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Artist review: Revisiting sting-an under-recognized Existentialist song writer¹

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Abstract

Artistic expressions such as songs and poetry are examples of free activities and are privileged modes of revealing what the world is about. Art's power, in the case of existentialism, is to a large extent devoted to expressing the absurdity of the human condition since for the existentialists, the world is no longer open to the human desire of meaning and order. Sting is included in this pool of gifted artist and his talent in making songs has not only paved the way for his successful career as

a solo artist but also helped him in communicating his thoughts and ideals to the world. His music, words and life are inextricably linked and this can be seen in many of Sting's confessional songs that have connections to events in his personal life. Existential characteristics have affected Sting both as a person and a musician. This paper calls for more researches on his music legacy that the world owed him for a long time.

Keywords: Sting, Existentialist, Song Writer

Introduction

Artistic expressions such as songs and poetry are examples of free activities and are privileged modes of revealing what the world is about. Art's power, in the case of existentialism, is to a large extent devoted to expressing the absurdity of the human condition since for the existentialists, the world is no longer open to the human desire of meaning and order. Songs, like other forms of literary work are effective means of conveying soulful emotions Singers-songwriters relay the realities of everyday life through the songs they create and a large part of the singer-songwriter's aesthetic is that of personal expression. In the 1970's, with artists like Joni Mitchell and James Taylor, leading the way, the 'confessional' mode became the order of the day. Intense personal, sometimes political subject matters were delivered in the most intimate ways. Sting is also



included in this pool of gifted artist and his talent in making songs has not only paved the way for his successful career as a solo artist but also helped him in communicating his thoughts and ideals to the world. The music, words and life of many singer-songwriters are inextricably linked and this can be seen in many of Sting's confessional songs that have connections to events in his personal life. Existential characteristics have affected Sting both as a person and a musician.

¹This article is a summary handout of Sting's artistic development as a chapter of the course: Popular Musicians in Western Countries that I taught to High School students. For educational purpose only, this article does not claim any originality in the content presented per se, but making a "revisit" to this artist's life as both a man and a musician. The historical and personal data were solicited and collected from various sources that I collected over the years, such as internet, books and newspapers. Some sources' original information might be missing due to the long time passage. Special thanks to www.sting.com and Wikipedia for very important information to this presentation complete. If there is any missing citations, kindly contact the author for duly acknowledgment and apology in advance for such negligence.

Profile and Biography

Profile

Sting is an international artist, a veteran of the music and film industries, an environmental and human rights activist and award-winning songwriter with a practically guaranteed fan base. He has always been a risk-taker, both professional and artistically. He has been very much hailed as an avowed existentialist. Much of his music has been a reflection of his personality and his very vocal views regarding his advocacies in life. He writes about anything from love, relationships, death, politics, religion, etc. He has been said to write songs that sound more like poetry than a typical pop song composition. As a clearly subjective being, he feels more than he thinks, so the emotion that is involved in his song writing is a clear manifestation of his existentialist tendencies. He appears to be more human and people can easily identify themselves with him; he speaks much of pain, letting go, about how cruel the world is, war, prostitution etc, which is exactly the way an existentialist looks at the world, as incomprehensible, absurd and without certainty and since nothing is explained then anything can happen, the best and the worst.

Biography

Gordon Matthew Thomas Sumner (born 2 October 1951), better known by his professional name Sting, is an English musician, singer-songwriter, activist, actor and philanthropist. Prior to starting his solo career, he was the principal song writer, lead singer and bassist of the rock band The Police.

Sting has varied his musical style throughout his career, incorporating distinct elements of jazz, reggae, classical and world beat into his music. As a solo musician and member of The Police, Sting has received sixteen Grammy Awards for his work, receiving his first Grammy for Best Rock Instrumental Performance in 1981, and receiving an Oscar nomination for best song. He is a member of both the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and the Songwriters Hall of Fame.

Early Life. Sting was born in Wallsend, England, near Newcastle upon Tyne, the eldest of four children born to Audrey (nee Cowell), a hairdresser, and Ernest Matthew Sumner, a milkman and engineer. His siblings were Philip, Angela and Anita. Young Gordon would often assist his father with early morning milk delivery rounds and his "best friend" was an old Spanish guitar with five rusty strings which had been left behind by an uncle who emigrated to Canada.²

He attended St Cuthbert's Grammar School, which later became St. Cuthbert's High School, in Newcastle upon Tyne. He would often sneak into nightclubs like the Club-A-Go-Go, where he would watch acts such as Cream and Jimi Hendrix, artist who would later influence his own music. After jobs as a bus conductor, a construction laborer and a tax officer, he attended Northern Counties College of Education (which later became part of Northumbria University) from 1971 to 1974 and qualified as a teacher. He then worked as a schoolteacher at St. Paul's Middle School in Cramlington for two years.

His first music gigs were whenever he could get a playing job. He performed in jazz groups on evenings, weekends, and during breaks from college and from teaching. He played

with local jazz bands such as the Phoenix Jazzmen, the Newcastle Big Band, and Last Exit. He gained his nickname after he performed wearing a black and yellow sweater with hooped stripes while onstage with the Phoenix Jazzmen. Bandleader Gordon Solomon thought that the sweater made him look like a wasp, which prompted the nickname "Sting"³.

Musical Career. In January 1977, Sting moved from Sunderland to London, and soon thereafter he joined Stewart Copeland and Henry Padovani (who was soon replaced by Andy Summers) to form the New Wave band the Police. Between 1978 and 1983, they released five chart-topping albums and won six Grammy Awards. Although their initial sound was punk inspired, The Police switched to reggae-tinged rock and minimalist pop. Their last album, *Synchronicity*, which included their most successful song, "Every Breath You Take", was released in 1983. While never formally breaking up, after *Synchronicity* the group agreed to concentrate on solo projects. As the years went by, the band members, particularly Sting, dismissed the possibility of reforming. In 2007 however, the band reformed and undertook a world tour.

Early Solo Work⁴. In September 1981, Sting made his first live solo appearance, performing on all four nights of the fourth Amnesty International benefit *The Secret Policeman's Other Ball* at the invitation of producer Martin Lewis. He performed solo versions of "Roxanne" and "Message in a Bottle". He also led an all-star band (dubbed "The Secret Police") on his own arrangement of Bob Dylan's "I Shall Be Released". The band and chorus included Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, Phil Collins, Bob Geldof and Midge Ure all of whom except Beck later worked together on Live Aid. His performances were featured prominently in the album and movie of the show and drew critical attention to his work. Sting's participation in *The Secret Policeman's Other Ball* was the beginning of his growing involvement in raising money and consciousness for political and social causes. In 1982 he released a solo single, "Spread a Little Happiness" from the film version of the Dennis Potter television play *Brimson and Treacle*. The song was a re-interpretation of a song from the 1920's musical *Mr. Cinders* by Vivian Ellis, and was a surprise Top 20 hit in the UK.

1980's. His first solo album, 1958's *The Dream of the Blue Turtles*, featured a cast of jazz musicians, including Kenny Kirkland, Darryl Jones, Omar Hakim, and Brandford Marsalis. It included the hit single "If You Love Somebody Set Them Free". The single included a fan favorite non-LP track titled "Another Day". The album also yielded the hits "Fortress around Your Heart", and "Love Is the Seventh Wave". It also included the song "Russians" which was based on a theme from the *Lieutenant Kijè Suite* by Russian composer Sergei Prokofiev. Within a year, the album reached Platinum. This album would help Sting garner a Grammy nomination for album of the year. The film "Bring on the Night", directed by Michael Apted, documented the formation of the band and its first concert in France.

