Oregon Musician

Sharing ideas about music and the teaching of music

Music and Resilience

The Editor's Comments

About the Editor

Diane Baxter, pianist, educator and consultant, is the editor of *Oregon Musician*. She is currently Professor of Music at Western Oregon University where she has received the *Faculty Honors Award for Outstanding Creativity* and the *Pastega Award for Excellence in Teaching.* Diane teaches studio piano and courses in Ethnomusicology, Performance Anxiety, and Research Methods. Off campus Diane consults and performs far and wide, often giving workshops on doing our best under pressure. "The Science of Artistry: The Fourth String" was published in *Clavier Companion* in Nov/Dec 2013. Diane's article, "Ethnomusicology and Alchemy" was published in the April/May 2020 edition of *American Music Teacher*. She lives, writes, plays and thinks in Brownsville, Oregon.

Art demands of us that we don't stand still.
—Beethoven

Welcome to this edition of the *Oregon Musician*. The authors contained herein all responded to a simple request: "Would you be willing to write an article on music and resilience?" You are in for a thoughtful set of contributions, far-reaching in their scope. I find myself wishing we could get in one room to discuss these together.

In *A Month in Siena* Hisham Matar writes that "only inside a book or in front of a painting can one truly be let into another's perspective." Isn't this what happens when we experience music, that we are momentarily allowed in to composers' minds, to immerse ourselves in the worlds

they have created? We are allowed in, so to speak, to spend time and to see the world momentarily as they have. As with all human relationships, what the listener/performer brings to the interaction affects the depth of perception but not the meaning itself. What is possible for a young player to perceive after one performance is vastly different than what is possible for a seasoned player who has performed a piece forty times.

Whether these sonic worlds reflect the daily reality of any individual composer is not something we can assume. Sometimes we know the source of inspiration, if there is a specific program, or poem, or painting that accompanies the work. And sometimes we are left to ponder how the work relates to the conditions from which the piece itself emerged. How did Olivier Messiaen compose *Quartet for the End of Time* in a German stalag? Edvard Grieg suffered a permanently collapsed lung before he reached age 20, yet he continued to compose brilliantly throughout his life. And how could Beethoven write such extraordinarily beautiful and joyful music at the end of his life, given the well-spring of grief that he was experiencing?

I remember listening in astonishment to a young college student once describe an entire "Vikings-are-coming-up-the-river-and-this-is-where-they-landed-their-boat-and-this-is-where-the-battle-started" scenario for a simple character piece, an intermediate work in ABA form. Vikings coming up the river were definitely not part of my particular understanding of the work. And yet, human beings want to connect with the music they hear and perform, so the attraction to infuse meaning is understandable. (If imagining Vikings coming closer helps a young player achieve a crescendo, then maybe that's a good thing. It won't get you very far in the next piece, however. I mean, what if the next piece is all about the battlefield at Culloden?) Matar tells us: "Implicit in the act of creation is praise of discovering and naming the world, of acknowledging it, of saying it exists." He refers to "the human spirit's secret ambition to connect." And in that process of connecting, we experience light that radiates out into the world, while at the same time illuminating us.

Janneke Brits discusses the late Schubert piano sonatas in relationship to the question of composition as autobiography. "The fact that the pianists who nowadays perform Schubert in a laborious way are usually about twice the age of Schubert should be food for thought. It is important that we acknowledge that great works of art are inevitably autobiographical and it is vital that we understand the context of a work's creation, but we must not place too heavy a burden on the *meaning* of music in relation to a composer's life events at the time. It is possible that we let our own thoughts and sympathies about the composer cloud the truth. The privilege of hindsight can often lead us to misunderstand a composer's intentions, and in the case of Schubert's last three piano sonatas we should not let a stereotypical image of him as a pitiable and suffering figure dominate our interpretation of his music."

