

The Beauty of Music

Dear Future Self,

I hope that at the point you are reading this you are a lot more experienced musically than I am now. I just hope that you never forget what music means to you and how it has impacted your life. Just in case you have, or in case you've gotten too involved in highly technical classes and workshops that you've let the pure beauty of music slip away, allow your past self to remind you of a few things.

Music is more than just a collection of notes, rhythms, motifs, and modulations. Music is emotion. Music allows you to get a glimpse into what the composer was trying to express to his audience. Composers have a variety of tools to help them portray different emotions. They use modes, whether major or minor, key signatures, time signatures, rhythms, and many others. These tools help a musician to portray an emotion, but it is primarily up to the performer to feel the emotion and to portray it in her playing. Remember back to when you were playing the Arioso by Bach. Do you remember how the time when you were having an extremely rough day and you let emotion completely take over was the best time you played it? How as the piece came to the climax and you reached for the high C, tears almost started rolling down your cheeks because you could feel the true feeling of the piece. You relaxed and allowed yourself to understand the music. Is this not the beauty of music?

Music lets the mind become separate from the regular world. It becomes your safe haven from the rest of the world. Music puts the soul at ease even while the mind and the body are working hard. As Jacqueline Du Pre said, "Playing lifts you out of yourself into a delirious place." (Pre) There is nothing better than feeling the way that I do when I play a beautiful piece with a group where the all of the people in that group have an intense love for music and are all looking for that same feeling as well. Recall the first time you began playing the fourth

movement of Sibelius' Symphony No. 2, as the third movement segued into it. The feeling of being lifted up and sheer joy encompassed your entire being. Chills ran throughout your body, and it was obvious that everyone else in the room was electrified by this moment. It was what I would describe as a magical moment that could rarely be duplicated.

Music inspires personal growth and gives meaning to life.. Think back to your senior year of high school, when you were ferociously trying to learn the Saint-Seans Cello Concerto in A minor for concerto night. It obviously was a huge jump in difficulty compared to previous pieces you had played, but you were determined to learn it. As the first couple pages started coming together the dreaded third page with it's double-stops loomed before you. This part was the reason many other cellists refused to play this concerto because of its difficulty. You chose to take it one step at a time. One measure, one finger then the other, then together. Over and over until you could play it without fail. Putting the entire thing together was a struggle, especially putting it together with the orchestra, but in the end it was all worth it. Concerto night came and through all the nerves you played extremely well. Your hard work payed off as you didn't have to think about what came next, your fingers just knew exactly what to do. All of the hours of practicing allowed muscle memory to take over. You didn't want it to end, it was just too fun. It allowed you to feel free and alive and full of happiness. Is this not how every performance should be like?

Music is passion. Without passion, music can become just a random assortment of notes, rhythms, and key signatures. Passion allows not only us, but our audience to feel in touch with the composer and with the meaning of the music. Remember back to your first semester in Utah Youth Symphony when you were studying the life and legacy of Beethoven. Beethoven's 7th Symphony is full of passion. The first movement is full of happiness and anticipation. The second movement is melancholy and heart breaking. The

third full of giddiness and excitement. The fourth being intense and exhausting. Although all were different, all had to be played with passion to allow the audience to feel the different moods and stories that can be felt during each one. Beethoven said, "To play a wrong note is insignificant, to play without passion is inexcusable." (Beethoven)

Music is beneficial in many other areas. It is a gateway to concentration. Music allows you to get into your groove. A special beauty exists in seeing someone whose brow is furrowed in concentration as she begins playing a piece that represents so much of her time and efforts. There is a similar beauty in watching someone begin sight reading a piece, and seeing the excitement in her eyes as she anticipates learning the piece to the fullest of her ability. Music becomes a happy place, even though in many instances it can be difficult to find. Think of all of those times when you knew you needed to be practicing, but you just didn't want to. After about the first ten minutes, the feeling of playing brought such joy that you didn't want to stop until you either had to because of time, or because your hands were in so much pain that you felt as if you physically couldn't play anymore without causing more damage. Those are the best days for practicing.

A humanistic style brings music to life. Yes, there can be beauty and security in hearing music that has been played perfectly, some beauty is lost by this. The mistakes that a musician makes during a performance add style and it gives a glimpse of how someone can recover. Listening to a performer who has started out a little rough and then seeing the transformation of him getting into his focus and then playing flawlessly is an exciting experience. Music isn't made to be perfect.

Music is personal. This is probably the most important aspect of music. In aspects such as notes and rhythms, these should definitely be followed. But the rest of it is up to the performer. You can hear the same piece being performed twenty times by twenty different

people, and in the end, you've heard twenty different interpretations, and it can feel like they are completely different pieces. It is so fun to realize the difference between the different styles and twists that each person puts into a piece they love. This is what makes people fall in love with music.

Music is a lot like life. It's beautiful. There are times in both music and life where there is dissonance, but in the end it almost will always resolve to a beautiful chord which allows a sigh of relief. We have times where there is a specific way to do something, and then we have the ability to add in our own interpretations and well as improv some of the other. There are times where anticipations and suspensions have us just waiting for the outcome to be made known. In life we have different tempo changes and other variables which are always switching things up. And just like life, music is to be made our own. Yes there are ways that other people have done it, and there is a path which is to be followed, but it is up to us to decide how to interpret and how to play it. Music is for everyone, because it is personal.

Love,

Present Me

Works Cited

Bach, Johann S. Arioso. N.d.

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Sebelius. Sebelius Symphony No. 2. N.d.