Sting performing in 1985. Also in 1985, he sang the introduction and chorus to "Morning for Nothing", a groundbreaking song by Dire Straits (he was given co-writer status and receives royalties based on his performance

²Wikipedia,Sting,https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%8F%B2%E6%B1%80,last accessed: Jul 2,2021

³Wikipedia,Sting,https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%8F%B2%E6%B1%80,last accessed: Jul 2,2021

⁴ www.sting.com. last accessed: Jul 2,2021

because he refused his melody from The Police hit “Don’t Stand So Close to Me” for his vocal parts. It is one of only two shared songwriting credits on any Dire Straits album). He performed this song with Dire Straits at the Live Aid Concert at Wembley Stadium. He also provided a short guest vocal performance on the Miles Davis album “You’re Under Arrest”. He also sang backing vocals in Arcadia’s single “The Promise” from their only album, “So Red the Rose” and in Phil Collins’ two singles “Take Me Home” and “Long Long Way to Go” from his album, “No Jacket Required”. He also contributed a version of “Mack the Knife” to the Hal Willner-produced tribute album “Lost in the Stars: The Music of Kurt Will”. In 1984 he performed “Do They Know It’s Christmas?” with Band Aid for the relief of poverty in Africa. Sting released *Nothing Like the Sun* in 1987, including the hit songs “We’ll Be Together”, “Fragile”, “Englishman in New York”, and “Be Still My Beating Heart”, dedicated to his mother, who recently died. It eventually went Double Platinum. The song “The Secret Marriage” from this album was adapted from a melody by German composer Hans Eisler, and “Englishman in New York” was about the eccentric writer Quentin Crisp. The album’s title is taken from William Shakespeare’s Sonnet 130.

Soon thereafter, in February 1988, he released *Nada Como el so*, a selection of five songs from *Sun* sung by (Sting himself) in Spanish and Portuguese. He was also involved in two other recordings in the late 1980’s, the first in 1987 with jazz arranger Gil Evans who placed Sting in a big band setting for a live album of Sting’s songs the CD was not released in the U.S.), and the second on Frank Zappa’s 1988 *Broadway the Hard Way* album, where Sting performs an unusual arrangement of “Murder By Numbers”, set to the tune “Stolen Moments” by jazz composer Oliver Nelson and dedicated to fundamentalist evangelist Jimmy Swaggart. October 1988 saw the release of Igor Stravinsky’s *The Soldier’s Tale* with the London Sinfonietta conducted by Kent Nagano. It featured Vanessa Redgrave, Sir Ian McKellen and Sting in the role of the soldier.

1990s. His 1992 album *The Soul Cages* was dedicated to his recently deceased father and included the Top 10 song “All This Time”, which reached #5 on the U.S. Pop chart, and the Grammy-winning “The Soul Cages”. The album eventually went Platinum. The following year, he married Trudie Styler and was awarded an honorary degree in music from Northumbria University. In 1991, Sting appeared on *Two Rooms: Celebrating the Songs of Elton John and Bernie Taupin*, an album dedicated to the singer/songwriter duo. Sting performed “Come Down in Time”, for the album which features other popular artists and their renditions of John Taupin Songs. The album was released on 22 October 1991 by Polydor. Also in 1991, a recording of Prokofiev’s *Peter and the Wolf* was made by Deutsche Grammophon, narrated by Sting, and played by Claudio Abbado and the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. This was also used as the soundtrack to the television special *Peter and the Wolf: A Prokofiev Fantasy*. In 1993, he released the album *Ten Summoner’s Tales*, which went Triple Platinum in just over a year. *Ten Summoner’s Tales* was nominated for the Mercury Prize in 1993 and nominated for the Grammy Award for Album of the Year in 1994. The title is wordplay on his surname, Sumner and *The Summoner’s Tale*, one of *The Canterbury Tales*. The single “Fields of Gold” had moderate success on radio airways. Concurrent video albums were released to support *Soul Cages* (a live concert) and *Ten Summoner’s Tale* (recorded during the recording sessions for the album).

In May 1993, he released a cover of his own classic Police song from the *Ghost in Machine* album, “Demolition Man” for the *Demolition Man* film. Together with Bryan Adams and Rod Stewart, Sting performed the chart-topping song “All for Love” for the film *The Three Musketeers*. The song stayed at the top of the U.S. charts for five weeks and went Platinum; it is to date Sting’s only song from his post-Police career to top the U.S. charts. In February, he won two more Grammy Awards and was nominated for three more. The Berklee College of Music gave him his secondary honorary doctorate of music degree in May. In November, he released a greatest hit compilation called *Fields of Gold: The Best of Sting*, which eventually was certified Double Platinum. That same year, he was featured in a duet with Vanessa Williams on the song “Sister Moon” which appeared on her album *The Sweetest Days*.

His 1996 album, *Mercury Falling* debuted strongly with the single “Let Your Soul Be Your Pilot”, but it dropped quickly on the charts. He reached the Top 40 with two singles the same year with “You Still Touch Me” (June) and “I’m So Happy I Can’t Stop Crying” (December). During this period, Sting also was recording for the upcoming Disney Film *Kingdom of the Sun*, which went on to be reworked into *The Emperor’s New Groove*. The film went through drastic overhauls and plot changes, many of which were documented by Sting’s wife, Trudie Styler. She captured the moment he was called by Disney who then informed him that his songs would not be used in the final film. The story was put into a final product: *The Sweatbox*, which premiered at the Toronto Film Festival. Disney currently holds the rights to the film and will not grant its release. That same year, Sting also released a little-known CD-ROM called *All This Time*, which provided music, commentary and custom computer features describing Sting and his music from his perspective. In 1997, Sting performed “I’ll Be Missing You” with Puff Daddy at the 1997 MTV Music Awards in tribute of the late Notorious B.I.G.

2000s. The *Emperor’s New Groove* soundtrack was released with complete songs from previous version of the film. This is seen by many as a move on Disney’s part to soothe the relationship with Sting and to keep open the door for future projects. The final single used to promote the film was “My Funny Friend and Me”. Sting’s September 1999 album *Brand New Day* included the Top 40 hits “Brand New Day” and “Desert Rose”. The album went Triple Platinum by January 2001. In 2000, he won Grammy Awards for *Brand New Day* and the song of the same name. At the awards ceremony, he performed: “Desert Rose” with Collaborator on the album version, Cheb Mami. For his performance, the Arab American Institute Foundation gave him the Khalil Gibran Spirit of Humanity Award. However, Sting was criticized for appearing in a Jaguar advertisement using “Desert Rose” as its backing track, particularly as he was a notable environmentalist.

