

Music and art comparison; prince's diamonds and pearls essay

[Art & Culture](#), [Artists](#)



Music and art comparison; Prince's Diamonds and

PearlsIntroductionRecognizing artistic culture providing major themes for current music videos appealing to popular culture featured on MTV is a very unusual way of perceiving and analyzing current music. Comparing and contrasting well known respected art forms to popular culture music were even more unusual when MTV aired its first seasons then today, even though the beauty of Renaissance art shows through coming into our lives in every area of our everyday living through movies, shopping mall items, magazines, books.

Prejudging current popular music and lack of teaching art and music history in the education system are two reasons for lack of appreciating culture in music videos. Watching music videos on MTV has unlimited potential for improving children's and teens GPA's who are bored with school work. It is easy to overlook sexually explicit messages and themes, going further to see the art historic reinventions continuously reviving itself in popular music videos when the viewers know what to look for. Anyone who cannot see the primary theme is visual interpretations of Renaissance art in Prince's Diamonds and Pearls song and video lack sophistication and knowledge about artistic designs and musical arrangements, and where it all came from.

Diamonds and Pearls music video were released in 1991. The settings of the creative, Robert Joffery Ballet school inspired entrancing and spell bounding musical video and music melody writing takes place during the early fifteenth to the sixteenth centuries, Renaissance era. Creative modern

elements combined Renaissance elements appearing from the beginning to the end in the building designs, window designs, artist's dress, constant alteration singing and playing phonic melodies are all characteristics of this time period. Music Characteristics Renaissance music brought forward recognizable progression and advanced arrangements in music voices and melody writing.

Music of this era reflected music combined from all parts of the world in various styles. It was a time of experimentation. Almost all music from this time forward used as much variety as possible in one music piece. The more musical and rhythmical instruments contributing and accenting the high and low points of the music, the more concentrated flow and musicality of the music.

A music piece playing one voice level throughout the song loses listeners. Music melodies must be efficiently arranged to temporarily transport audiences into another world, ending before the listener realizes it. It is crucial to musical success that audiences want to hear the short lived music piece over and over again. Renaissance composers experimented with many possibilities of using variety of voices.

Renaissance music was a transition period for creating rhythms and patterns formulated for dance music, with emphases on ballet dancing. It is not rare or only in Prince's Diamonds and Pearls to find variety of musical voices with constantly changing the pitches and chord progressions. Overall design elements, music texture and scenery forms the Diamonds and Pearls musical

arrangement into a complete Italian and French artistic piece. The Renaissance ages significantly inspired Prince's initial music writing and arrangement, apparent in his fascinating break through movie showcasing his talents, *Purple Rain*. The real viscosity of his in depth appreciation for the arts came through in the *Diamonds and Pearls* music piece mixing popular rock music with culture. Because the Renaissance combined Italian and France art and music, music had to be multileveled to be suitable for dancing, all elements combined in Prince's video.

Ballet dancing has its roots in Italy and France, dating back to the fifteenth centuries that is recorded. An Italian composer made up ballet French terminology. Music pieces sung on different levels flow in harmony much smoother when the arrangement is finalized. The different levels are polyphony, monophonic, polyphonic, homophonic and heterophony. *Diamonds and Pearls* arrangements were written utilizing singing voices in all phonic sound levels.

Prince begins singing in smooth even baritone voice nearly sounding like a very masculine but flowing soprano, while playing triad chords on the classical piano centering the Renaissance themed room. Later the soprano joins in with an effortless pitch. The talented baritone and soprano sings independently of one another giving an audible pleasing smooth flow and transition in the first few bars, but later joining together creating homophonic melody. Soprano and baritone alternates each taking the lead over the songs melodies. The multitalented unmatched soprano, using a combination of

vocal techniques, somehow combining high notes with an alto sound while using low and high registers in the voice, known as belting.

Another strong influence; Joffery Ballet Renaissance features in Prince's music showed up long before *Diamonds and Pearls*. Ballet dancing was significant and mandatory to the development of the Renaissance era. King Louis XIV was a professional ballet dancer, a requirement for his position as a prince. Prince (the musician) was approached by Joffery Ballet's artistic director, Gerald Arpino requesting permission to use four of his songs for the review, *Billboard*. Prince allowed him access to his entire collection of songs.