Jill Timmons reflects on the performer's role. "Each of us in our own way radiates into the collective. If we can turn to our own personal compass, our way of living passionately and with our highest integrity, we cannot only find a path to thriving, but we also

may offer a way of uplifting the collective. It starts with us. Whether we are streaming an inspirational performance, teaching on one of the many Internet platforms, encouraging a home-bound student, giving a listening ear to a colleague, or expanding our own musical creativity, we can be the agent of uplifting and supportive action. Each person's path will be unique but will be echoed by those who seek some higher meaning."

Paul Roberts, known and loved well in Portland, has graciously contributed part of his in-progress book *Reading Liszt: Words Becoming Music* (to be published this year). He writes, "When I play my particular 'Liszt' I am playing—performing, recreating—the world of his titles and his epigraphs, the fountains of the Villa d'Este, the sonnets of Petrarch, the valley of Obermann. I don't have to think this way—the music after all has a life of its own—but I choose to. Liszt asks us to as well: in his scores the titles proclaim as much, the poems are there before us, Senancour's novel *Obermann* is present in our minds (and on my shelf). The music is its own entity, but the 'Liszt' I perform and teach, in relation to the poems and prose and epigraphs attached to it, is a different entity. This entity connects somehow to his life. That is my theme."

Deborah Cleaver says that music is one of the most resilient of influences. "When adversity in any form strikes, the possible outcomes range from crushing defeat to triumphant victory. The latter is known as resilience . . . the ability to bounce back. Of all the influences that contribute to human resilience, music is one of the most profound."

In her powerful account, Rhonda (Ringering) Rizzo tells us that "Resilience is commonly considered to be an individual's ability to be flexible under pressure, to remain optimistic in the face of failure, and to find opportunities in the darkest times. Regardless of whether these traits are innate or acquired, one thing is certain: resilience requires the ability to think. We're musicians. Adaptation is what we do. We've been training in this sort of resilience all our lives."

Susan Todd realizes that the external world can derail the best of intentions. "Sometimes, however, even a good toolkit full of diverse knowledge is not enough. Sometimes the source of challenge is something outside of our control and will test our personal ability to cope beyond what knowledge we can bring to the situation. To remain resilient in the face of such challenges we have to take care of ourselves mentally and physically."

And finally, James Kreiling discusses late Beethoven. "It has always struck me as miraculous that, despite the turmoil, ill health (he often complained of intestinal upsets), financial worries, and the custody battle Beethoven experienced throughout his final decade, the music he created at this time is overall some of the most profoundly ecstatic, joyful, and generous of spirit of his entire output."

I hope you enjoy these generous contributions from our authors. As always, I welcome your comments.

Music and Resilience

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by Janneke Brits

About Janneke

Janneke Brits is a highly respected and much sought-after teacher and keyboardist currently living in London, UK. She is Head of Keyboard at Eltham College in southeast London where she oversees a large and busy department. She performs frequently in the UK and France in a piano duet with her husband, James Kreiling. They have given UK premieres of several new works, as well as music of Peter Eotvos and Michael Finnesy. As an early music specialist, Janneke has performed with the Royal Academy Beckett Ensemble and performed on early keyboard instruments from the Cobbe Collection. As a chamber pianist, she has performed in many of the great halls in London, including the Barbican, and has participated in an exchange to Gothenburg, Sweden. She is assistant professor at *Music at Chateau d'Aix*, a piano course held in the south of France every August. She is co-artistic director and founding member of *En Blanc et Noir*, another festival for young pianists in Lagrasse, France.

It is difficult for us to imagine what the suffering must have been like for those in ill health before the modern age of medicine. It is what makes the final achievements of the great artists, writers and composers who lived before the 1920s all the more powerful to us now. It's extraordinary that these individuals were able to transcend their fears and create some of their best work while critically ill. It is only natural that we inevitably associate the last works of great historical geniuses with the spectre of death looming over them. The contradiction of the macabre and the pure is, after all, a common symbol in western

art, from depictions of Christ on the cross to Shakespeare's dramatic plays. Nothing quite sharpens the senses like knowing that death is around the corner.

