is Writing Anyway?
By Billie A Williams

In the *Intellectual Devotional* by David S Kidder & Noah D Oppenheim we are given a lot of food for thought. One thing they say is that Music has a pattern where noise only has sound. I'm afraid that could define Heavy Metal for me. Noise, loud and busy that has no rhyme or reason for being. Sorry Heavy Metal fans, it just doesn't translate for me.

Kidder and Oppenheim say the basics of music compared to noise have to do with
Pitch—How high or low a sound is to the ear;
Scale—a stepwise arrangement of pitches;
Key—which is an arrangement or system of pitches usually based on one of the major or minor scales.

Simple isn't it? The *Ghost Music of Vaudeville* as a mystery has a similar basic set up.

Pitch: how intense (high) or relaxed (low) the action

Scale: an arrangement of pitches that take us from each paragraph with a beginning, middle and end, to each chapter with its beginning, middle and end; to the book as a whole with a beginning, middle and end.

Key: That is a little harder, but I think of it as all the system of pitches – the paragraph, page, chapter, and book according to one of the Major (genre) or Minor (sub-genre) scales –genre and subgenres of the mystery from cozy, procedural, true crime, or hard boiled.

Therefore, everything in writing the mystery can be reduced or elevated to its musical counter part. Our culture influences our pitch, scale, and keys whether that is in writing or in music. Extremes may abound even while the rules are followed. For instance music in India compared to the music here in the west such as opera. Or compare the Native American Drum, to the drum of modern rock – they are nowhere in the same playing field – the Native American Drum is spiritual, the rock drum is entertainment. Both, however, are entertainment and in some circles could be called something close to a spiritual realm.

Music and writing are both creative processes. Whether we use pitch, scale, and key or whether we use some other method to join the parts into a complete whole – they compliment each other, and I believe they embody each other.

It is said that we each “march to our different drummer,” and I believe that is as true in creating fiction as it is in creating music.

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Billie A Williams is a mystery/suspense multi-published, award-winning author whose accidental sleuths solve crimes with wit, wisdom, and chutzpah and perhaps just a dash of

music. You can contact her at billie@billiewilliams.com or her website at www.billiewilliams.com