Prince was inspired to write ballet music. *Diamonds and Pearls* was made because of Joffery's influence and inspiration on him. Although *Diamonds and Pearls* features ballet dancers, ballet dancing were used as a background setting in the video except for occasional clips. The video itself was possibly filmed in the Joffery Ballet School and theatre in New York City. Interior elegant, but basic, designs in the building and theatre are copied from historic memorable Renaissance patterns.

With wide variety musical and singing contributions applied to this song, there are also counterpoint imitations. "Imitation was much used in both vocal and instrumental compositions of the 15th and 16th century. The strictest form of imitation is the canon. While imitation is found to some extent in the music of nearly all periods, it is of special significance in Renaissance music." (Imitation, *Columbia Encyclopedia*). Prince sings several phrases, his soprano echoes the exact same phrases.

There are several musical terms that may apply to this technique. Imitation is also heard in his three single note melody beginning the song, sometimes with an underlying pulse, sometimes without the underlying pulse. It sounds like he begins each bar with the same three note chords smoothly flowing well coordinated melody, but changing another singing voice, varied instruments, mixed with the high notes interchanging simultaneously with low notes. Notes providing the steady accompaniment for the duration of the musical selection are played around the middle C. Prominent use of the foot peddles sustaining the soothing, pleasant instrumental sounds varies the pitches, sounds and rhythms give an emotionally enhancing entertaining musical combination resulting at audible levels. The full use of the piano's foot peddles, combined with the sopranos impressive voice fills in an ongoing harmony that prevents the song from coming across choppy and broken up. When combining as many varied and opposing elements as Prince does, producing a smooth even harmony outcome is not easy to do.

At this time, no one trying to make it on MTV would ever think of using a well trained opera or musical theatrical level soprano in a hot, pop music video targeting to a popular youthful culture. Furthermore, no other artists were willing to risk using this combination. Combining contrasting themes and techniques no one would ever think of matching up requires many hours of revising small details.

Prince's combination of unusual talents is what got the attention of the Robert Joffery's artistic director. Architecture; the art comparison Renaissance buildings are recognizable by their arches, domes

and columns outlining the buildings most prominent features. Of course, during the Renaissance, arches and columns served a purpose. Modern designed buildings are built for its decorative beauty. “ The Renaissance artist was an image maker in every sense: he both expressed and created the consciousness of society in his work. The early Renaissance believed intensely in the magic power of images” (Cole 217-18) The elaborate visually appealing vaults, columns and domed shaped arches were useful, but Renaissance artists created a statement, an image forever branding this particular style exclusively to this time frame. Filming of Diamonds and Pearls uses camera angles to emphasize the architect of the building designed to reflect the sixteenth century. Colors selected for the first half of the video were simple, mainly black or dark brown and white, causing architect shaping of the building to stand out as the most visual element of the video.

Music video filming first visual scenery shows an arched shaped window letting natural sunlight shine through lighting up the building, providing the major source of lighting. As the video moves forward, three windowed gables with arched shaped endings are filmed frequently during the video. The camera angles emphasize the visibility of the Renaissance artistic building. The Renaissance used imagery in their art work. In Diamonds and Pearls, imagery is embedded everywhere throughout the buildings interior. Renaissance imagery in Diamonds and Pearls are seen in the arched shaped windows and the exquisite designed floor patterns on which the grand piano centers around. Another significant reflection of the Renaissance influenced

architect is the lintels, or the beams, running across the three glassed ornamental decorated windows.

Well shaped, carved circular columns running from elegant designed floor to the arched vaulted ceiling making up a major portion of the architectural building are seen consistently throughout the video. The filming of the video took place in two separate locations of the same Italian French designed building, which the circular columns show up again being well presented in the theatre portion of the building. As mentioned previously, large windows were used often filling up an entire wall of these elegant buildings allowing sunlight shining through the rooms.