In February 2001 he won another Grammy Award for his rendition of “She Walks This Earth (Soberana Rosa)” on *A Love Affair: The Music of Ivan Lins*. His song “After the Rain Has Fallen” made it into Top 40. His next project was to record a live album at his Tuscan villa, which was to be released as a CD and DVD, as well as being simulcast in its entirety on the internet. The CD and DVD were to be entitled on such a night and were intended to feature re-workings of Sting’s favorites such as “Roxanne” and “If You Love Somebody Set Them Free”. The concert, scheduled for 11 September 2001, was altered in various ways due to the terrorist attacks in America that day. The webcast was shut

down after one song (a re-worked version of "Fragile") after which Sting let it be up to the audience whether or not to continue with the show. Eventually they decided to go through with the concert, and the resultant album and DVD was released in November under a different title. *All This Time*. Both are dedicated "to all those who lost their lives on that day". He performed a special arrangement of "fragile" with Yo-Yo- Ma and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir during the opening ceremonies of the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, Utah.

In 2002, he won a Golden Globe Award for the song "Until..." from the film *Kate and Leopold*. Written and performed by him, "Until..." was also nominated for Academy Award for Best Song". In June he was inducted into the Songwriter's Hall of Fame. In the summer, Sting was awarded the British honor of Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE). In 2003 he released *Sacred Love*, a studio album featuring collaborations with hip-hop artist Mary J. Blige and sitar performer Anoushka Shankar. He and Blige won a Grammy for their duet "Whenever I Say Your Name". The song is based on Johan Sebastian Bach's *Praeambulum 1 C-Major (BWV) 924* from the *Klavierbuechlein fuer Wilhelm Friedemann Bach* though Sting gave little comment on his adaptation. The album did not have hit singles like his previous releases. The first single, "Send Your Love" reached only #30 and reviews are mixed. However, the album reached platinum status by January 2004.

His autobiography *Broken Music* was published in October. He embarked on a *Sacred Love* tour in 2004 with performances by Annie Lennox. Sting went on the *Broken Music* tour, touring smaller venues, with a four piece band starting in Los Angeles on 28 March 2005 and ending his "College Tour" on 14 May 2005. Sting appears as a guest on the 2005 *Monkey Business* CD by American hip-hop group *The Black Eyed Peas*, adding vocals to the track "Union" which makes heavy use of samples from his *Englishman in New York*. Continuing with his involvement in *Live Aid*, he appeared at *Live 8* in July 2005. During 2006, Sting collaborated with Roberto Livy in producing a Spanish language version of his cut classic "Fragile" entitled "Fragilidad" on the album *Rhythms Del Mundo* by Latino recording legends.

In October 2006, he released an album, to mixed reviews, entitled *Songs from the Labyrinth* featuring the music of John Dowland. As a part of the promotion of this album, he appeared on the fifth episode of *Studio 60* during which he performed a segment of Dowland's "Come Again" as well as his own "Fields of Gold". Reports surfaced in early 2007 that Sting would reunite with his former *Police* band mates for a 30th anniversary tour. These rumors were confirmed by posts on the popular fanzine *Stingus* and on other news websites.

On 11 February 2007, he reunited with other members of the *Police* as the introductory act for the 2007 Grammy Awards, singing "Roxanne", and subsequently announced *The Police Reunion Tour*, the first concert of which was held in Vancouver on 28 May 2007 for 22,000 fans at one of two nearly sold-out concerts. The *Police* toured for more than a year, beginning with North America and eventually crossing over to Europe, South America, Australia and New Zealand and Japan. The last concert was at *Madison Square Garden* on 7 August 2008, during which his three daughters appeared with him on stage. In 2007, he recorded a song called "Power's Out" with Nicole Scherzinger (lead singer of *Pussycat Dolls*) the song is featured on her debut album *Her*

Name is Nicole which she was prepared to release in the beginning of 2008. Toronto documentary producer Vanessa Dylun, who was producing a film called *The Musical Brain*, featuring neuroscientist Daniel Levitin, approached Sting about participating in the film. Sting was interested in the experience of having his brain scanned by MRI while different types of music were played to him. The film was financed by CTV in Canada and National Geographic International (broadcast internationally as *My Music Brain*). Sting was also featured in Levitin's second book, *The World in Six Songs*, where several of his songs (including "Russians") are discussed.

He is featured as a playable character in the video game *Guitar Hero World Tour*. "Brand New Day" was the final song of the night for the *Neighborhood Ball*, one of ten inaugural balls honoring President Barack Obama on Inauguration Day, 20 January 2009. Sting was joined by Stevie Wonder on harmonica. According to an article on his official website, Sting entered the studio in early February 2009 to begin work on a new album *If on a Winter's Night*, released on October 2009. Initial reviews by fans that had access to early promotional copies were mixed and some questioned Sting's artistic direction with this Album.

2010. On 4 March 2010, 2010 Sting performed at the *Meydan Racecourse* launch in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. On 2 June 2010, Sting began his *Symphonicity* tour of North America and Europe. The tour features many of Sting's songs performed with the *Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra*, as recorded on his *Symphonicities* album. On 31 December 2010, he performed in Kiev, Ukraine on a New Year show on the popular TV channel *Inter*.

Personal Life. Sting is married to film producer *Trudie Styler*, and has six children with *Trudie* and ex-wife, actress *Frances Tomelty*. Sting owns a Jacobian castle in Wiltshire, which he calls "Lake House", where he records his albums, a place in London, an apartment in New York, a place on the beach in Malibu, California, and a Renaissance Florentine Villa called "Palagio" in Figline Valdarno, Tuscany, Italy. He has been cited as pretentious and is accused of intellectual arrogance for stepping into territory not usually covered by "pop stars".

Selected Music Albums of Sting⁵

A good song is as if the poet had pressed his heart against the paper, and that could have conveyed its hot, tumultuous throbbing to the reader. The songwriter must take his place somewhere between the poet and the musician, and must form a distinct class by himself. The faculty of writing songs is certainly a peculiar one and as perfect in its kind as that of writing epics. They can only be written by true poets. Songs relate to man the experience and hoarded learning of the feelings; greater poems detail that of the mind. One is the result of the wisdom which the heart keeps by remaining young, and the other that which it gains by growing old.

A song writer therefore is a poet by heart; he transcends boundaries and refuses to confine his music to what is given. This way of expressing one's music is clearly imbedded in the works of a musical genius in the person of *Gordon Sumner* or better known as *Sting*. For *Sting*, it's very hard to talk about music in words. Words are superfluous to the abstract power of music. One can fashion words into poetry so that they are understood the way music is understood but they only aspire to the condition where music already exist.

⁵ www.sting.com. last accessed: Jul 2,2021

Music is difficult to write about. Despite being performed on very concrete instruments, music itself is an abstract art. In writing about music, writers try to capture at least a portion of not only the meanings of notes and words, but also the emotions evoked and the very essence of the art form.