I'd like to make the case that us modern music-lovers do this in the case of Franz Schubert, particularly in relation to his last three *Piano Sonatas* (*D958 in C minor, D 959 in A major and D960 in B-flat major*), which may rob us of appreciating the full scope of their meaning. Much of Schubert's greatest work was composed within the last 5–8 years of his life. In most cases, this would mark the final "late period" of a composer's output, but in Schubert's case, it is detrimental to label his final works in this way. His sudden death as a young man makes him a certain exception.

I frequently hear the last three piano sonatas played with a ponderous approach to tempo and with a sense of hushed reverence that does not correlate in my mind with the spirit of a young man of 31. In the last few years of his life Schubert enjoyed appreciation for his music in Viennese society, despite not making much income from it. He wasn't composing music for a non-existent audience just to satisfy his impulse to compose. He performed his music frequently and with great enthusiasm, and was not intimidated by his audiences. The fact that the pianists who nowadays perform Schubert in a laborious way are usually about twice the age of Schubert should be food for thought. It is important that we acknowledge that great works of art are inevitably autobiographical and it is vital that we understand the context of a work's creation, but we must not place too heavy a burden on the *meaning* of music in relation to a composer's life events at the time. It is possible that we let our own thoughts and sympathies about the composer cloud the truth. The privilege of hindsight can often lead us to misunderstand a composer's intentions, and in the case of Schubert's last three piano sonatas we should not let a stereotypical image of him as a pitiable and suffering figure dominate our interpretation of his music.

Schubert's short life is an interesting one to read about with regards to his mental and physical health, as there is a decent amount of historical information about his treatment by doctors for some of the various ailments and illnesses he suffered. It is thanks to his older (and financially secure) brother Ferdinand, that Schubert was able to afford rest and reasonably good medical care when needed, and why there is now some historical information available. Schubert's was doubtlessly a life cut tragically short, 31 January 1797 to 19 November 1828, even by the standards of those days What made his death so tragic was the fact that those who cherished him the most were older friends and relatives. Schubert was always the younger, bohemian outsider—he was lovingly taken under the protective wing of those more mature than he, such as composer and friend Joseph von Spaun. Schubert would have expected to outlive those around him, instead of it being the other way around.

Schubert: Youthful Optimism and Resilience

Let's also go back to the early years of Schubert's life. Schubert's father was able to enjoy relatively stable employment as a schoolteacher, although he was not able to provide great financial security for his family. It is likely that the greatest ambition Schubert's parents had for him as a young child would have been to follow in his father's humble footsteps, though Schubert soon proved them wrong. His father taught him the rudiments of violin playing but he soon surpassed him with obvious musical talent, and he had a beautiful soprano voice. He was thankfully spared the dreaded childhood illnesses such as smallpox which killed so many children in the 19th century, and by and large he experienced a secure start in life. By good fortune, Schubert's father was able to arrange a meeting with the great master-composer Anton Salieri, who then provided the young boy with the opportunity to study at the prestigious *Stadkonvikt* school in Vienna, where he formed a circle of friends that remained his greatest source of comfort in life, including Joseph von Spaun.

It must have been a very intimidating experience for a child of such humble beginnings to join an institution where his classmates would have been from far more privileged backgrounds. However, it seems that Schubert's precocious musical ability is what gave him the confidence to exist in a higher class-conscious part of Viennese society until the end of his life. His humble beginnings would always mark him as an outsider in the wealthy Viennese circles that became the source of his income later in life, but his earnest musicianship earned him constant respect and friendship from those more mature than him. Various friends described him as "so healthy and vigorous," having a "robust physique" and "enjoying good health."

It is widely assumed that Schubert first contracted a venereal disease some time in 1822, during what was ironically a very optimistic, carefree time of his life. There are many accounts of him enjoying parties and outings to the countryside which would take him several days to recover from—a sure sign that he was one to enjoy the pleasures of social life. He had just finished his studies, and thanks to the support of his wealthier friends, he was composing freely and enjoying the normal freedoms of a respectable young man. He had great success with his compositions for the theatre, while "Schubertiad" evenings became a fixture in the fashionable salons of the rich. Being accepted into the prestigious society of Vienna's "Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde" must have been the clearest indication to Schubert that he had earned his place in the most respected artistic circles. Yet, at this point the first syphilitic symptoms sadly coincided with Schubert's tendency to withdraw periodically from social circles and instead, to compose prodigiously in the comfort of Ferdinand's suburban home or at the home of his friend, Johann von Schober.