However, there were no electricity in the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries, however there were oil lamps. Large windows equaling the size of an entire wall were a necessity, however the Italians applied intricate artistic details making everything visually appealing. An Italian designed mirror draped on the circular column centering the building reflects the classical piano.

Renaissance combines artistic developments of French and Italy. The mirror reflects Italian images because of its elegant carvings framing the glassed mirror itself. French styled mirrors are surrounded by plainly designed but dominantly colored frames.

Later, the French art style started adding carved designs to their work during the transition period. Another artistic comparison highlighting the main focus in this musical arrangement is jewelry. The song's title, Diamonds and Pearls,

gives insight to what the songs main focus is. But songs, paintings, writings, the Bible, and movies are symbolically and are not to be taken from what shows up on the surface. The songs lyrics portray that if he gives her diamonds and pearls or expensive jewelry, would that make her happy enough to love him and stay with him. Prince had an unusual artistic, sophistication about him transparent in his music although he wanted to play music appealing to popular culture.

“ The Renaissance brought a transformation in the art of the jeweler; noted artists and architects often designed or even rendered pieces of jewelry. Jewelry was splendid with enamel and precious stones; heavy gold link chains, jeweled collars, and the necklace with pendant were worn by both men and women. Jewelry, worn to excess, became overcrowded with stones, to the neglect of the design and setting.(“ Jewelry, Columbia Encyclopedia). Pearls were excessively branded into the clothing worn by people living during the Renaissance ages. Glowing, shining jewelry, are emphasized through out this video as well as the building architect designs and decorations. Prince holds white shining pearls up into the camera lenses, on several filming occasions.

In the first few measures of the song, there are five actors. All of them are modeling huge earrings shaped and created into white crosses giving sophisticated character to their entire facial images. The jewelry is patterned to bring back the images of the original jewelry in the sixteenth centuries. “ n jewelry one wishes delicacy — the lack of which is the great fault of much of the amateur jeweller’s work — but one also wishes a certain sturdiness

and vigor of design. The majority of the platinum pieces show aimless criss-crossings of lines and curves and lack the "third dimension"—the depth of the piece from front to back—a characteristic beauty of nearly all Renaissance jewelry." American Institute of Architects. 407) The actors, musicians flaunting the elegantly designed earrings are formed with white beads, the characteristics of the Renaissance jewelry. Renaissance art work focused on enlarging and calling attention to the big beaded bubble reflecting light, providing additional unique looks to the overall outcome of the video.

Contrast or conflictsAll of the analysts, critics, and researchers concluded this song focused entirely on sexual emphases. None of the analysts ever thought this music piece was a reinvention with a significant purpose to bring back the Renaissance art styles using modern resources. If Diamonds and Pearls would have made its first presentations in musical theatre, seeing the artistic emphases would have been noted by the general public. Because it was initially aired in popular music videos on MTV, the artistic influences were entirely missed.

The song was written for Joffery Ballet, or to honor the Joffrey Ballet, but MTV is where the majority of the people saw the video. It is evident in Prince's video, as well all of his video's, he placed importance on where art originated from. He wanted to sing about Renaissance art. He had to make his presentations emphasizing Renaissance art entertaining, something that the general public would want to see. He is highly respected for his accomplishments now. Another controversial topic of that time was Black

music artists on MTV. Black music artists on MTV, were at that time viewed in a light similar to modern 20th century fantasy art.

African Americans worked hard to be accepted as respected Blues singers. They achieved that status. Black singers had another barrier to cross over; obtaining the respect as a singer appealing to popular crowds. Black people in the educated art world were unheard of. One can imagine the shocking surprise Prince came across when he wanted to incorporate ancient art ideas into his modern music.

During the any historic art eras, no one heard of Black artists, painters or architects. Prince combined opposing elements and made them work.

ConclusionRenaissance art is elegant, visually appealing, has character and repeatedly come into our lives during the course of every day living.

Sometimes it shows through unexpected, surprising means. These various ways are so unusual, we sometimes do not recognize when historic art forms are showing us a new development enriching and decorating our lives. For viewers to appreciate art influences in music videos appealing to popular culture, a knowledge of art history must be present before viewing the videos. Prince was famous for introducing new themes, and ideas.