Sting is an international artist, a veteran of the music and film industries, an environmental and human rights activist and award-winning songwriter with a practically guaranteed fan base. He has always been a risk-taker, both professional and artistically. His restless energy has served him well and forced him on to hitherto unforeseen paths. He has described himself as a lifelong learner and this curiosity has not let him stagnate for lack of creative direction. He initially became famous as a member of The Police, one of the most successful groups in popular music history. But ultimately he gave in to his urge to become a solo artist. The music, words and life of many singer-songwriters are inextricably linked and Sting is no exception. Many of his confessional songs have connections to events in his personal life; these connections are either explicit or implicit. For Sting, music is a journey and his songs are the signposts of his primary mode of expression. People change over the course of their lives- they develop new interests and new friends, and the new experiences become part of them. Yet despite changes over a person's lifetime, people also, paradoxically remain the same. Though one may evolve in the process, it should not extinguish the burning desire to re-invent oneself, to remain the person that one is in the middle of a conformist society. Sting was a working class boy from Newcastle. His father was a milkman and he would find in working-class communities that his future can be laid out for him- one tends to repeat one's parents. He too would be a milkman, and he always kicking out against that blueprint. Coming from the background that he had, Sting knew that he was always going to be accused of being out of place and being pretentious for having this huge curiosity about the world, literature and music. His intention was always to be – singular. He had a testing childhood. They were not a happy family and a bit of a broken one. Both of his parents died in 1987 and Sting didn't go to either funeral. At that time, he felt his presence back in Newcastle would turn the funerals into a media circus and it is something that he now regrets. He spent a lot of time alone practicing on an old-five-string Spanish guitar that an uncle had left in the house when emigrating, and as a teenager he was regular in Newcastle music venues- standing awe-struck as he took in the musical exotica of Jimi Hendrix and Cream. Working as first a bus conductor, then on a building site, he had become proficient to join local jazz bands and play in dive venues. He got his nickname from those days-when he was a member of the local Phoenix Jazzman band, he would always wear a yellow jumper hooped black stripes which made him look like a bumble bee. After qualifying as a teacher, he moved from the North East and his Newcastle home to London to see whether the pavements were indeed paved with hip jazz joints. He found a city that was interested only in this new anarchic sound known as 'punk rock'.

Knowing the climate was not right for a jobbing jazz bass guitarist, he joined up with Andy Summers and Stewart Copeland. They poured a bottle of bleach over their hair and got themselves some safety pins and as the Police, they contrived a new wave sound-with just enough reggae inflection to distinguish them from the masses. Sting was never into rock n'roll. He wasn't into Led Zeppelin or any of those bands. He was obsessed by jazz musicians such as Miles Davis and Ray Brown and he loved the Big Bang

sound, the Dixieland jazz sound. He appreciated the energy of punk music, but it lacked the sophistication. He adapted it, put in some complex harmonies and chord changes. Punk/New Wave was only ever a flag of convenience for them, they flew it and it worked. In spades, within a few years, The Police were one of the biggest groups in the world. And Sting was being as 'singular' as ever. The Ghost in the Machine album was named after an Arthur Koestler book and Synchronicity was named after the Jungian theory of the same name. In a song 'Don't Stand Close To Me' he used Nabokov to rhyme with 'cough'. Nabokov was a famous Russian writer. All of these piqued people's interest and had them asking since these were not the typical subjects of pop music lyrics. It was different.

The Police had run their course by 1984, and Sting was delighted to be able to get back to his jazz sound as a solo artist. He worked with jazz greats such as Kenny Kirkland and Branford Marsalis and looked on bemused as his solo career threatened to eclipse the commercial success of the Police. In 2007, The Police reformed for a very lucrative tour, but he says any further Police work would be dreadful and gratuitous. He was quoted as saying "I am what I am" he says of the perceptions of him." As I said, I am a singular person. I never wanted to conform to any particular stereotype. And I'm still like that. I get flak for it. But it doesn't matter, it won't change the way I am".

An artist of soaring caliber, Sting's refuses to fade and continues to engrave his name in the minds of people by creating music that conquers and liberates. No matter how one perceives it, he gives music a new meaning by endlessly transcending, defying, and innovating. Music is a reflection of the society or the individual that makes it; showing who this society or person is and what they are like in their values, interests and even beliefs. Music is defined by the society or the individual that produces it. Its theme is so diverse that there is no exact way or meaning that can be attributed to it. According to Sarah Worth "Music cannot compete with linguistic meaning" because it has no definite reference points to derive its meanings". It is not language per se but rather a language of expression. Sting has made communication possible through his music despite the changing times and the multiplicity of messages that his listeners decipher from his songs. He is able to convey his innermost thoughts and feelings by telling a story or by just writing the emotions involved in what is hurting or affecting him at the moment. Much of Sting's music was influenced by rock and jazz. He started with playing jazz music, but it can never be denied that rock and guitar legend Jimi Hendrix had much influence on the way Sting expresses his musicality. These types of music exemplify are ultimate forms of expression, boundless in terms of its rhythm, tone and scale. It can scream out loud at one point and then rapidly become subtle at another. One has to walk through his works to feel how complex and deep a man Stings is. He is a musical adventurer and a genius in his field. He defied boundaries and never limited himself to what is constant. Every album he makes speaks of what he is, of what he truly believes and aspires for (Gable, 2007)^[6].

Breaking Free of an Artist⁶

'The Dream of the Blue Turtles' album (released June 1, 1985) was Sting's first solo first solo album and represented a very real risk. He had given up the safe option of continuing with The Police in order to make it alone. Following the massive success of 'Synchronicity', Sting decided to set out

⁶ www.sting.com. last accessed: Jul 2,2021

on his own. This decision he admitted was not particularly logical. Many in his circle disagreed on his move to leave what arguably the biggest band in the world at that time. It was a risk that he courageously took, fully aware that he is compromising an established career. He ignored this as much as he could, counting on the hope that the momentum created by the band would keep the people curious about what he is up to. He gained some from the loss; he now has a sense of freedom in not having to tailor songs to accommodate even one as versatile group as The Police. It was like opening a window in a closed room. He now has more room to stretch and more space to move about.

The title of the album came from a dream that woke him up on his first night in Barbados. He dreamed that he was sitting in the walled garden behind his house in Hampstead, under a lilac tree on a well-manicured lawn, surrounded by beautiful rosebushes. Suddenly the bricks from the wall exploded into the garden and he turned to see the head of an enormous turtle emerging from the darkness, followed by four or five others. They were not only the size of man; they were also blue and had an air of being immensely cool, insouciant and fearless. They commenced to destroy his English garden, digging up the lawn with their claws and chomping at the rosebushes, bulldozing the lilac tree. Sting interpreted the turtles as symbols of the sub-conscious, living under the sea, full of unrealized potential. With the album he wanted to destroy a lot of preconceptions and expectations, and do something unsettlingly different. The overriding feeling that he had in that dream was joy, watching the spectacle of his garden getting wrecked. And the analogy is the band; by going through the process with this new band, he shall break a lot of easy options, one of which is making a Police record.

The album was created with the help of his friend, writer and critic Vic Garbarini, and a band of young jazz musicians in Eddie Grant's Blue Wave studio in Barbados. These musicians are all ten years younger than Sting and middle-class blacks who did things naturally and so easily. They're probably the best young jazz musicians in the country and his intention was to use musicians who had the finesse of playing jazz and to make music without that label. Basically, the whole project was designed to create a new kind of hybrid that was neither rock n roll nor jazz. He was never really interested in the spirit of rock n roll but in the spirit of live music, but at the same, he did not want to make a jazz album. He carefully layered different musical tracks in the studio and used synthesizers to create chiming tones and orchestral textures. Sting seamlessly blended Slavic melodies, modal scales and African, Caribbean rhythms into a high-tech global folk music. 'The Dream of the Blue Turtles' is a collection of ten experimental, fiercely focused pop compositions. It is an extension of Sting's development as a songwriter and has appropriated a more personalized sound to complement it. His goal was to forge a connection between rigid pop formula and the creative spark of improvised music. Like a chemist confident of his materials but unsure how his experiment would turn out, Sting took chances and it worked.

