

# If You Can't Say It, Sing It



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I think we can agree that music is an expression of the soul: creative ideas molded in sound and projected out as melody and harmony. When we play music for each other, we share our thoughts and feelings with one another. It's a form of communication that anyone can get good at with practice. Because of this, we can say that the audience to a musical performance in any context is just as important as the performer. I am not suggesting that we all need to put on our best clothes and stand on stage to perform music, but rather we can be in a comfortable environment playing a section of a song for a friend to be performing music. It's about the communication, not the aesthetics and audiences can be of many different sizes and shapes. We all communicate differently and each person's voice is unique and important, so don't hide your voice, because someone out there needs to hear it.

For most of human history, we have understood the communicative nature of music. A popular musical group activity for anyone to join is the drum circle, and they have been around for centuries. It's a simple and easy way to musically connect with others through rhythm. The group plays a repetitive rhythm, becoming one sound, and gives turn to each drummer to communicate an idea to the group. Each idea presented is unique and specific to the performer. There is no competition. No one is trying to make a quick buck. It's just people talking to each other through music.



As far back as the 1500s, there existed a type of gathering called a *Salon*. These meetings were extremely popular in Italy and France and are still practiced to this day. A salon is an event hosted by someone of means at their home where a number of prominent artists, composers, and writers would gather to discuss ideas and share their work with one another. Most popular in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, salons were very important in the *Age of Communication*. Artistic people are notorious for making social commentary which lead to exciting conversations occurring during a salon. The musicians would perform their music for each other and discuss the instrumentation, often on a piano, and what new sound combinations they were exploring. This led to more well-rounded composers and faster, more expansive exploration of musical ideas.

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As salons are more of a European tradition, Americans decided to rename the practice as a *Club* when it was brought stateside. Many of these such music clubs were getting started heading into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was a similar gathering to a salon, but focused more on musical expression instead of all areas of discussion. Musicians and music enthusiasts from the local community would get together at the home of a host maybe once or twice a month to discuss composers, operas, and stand alone musical pieces. Some of the members would then perform music to emphasize the theme of the meeting and share special bits of information about the piece and how it relates to the theme. It was a great way to meet other musicians and learn about music.

There appear to be some music clubs still alive today in the US, but not nearly as many as there once were. Ones that I've been able to find focus more on scholarship competition than on communication through music. I have not attended the meetings of any, so I cannot speak from experience. It would be good to see people getting together to play music without an end goal such as gigging or competing. I hope this newsletter serves to inspire the creation of new recreational music clubs.

Sound is an important way to communicate and what better way to connect than through gathering together and playing music?