“ Prince has been called a modern Mozart by avant-garde director Peter Sellars, Prince-whose full name is Prince Rogers Nelson-produces music that any choreographer worth his or her mettle could easily tackle. “(Gruen 34) Not many people would agree that Prince’s artistic contributions were easily tackled, and producing the same appealing desirable results. Prince’s

fashions, his obsession with jewelry, his French cut high fashion designs falsely gave him the image of being gay by the general public. He was repeating Renaissance art history, and his was happily married. In Diamonds and Pearls, the music and the architectural art designs have all been reinvented from art history from the Renaissance.

The song has all the characteristics of Renaissance music, the cannon phrases, imitation, different vocal ranges all sounding at the same time, portrayed through modern musical styles. Many songs contain elements from historic art forms, but are usually known for copying past music artist, not art eras. Artistic objects such as buildings, paintings, writings, even movies are implanted in viewer's memory much longer than songs are.

There are so many different things going on in songs and music video's at one time, all competing to capture an audience within two or three minutes. Even after the song and video is over, the visibility in the music video survive in memory retention longer. Unless the audience is a trained musician or singer, the artwork used for architectural design will linger longer with the general audience than the music melodies, phrases, texture and shaping of music. Even lyrics are memorized more than the details of the music. Diamonds and Pearls, had a long lasting success retention rate because it reestablished historical visual and audible affects. More pop artists who stay successful for their lifetime have used historic art forms from the past.

The filming, directing and setting was to emphasize the building's exclusive Renaissance image and trademarks. Arched shaped doors and windows,

lintels, ornaments carved or engraved into the texture of any building are using Italian printed patterns from the Renaissance ages. Further using visual imprints of images from the French and Italian artists, a ballet dancer executed chaine turns, tendue derrière with port de bras, along with partnering dance moves adding a French Renaissance theme to the finished product of the musical arrangement. The production of the video is the final determining factor setting this music piece in the Renaissance ages.

Anyone who cannot see the primary theme is visual interpretations of Renaissance art in Prince's Diamonds and Pearls song and video lack sophistication and knowledge about artistic designs and musical arrangements, and where it all came from.;; Works Cited; Cole, Bruce. Italian Art, 1250-1550: The Relation of Renaissance Art to Life and Society. 1st ed. New York: Harper ; Row, 1987. Questia. 18 Apr.

2008 ; [http://www. questia. com/PM](http://www.questia.com/PM).

qst? a= o; d= 71669966;." Imitation." The Columbia Encyclopedia. 6th ed. 2007. Questia. 18 Apr. 2008 ; <http://www>.

questia. com/PM. qst? a= o; d= 112865322;." Jewelry." The Columbia Encyclopedia. 6th ed.

2007. Questia. 18 Apr. 2008 ; <http://www. questia>.

com/PM. qst? a= o; d= 112866603;. Gruen, John.

"Dance on Television: Poster Art." Dance Magazine Apr. 1994: 34. Questia. 18 Apr. 2008 ; [http://www. questia. com/PM. qst? a= o; d= 5000183598](http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o;d=5000183598); L., E. E.

"Preface." Tonality and Atonality in Sixteenth-Century Music. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1961. xi-xiii. Questia. 18 Apr. 2008 ; <http://www. questia. com/PM. qst? a= o; d= 10915324>;

American Institute of Architects. The Significance of the Fine Arts. Boston, MA: Marshall Jones Company, 1923. Questia.

18 Apr. 2008 ; <http://www. questia. com/PM. qst? a= o; d= 89023766>;

Rosen, Jody. "His Majesty." The Nation 2 Aug.

2004: 52. Questia. 18 Apr. 2008 ; <http://www. questia. com/PM. qst? a= o; d= 5006517459>;

Ruhlmann, William. Breaking Records: 100 Years of Hits. New York: Routledge, 2004. Questia.

18 Apr. 2008 ; <http://www. questia. com/PM. qst? a= o; d= 109157241>;

Shuker, Roy. Understanding Popular Music.

New York: Routledge, 1994. Questia. 18 Apr. 2008 ; <http://www. questia. com/PM. qst? a= o; d= 108399082>;;;