Sting opted to perform solo and he validated the soundness of this decision with the success of his first solo album. His creativity legitimized the individualism of the bohemian artist's world and at the same time, made it possible to see in his music the liberation of man by reminding him of his own inner potential. Being creative meant removing the barriers which imprison man from within, meant self-realization and freedom. The key to realization of the ideal of communication was to be seen in the individuality and personality of the artist. The more honest, sensitive and authentic' the artist's behavior towards himself, the more

immediate the communication with his audience becomes (Berryman, 2000)^[1].

Of Mourning and Rebirth

On his second solo album, 'Nothing like the Sun' (released October 1, 1987), Sting has stepped back from stylistic liberation offered by 'The Dream of the Blue Turtles' and has subdued the visceral pop /bop synthesis. 'Nothing like the Sun' is much more serene, and confirms Sting's sensitivity to intra and extra familial relationships through lyrics couched in more familiar musical settings. It did not start out to be an album about anything. Sting came up with 10 or 12 songs and it was only later that he realized a lot of the songs were about women, but not just women as romantic objects, but as advisers, women as companions, as mothers, sisters. The record was very therapeutic record for him to make. His mother had just died and he supposed that he was obsessed by the idea of females and how he was going to replace her. The album is about mourning. It is a moaning record about how awful life and death are. One has to face death and there is a way to do it that isn't just moaning. It is also about re-birth. The need to rejoice in a way because that's the way his mother lived; full of life and with an incredible sense of humor. His mother gave Sting an example of courage and that is enough reason for Sting to rejoice. The opening cut of the album 'The Lazarus Heart' is a moving homage to his mother, who died while the record is being made. For Sting, nothing in life is isolated and everything is connected. The timing of death of Sting's mother was linked to a lot of other events. It coincided with a time when the album became free of the machinery. He recorded the album digitally and he found it as first difficult and alienating, but later on he finally had the feel that it allowed him more flexibility in terms of arrangement. But basically he knew that there was a core in each song that you could not alter nor destroy.

The album is a powerful, often hypnotic blend of jazz and rock styles into a thoughtful suite of twelve songs about love, politics, and the meaning of individual life. The album's title comes from a sonnet by Shakespeare that begins with the line "My mistress's eyes are nothing like the sun". Against the extravagant imagery of much Elizabethan love poetry, that sonnet articulates a human-scale vision of love for a flesh-blood woman, who far from standing on a pedestal, "treads of the ground". Here, Sting resists, for the most part his tendency to drift into the mystic. Instead he locates the songs in an uneasy three-dimensional world of unruly emotions in 'Be Still My Beating Heart', 'Sister Moon', nightmarish social systems in 'History Will Teach Us Nothing', 'They Dance Alone' and personal commitment in 'The Secret Marriage'.

'Nothing like the Sun' represents impressive growth for Sting. His voice is rich, grainy and more mature; his ideas are gaining in complexity; and musicality he is stretching without straining. His mistress's eyes may be nothing like the sun, but on this album Sting's intrepid talent shines on brightly. Here, Sting is steering the music. As a lyricist, he does a commanding job walking between subjects as far removed from lunacy, the families and political martyrs in Chile. Death is inevitable and no one is ever prepared for it. The loss of a mother leaves the child weeping with thoughts on why such a tragedy can occur. He is left with recourse to moan and mourn. A process that might help lessen the burden but never totally eradicates it. There is re-birth after death in the sense that the inspiration that was his mother never stops breathing back the life in him. He sees her image in every woman, and he writes about them so that his mother may continue living. (Campion 2009)^[2]

Journey Back Home

The 'Soul Cages' album (released January 22, 1991) was dedicated to the memory of his late father. The album was very personal, confessional and therapeutic in terms of facing death and loss. Sting's father died in 1989. They had a difficult relationship and his death hit him harder than he'd imagine possible. He felt emotionally and creatively paralyzed and unable to mourn. Eventually he talked himself into going back to work and a collection of songs was the result.

The theme of the album is essentially about dealing with death. He is 38 years old and for him, at this age, death is an important subject. He has a way of expressing things through songs that may be useful to someone else, a sort of therapy. He reached the age where he wanted to assess his life to figure out what he done wrong, what he had done right. He started with his memory, which is that of a ship because he lived next to a shipyard when he was young. It was a powerful image of this huge ship towering above the house and tapping that was godsend. He began with that and the album just flowed. It was written in about three or four weeks. Soul Cages is about in a way; working through things in one's own way rather than trusting in mass ideologies. One comes into the world alone and one leaves alone. The title song is based on a fable about souls trapped under the sea in Davy Jones' locker and how a sailor wages the king of sea to free them. When one is left alone it is saddening, but it is a good thing also to feel a loss so deeply because one is reminded not force people into cheering one up.

Highly serious and sonically gorgeous, The Soul Cages forgoes Police-style catchiness and the safety conventional song structure for vat swirls of sound that builds to either musical or emotional crescendo. What elevated Sting's new music is it is freer, deeper and has a unified mood. Blaring guitars probably would not be appropriate since the songs are mostly a sullen bunch that explores personal and romantic loss and relationships gone astray. Soul Cages takes on a deeper meaning at each listening, and its focus is intensely personal. It is Sting's way of coming to grips with the death two years ago of his father and of probing the lives of other working-class heroes who lead equally unsung existence. The album thus has a more immediate, emotional impact than either of his previous solo efforts. 'The Soul Cages' begins with a somber, haunting melody that deals with "Billy" and his father, the shipbuilder. Sting employs Northumbrian pipes, exclusive to northern England, to give the track a cold, pallid feeling of loneliness and alienation. It's not the uplifting, buoyant sound Sting has been associated with in the past. He has a message to convey, a story to tell, and he does just that. Just like the other tracks on the album, it gives the listener a feeling of awe, a sense of musical travel to another place and time that can only be experienced by listening to the album. Sting's newer style is an evolution. It's different from Police. When compared, it should be kept in mind that the style of Sting's earlier work is just as valid and just as powerful and unique as his later work. The only difference is that the style has changed.

The soul is a breath of living spirit, which with excellent sensitivity, permeates the entire body to give it life. Making songs is a beginning of the process of reconciliation for the songwriter. Being able to put mind, body, and spirit coming into harmony during a death of a loved one can release the soul from despair. In creating songs, Sting is able to deal with death, and with it comes the release of his soul from the bondage of despair and grief (Ward, 2006) [39].

The Healing of Self

After the downbeat tones of 1991's 'The Soul Cages' album it was typical of Sting to bounce back in 1993 through the album 'Ten Summoner's Tales' (released March 9, 1993) with what many critics considered to be his most light hearted and upbeat album of his career. Sting has exorcised a lot of ghosts on his previous record, which was very personal, confessional and therapeutic in terms of facing death and loss. The therapy worked, because now he has a new sense of freedom, a desire to make songs solely intended for entertainment, designed to amuse.

In 1992, Sting moved his family out to the country to a rundown manor house built in the sixteenth century that needed some care and attention. It was called Lake House. He felt inspired to write and for the first time in many years with a genuine spirit of happiness. There were no grand concepts, no plan, except to have fun telling stories in as many diverse styles and moods as he could think of. It is this carefree spirit that pervades the album and helped it become one of his most popular records. The title is a mild literary joke because his surname Sumner comes from the medieval name Summoner, who was someone who summoned one to court to see the king. The Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer in the fifteenth century is a collection of stories told by a group of pilgrims- there's a nun, a miller, a knight, a summoner, a pardoner and they each tell a story. They each tell a story of all kinds, romantic, funny, rude and they are told in different styles. Sting thought that there was a connection, because the album is essentially a collection of songs of styles- it comes from everywhere and the only thing that connects it is him. Hence he came up with the title 'Ten Summoner's Tales'.

The album comes with a video and the reason for making one is because the recordings were made in the dining room of his 400-year old house in England and the environment was very happy, so they thought of filming the whole album. Sting doesn't like studios much because he finds its prison like environments where one doesn't breathe air or see the sunlight for months that is why he decided to make the record at home instead. As to the mood of the album, he felt that his last album, 'The Soul Cages' had served its purpose and he did not feel the need to do it again. He wanted to make a record that let him get back to writing songs just for fun. More so, Sting doesn't want any more confessional songs and he wanted to put himself in other scenarios. He looked around at the most normal things in life and tried to see the subtle stories within them. What was particularly remarkable about the album was the diversity of stories and styles contained across the twelve tracks. From an outstanding opening 'Prologue' track of 'If I Ever Lose My Faith In You' which was accompanied by a highly memorable video and won a Grammy for 'Best Male Pop Vocal Performance' to the final 'Epilogue' of 'Nothing Bout Me' in which Sting ditches attempts of amateur psychologists to analyze him and his work, the album lives up to his own description of being a collection of styles (Davies, 2005) [10].

A Feel of Home

'Mercury Falling' (released March 12, 1996) was the second album written and recorded in Lake House. This was the time that he was enjoying long periods at home with family. He had spent so much of his life in hotel rooms and concert halls and at last he felt that he was living a real life. His kids would come home from school in the afternoon and they'd all have dinner together like a normal family. He supposes the album title suggests, among other things that his mercurial life was

beginning to find some balance, finally a true home. There are so many references attached to the word 'Mercury'. It's a metal, liquid, a God, a planet. Mercurial is a valuable description. Just like when the thermometer is falling, it is getting cold. The lyrics of the songs have lots of reverberations, they mean so many things – There are so many styles on the record and that 'Mercury Falling' seemed to be the right thing to call the record. And at the end of the record he returned to the idea of mercury falling-only to rise again. Like a thermometer, emotions rise and fall on this new album. The new songs are full of seasonal ideas; of getting back in tract, that one might die in winter yet be born again in spring that one can be broken and then mended. The personality of the house does invade the record somehow. The studio is in the dining room, so he can enjoy time with his kids or take a walk in the garden while trying to work out the lyrics. Living closer to nature brought him closer to the cycle of seasons. Sting was also very mercurial in jumping around from genre to genre and like Mercury, the thief of Gods, he stole from everywhere. He continues his life-long experiment of weaving world beat rhythms and instrumentation with the basics of rock, jazz and pop. He reflected that in the past, he has written albums that were related to death- either the death of someone he loved or the death of a relationship or whatever. But now he reached a stage in his life where he doesn't see death as the end to anything. He sees death as merely another door to open, and he thinks the songs reflect openness about death. The songs were more about rebirth as much as death, new beginnings as much as they are about endings. The 10-song disc is an extension of Sting's Ten Summoner's Tale. Just like 'Summoner's' it wrestles with the life one day, one joy, and one problem at a time. It has a lean aggressive sound that shamelessly borrows from any style that stung Sting. There are elements of traditional Celtic arrangement, jazz country and even R&B. Musically this album is pleasant and melody-oriented. The literate lyrics are able to tell their story. Mercury falling proved that as Sting gets older he has become more ambitious and more fluent in his attempt to make music a universal language (Huang, 2000) [23].

Into the Millennium

Brand New Day (released Sept 27, 1999), is a collection of songs exploring the theme of love. He did not set out to write the lyrics just about love, yet almost all the songs have theme of broken lives that can be mended with love. His challenge was to write a happy love song without being predictable or self-righteous. Like the last song 'Brand New Day', begins with a skeptical view and then moves towards acceptance, to diving back to love. It's basically the thought that falling in love is an act of optimism- and the album has a tone that is an optimistic one.

Sting composed the music long before he ever had a rhyming couplet or even an idea of what it would be about. He doesn't normally work that way. He normally writes lyrics and music in the same period. This time, however he'd written an hour of music, sequenced it, had it all in order and then had to try and figure out what it was going to be about. He'd go for long walks with his music in the songs would his head and hope that characters, moods or stories would appear. It is a slower process. He eventually found out that virtually the songs were love songs, which is not unusual. A variety of love songs, from sad to hopeful to optimistic –even some twisted. He feels that the millennium is very much part of the record. People need to look positively toward the future and not be trapped in the lunacy that is the end of the world. The album has a millennial theme as he adopts an upbeat tune of new age

optimism in defiance of the doomsayers. He incorporated highly rhythmic elements, echoes of Miles Davis and medieval plain song of Algerian pop and American country music. It also ranges with typical Sting audacity, over a world of styles. He chases some exotic Middle Eastern harmonic intervals in 'Desert Rose', a duet with Arab singer Cheb Mami, which is a concrete proof of his ability to translate musical influences into his own unique songs. The album is destined to be Sting at his very best. The lyrics convey clearly what he is trying to say to everybody and the music merges like magic (Kivy, 2002) [27].

Courage in a Period of Uncertainty

Sting's concept of his first live album 'All This Time' (released November 20, 2001) in fifteen years was to create something intimate and personal, practically the antithesis of a typical live recording. He envisioned the project being like a love letter, a kind of thank you note to his fans. The plan was to record the songs that Sting and his band had been playing on tour for the last two years. They knew the songs inside and out and they wanted to play it differently. The band would rehearse for eight days and following rehearsals, on Sept 11th, perform for a small audience of fans and friends in Tuscany, Italy. They would record the album and simultaneously webcast the concert around the world while a documentary film crew who would also film rehearsals would capture the performance. The show was all set when the tragic news of the World Trade Center reached the group. Completely shocked, upset and angry, the band conferred and agreed that they should try to play as planned. They felt that under the circumstance playing was the only thing that was under their control and instinctually the right thing to do. The group decided to webcast only one song 'Fragile' as a mark of respect and then shut the webcast down. Sting addressed the crowd that night by simply saying that the group will sing the song for those who lost their lives. The plan to perform only one song changed when the crowd urged him to continue, and the performance provided a type of emotional catharsis for all.

Fifteen of the nineteen songs played that moving night are all in the album and the song selection reflects the mood of the moment, the intimacy of the evening was also felt that the performance was almost free of rock-star ego and posturing, and the crowd response sounds appreciative without becoming distracting. The bestselling point of the album is still 'Fragile' though, as the vocals are concurrently calming and insightful, he lyrics masterfully captures the intangible sense of pain that arises from the tragedy. The song was not in any way crafted for a tragedy, but the song's lyrics were ironically applicable to the events of September 11. Sting found it strange that throughout the evening the songs kept surprising him how appropriate they were, or how they were to the situation they're in. The night calls for a somber show but as the concert progressed the mood changed. They felt they had the night to be there, listening to their music, making music, singing, because it's really the opposite of what terrorism wants. Terrorism wants people to be afraid, to be controlled. So even though at that time they did not want to do it, they had no second thoughts but to push through to make a statement. For Sting the evening became a therapy, it ended up with a joyful healing celebration...a fitting memorial to that day (Cramer, 2009) [8].

Plight of the Warrior

The album 'Sacred Love' (released September 30, 2003) was recorded in Italy and Paris, as the United States and Britain were preparing to invade Iraq. Optimism was somewhat

difficult to maintain in the aftermath of Twin Tower attack and in the face of the messianic determination of these leaders to seek revenge on an Iraqi regime that, while certainly repellent enough, proved to be not guilty in this case. Words in the mouths of politicians tend to become devalued currency. Words like freedom and truth probably suffered the most, as these countries declared an all-out 'war on terrorism'. Sting started thinking about it a day after the tragedy. The mood is reflected in some of the work, and then it finished off in Paris in the build-up to the Iraq war. But still, Sting writes about personal relationships, close relationships, but with a parallel resonance in the political sense. He expressed his views on what and how the world must be created and it's up to mankind if he wants to create a positive or negative world. In song after song, thoughts of romance lead to ideas of faith. Love then becomes a pilgrimage, a prayer, a ritual and a benediction. It is an old connection that is the root of devotional music worldwide. The most impassioned song on the album is about politics not love. There were songs where Sting captures the helplessness and despair of the times and a song that equates to explosive romanticism in a duet number with Mary J. Blige. The album was described as poetic, sophisticated, jazzy and occasionally even funky, a typical fusion of styles as only Sting can mix and blend. In all, this is Sting's two-year-in-the-making response to the war-torn world and falls back on that hallowed notion held by most spiritually attuned songwriters: Love will find a way.

Sting has in him the social responsibility to bring out whatever political stance he has. He knows that expressing people's sentiments can make a difference in terms of addressing a concern or even a political turmoil for that matter Music gives voice to his protest against the inauthenticity of society and establishes his own "natural right". It is the vehicle of his resentments, gratifying them and discharging them and seems to grant him an individuality of his own, because it pits nature against convention. Yet the individuality he conjures up replaces one's anonymity with another, rescuing himself from the oblivion of modern society by summoning up the power of the whole over all individuals, a power evinced in passion, aptly evoked in the terrible anonymity in music. An exceptional individual will appear, who because of his own nothingness, may represent the social whole in himself and so afford its members the proper vehicle of their own being. It is the artist who is to create order in a society where order is rapidly corroding, an order devolving from and around the artist himself. Art has a revolutionary mandate, just as revolution is politics as art. The artist assumes a political function because he speaks the language of 'nature', not social convention; the passion claims a 'natural right', the common element of art and revolution. His political function is revolutionary, because appeal to 'nature' implies the possibility of a wholesale transformation of society according to an ideal that transcends it. Whether the artist personally has political ambitions or aims is irrelevant, for it is not himself but the passion he conjures up in his art that is political in essence, a social power capable of crossing all traditional constraints. On the other hand, he incorporates his power in himself; his figure affords social passion a collective focus. Through his work he creates himself in the image of an artist. It is by relation to the artist himself that his work exercises its ordering power. Inflation of the artist to political savior suggests the revolutionary leader who conjures up and orchestrates the passion for violence into a supposedly creative source of a new order. The true artist, then, must have the power to shape society into, a force of nature, as if society

were a grand symphony (Cox, 2001) [7].

In Gratitude to the Artist

The last few years have seen undisputed rock god Sting in a widening gyre away from rock, jazz and world-music idioms towards the less familiar airspace of classical music. The singer bassist took up the lute in 2005 and the following year released a collection of works 'Songs from the Labyrinth' (released on September 2006) by Elizabethan composer John Dowland, a lutenist who died in 1626. He picked up the music of John Dowland, which is centuries old, but loaded it with pop hooks. For Sting he is the father of the whole thing, the first English pop star to have an international career. He was a lute player who travelled the whole of Europe playing really popular songs. Every home had a lute and Dowland Songbook. He was the man whose legacy people follow. His songs were famous all over Europe and at that time there was little difference between high-art and popular music. The songs were all about three minutes long, which is the length of a pop tune. In songs from the Labyrinth, Sting's vocal sound differs from that of his earlier solo work. More of an emphasis is placed on longer vowels, legato phrasing, hair pin crescendos and he is using more air. Sting does eleven songs on the disc, including one by Robert Johnson, another composer-lutenist of this period. Sting also played a bit on the lute, read excerpts from a famous letter written by Dowland and yields the microphone to Karamazov for several of the composer's pieces for lute alone.

It was not really intended to lead to a record. It was a labor of curiosity of love and the turning point was when Sting came across Dowland's letter- a long plaintive missive he wrote from Germany to Sir Robert Cecil, Elizabeth I's secretary of state. In it, Dowland recounted his travels around Europe, offered intelligence about Spain's military ambitions, and tried to dispel whatever suspicions had prevented him from getting an important job at Elizabeth's court. He realized that Dowland was offering him a narrative line to hold the songs together, and to provide some kind of context for people who knew nothing about the composer and his milieu. England at that time was essentially a police state, with an extensive spy network at home and abroad. It tortured and killed its subjects for all kinds of perceived crimes, including Roman Catholicism. Dowland had become Catholic during his years in Europe, fell in with some seditious English Catholics in Italy and came close to being taken up as a court musician by Pope, till he realized that such a step would make it impossible to return to England. It's an open question whether the streak of melancholy that runs through Dowland's songs was due to thwarted ambition, personal ambition, or the fashion of the time. Sting believes it's a combination of the three, with a strong tilt toward thwarted ambition. Sting thinks that Dowland felt like an outsider. He admitted that as a dairy-man's son and a northerner, in a country that still maintains a hierarchy based on social class and geography, he feels identification with Dowland that goes deeper than the similarity of having made a name and fortune by creating music that a lot of people know about.

Sting has exchanged his guitar for a lute, returning to the renaissance for inspiration. For him Melancholy and self-reflection is the new rock n roll. The uniquely doleful sound of Dowland has been close to Sting's heart for longer than anyone could have guessed and now through his advocacy his music will be shared to countless people. 'Melancholy is no bad thing' for him it's the music of self-reflection. The world has become less reflective. The music is timely because there are people who think they are right, whatever they do but never look at the judgments they've made. A true artist lives forever through his music and sharing a fellow artist's legacy

to many is the epitome of humility, untainted adoration and respect. It is through the weaving of the old and new that equilibrium exists. A tinge of the past mellows a person living in the tyranny of the present. Melancholy in music is appropriate in the world that now exists. Deceit and greed has been dominating mankind and walking one phase slower allows man to pause and reflect on the imperfections committed; on how he will take the initial step towards renewing his faith to hope and love (Berryman, 2000) ^[1].

Before the Winter Comes

'If On a winter's Night' (released on September 30, 2006) is a collection of traditional songs, hymns, lullabies and laments inspired by Sting's favorite season. His record company had suggested a Christmas album, but he wasn't partial to that idea. He doesn't like Christmas very much but he is interested in the psychological concept of what winter means. People need winter to reflect, to sit in darkness, to deal with the ghosts of the past, and then they can move forward. Basically he wanted to find songs that channeled some kind of older wisdom rather than stuff like Frosty the Snowman. He is an agnostic and was interested in the pre-Christian idea that the winter is more about regeneration than salvation.

Work on the album began in February 2009 at another of the singer's abodes in Tuscany. The album has calmness and a quiet sense of foreboding, its cushioned, sometimes enchanting sound evoking deep, undisturbed fall of snow. Sting has just turned 58, and much of his life has been spent away from home. But in the recent months for numerous reasons he has spent time working in his hometown. This is his most prolonged stay in the North East (Wallsend) since he left 30 years and more ago. The feelings and sentiments of his life, his childhood, his music and his vision were therefore very probably readily influenced by the North East and its unique strengths for many a long year, something that can be witnessed by his words but also in his new album. Like some of his most celebrated hits, Sting named his latest work after a book that has inspired him, Italo Calvino's novel, "If Only On a Winter's Night Traveler". A story of a book within a book to which he finds a connection as a traveler who has come home. Sting has just turned 58 years old but claims that he is not yet in his winter, but rather in a splendid autumn. The days of his childhood are mirrored in the album as his memories. The winters were hard and it's lonely to walk on ghostly dark and cold streets. But on occasions there are landscapes beautifully white with snow which appears to remind him to raise his spirits and go on living.

Sting's whole life has been a roller coaster of a journey and a life fully lived can be achieved by looking back to where it all started. The voice of the past echoes to the present and even if they won't see each other eye to eye, the endless whispers from the memory of what has been will continue to make itself heard. The road being travelled remains uncertain and endless, but being a persistent man Sting is, he looks back at the grey cold streets of winter's night so that he may once more appreciate the beautiful white snow landscapes that also come with winter. Only then can he continue with his journey (Jenkins, 2010) ^[26].

Resurgence through Classical Music

Sting's album 'Symphoncities' (released on July 13, 2010) shows how it can work with a chamber orchestra and with the Police. It is a collection of twelve songs ranging from hits such as 'Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic' to the not so popular 'The Pirate's Bride'. The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the London Players and the New York Chamber Consort provide the backup in the arrangement. Sting has

tried out practically every genre in the musical universe, so an orchestral rework of his songs seems a natural thing to do. Sting joined the current craze of big-band albums not with a set of standards or cool-hunting covers but with a collection of his own songs. Even during the early days with the Police, Sting carried himself with the assured air of someone whose artistic significance was a long established fact; a couple of decades later, he gives the impression that a search for a deeper, more worthwhile material simply yielded no. Yet if Sting's confidence can sometimes come across as arrogance, it is also what made Symphoncities work: Here a songwriter with enough belief in his creations to risk radically retooling them. Other giants in his field have tried and failed to meld pop structure with classical forms, but where other artists tried to create something brand new, Sting wisely retrofits his greatest successes as orchestral works of sort.

Sting's love for classical music can be traced in his childhood. He was brought up in the 50s, when there was only one radio station, BBC radio, so he could hear everything from Beethoven's Fifth to music hall to the Beatles. He grew up with the taste that music was universal. Although there are qualitative differences between music forms, and certainly skill differences, it's basically the same building blocks. And so he approaches music that way, a great deal of respect for classical music and sees it as a language he can communicate in and certainly be reached by. He likes playing with musicians who can improvise, but who can also-if it's a classical player- be dyed in the wool classicists. More and more classical players are familiar with pop music. They are familiar with its limitations, but also sometimes pop music is quite sublime. They don't have a prejudice view about it. They are open to it. So, he was looking for people with flexible and open minds about music, because that's what he thinks it should be, that's where one has growth.

For one of his songs on his 2009 recording 'If On a Winter's Night' he chose a fairly simple Schubert song -'Der Leiermann' from 'Winterreise' and interpreted it in his own way. He thinks it is important for him to say to the classical world that his job is not to impersonate a classical performer or classical singer. His technique is different. His emotional take on it is different. So it's not an impersonation, but a respectful interpretation. As to change in venues of his performances, he enjoys performing in football stadiums as much as he enjoys performing in small clubs and thinks that there are different skill sets that are required. A performer's job in a large place is to make it an intimate event so that the person at the top of the bleachers has some sort of connection with what the performer is doing. In a small club, a performer's intention is to make a memorable event out of something that is small and intimate. They involve different ways of looking at, presenting music, and different ways of singing, gestures perhaps. But he likes the challenge. For him, success is having freedom to explore new territory and making that territory as far as possible his own. But that involves in the first instance, putting oneself out of one's comfort zone. One may be out of his comfort zone now, but one can eventually learn in the process.

Truly, the exigencies of living in the world are always with man: but the world is not a fixed datum; it is increasingly subject to some control. At various stages of life, man can discover built-in limitations to his knowledge, but not to his curiosity, nor to his craving to impose order on the flux to which he himself is a part. It is this need which produces metaphysics, poetry, art, music and even exact sciences to bridge the gap from mind to world. Just as the world is partly malleable, so are the human species and the society, and the person. Each is what it has come to be, but the constraints

imposed by the past are not irresistible. The person while alive remains unfinished, in a constant process of self-creation, as recalcitrant to his own creative efforts as words are to a poet. The person is as much as effect of his actions as a cause. Every man is a self-made man for only he can determine what he can become (Sloninsky *et al.*, 2005)^[36].

Effect of Existentialism on Sting's Life as a Person and Musician

As a Person

Dread and anxiety has played a large part in Sting's life as a person. Sting described his life as a constant struggle, and the painful experiences that he gained has brought out the best in him. He grew up learning that the world is indeed tough and he has to be tougher to survive.

- This experience of pain has made him learn the importance of free choice and responsibility self. He realized that the quest for understanding life is a never ending process that is determined by the individual himself.
- The pain he experienced from his divorce from his first wife made Sting appreciate more the value of marriage and made him a better family man.
- The death of his parents left him devastated and lost but somehow he managed to put himself together and be a stronger person as he realized more the value of life.

As a Musician

Sting chose to be a musician after realizing that this is indeed his calling and a career in teaching is not his cup of tea. It was a long hard climb until the group; The Police was formed and became one of the most successful groups of the 80's.

- Sting was confronted with the desire to be the artist that he is and this has caused disagreements, friction among the band members until finally, Sting decided to leave the group in 1984 to pursue a solo career.
- This emotion inspired Sting to create deep, powerful lyrics and enticing melodies for his songs. With this ability to express oneself through songs, Sting also realized the value of artistic freedom.
- The pain that he sees in the eyes of those who are victims of injustice, war tyranny, led him to make songs that speak against war and violence. He felt that much of this pain has been caused by man himself and that if only he would learn to be responsible not only for himself but also to others then the world would be a safer world to live in.
- The death of his parents brought out a realization that one must live his life to the fullest that is why he continued to do songs that speak of the fate of the oppressed, and the right of the individual to live freely but responsibly.

All in all, this review calls for more researches on his music legacy that the world owed him for a long time. New perspectives in terms of music, text and aesthetics will help us to have a deeper understanding of the whole legacy that this artist deserves.

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