A diagnosis of syphilis was by no means an immediate "death sentence" then and was very common in Europe at that time, but Schubert would have known that it was

likely to shorten his life to some extent. It would also have precluded him from the social norm of marrying which no doubt altered the expectations he and his family had for his future. It must have been impossible for him to fathom his demise within a few years. He started to follow doctor's orders more carefully and sought rest and refuge when told to do so. He started to suffer from headaches in 1827 (a known symptom of secondary syphilis) but he still lived a productive and sociable life until the start of September 1828, at which point he decided to stay within the comfort and care of Ferdinand's home, as he felt too unwell. He had done so on previous occasions, and these periods resulted in astonishing works—his greatest song cycles and symphonies. This might explain why the last few months of Schubert's life resulted in such an extraordinary outpouring of masterpieces. He probably regarded this as another moment to free himself from social obligations and could therefore immerse himself in his work.

With regard to the last three sonatas, we should bear the chronology of events in mind. Schubert started the sketches for them in the spring of 1828 and they were finished and ready for publication at the end of September. This means that these works were conceived *before* the catastrophic decline in Schubert's health in November. That is not to say that there aren't dark chasms of despair in this music—the slow movement of the *A major D959* is particularly disturbing, and there is a frenzied urgency to the *C Minor Sonata D958*. This is indeed powerfully autobiographical music, though as I've stated, it's important that we don't let all of the notes in these sonatas be coloured by our perception of Schubert's imminent tragic situation. Each sonata is a statement in grandeur—there are luminous melodies throughout and the Scherzo movements are crafted with great affection for the carefree peasant-dances known as "Landler." There are light, magical touches in his use of harmony and modulations which show no heavy-handedness, and we must be careful not to lose this ease of flow in performance.

Inevitably, Schubert's final three sonatas have been compared to the triptych that is Beethoven's last three sonatas, also late works of huge significance. It is also the likely reason why Schubert's weren't published for 10 years after his death. It's interesting to draw parallels between the two composers' works, especially as Beethoven was an enormous influence on Schubert, but we have to be careful again not to let the poignancy of Beethoven's final authoritative statement (at the older age of 48–50) interfere with Schubert's more youthful "voice." Beethoven's piano writing strains at the edges of convention—he pushes the colouristic possibilities of the piano and the structural formality of the sonata to the very brink. Schubert's sonatas are also epic in scope, though they delight in melodic ease and perfect poise, rather than the urgent sense of motivic development which is so central to Beethoven.

It is with extraordinary inspiration that Schubert composed such achingly beautiful piano music in what would have been very worrying circumstances. During those

last few months and weeks he also composed the great *String Quintet in C Major D956*, finished editing the song cycle *Winterreise* for publication and started sketching a 10th symphony. All deeply personal works, they were written with the intention to be performed amongst his friends and fellow artists in the months to come. I firmly believe that this was a composer who was looking to do more and was not saying his farewell to the world in a state of self-pity with these compositions, even though they are suffused with dark moments. We must not let the bright light of his youthful optimism and resilience be dimmed, and we must perform his last three piano sonatas with the full scope of youthful expression they deserve.

The Long Winter: After Laura Ingalls Wilder

by Dr. Jill Timmons, NCTM

About Jill

Jill performs internationally as a solo and ensemble artist and has recorded on the Laurel, Centaur, and Capstone labels. With some thirty years in higher education, and through her consulting firm, Artsmentor, LLC, she continues to prepare pianists for competitive auditions and successful performances. Her best-selling career guidebook, *The Musician's Journey: Crafting Your Career Vision and Plan*, is published by Oxford University Press and will be forthcoming in a Second Edition in 2021. Timmons is the artist/teacher affiliate with Classic Pianos at their flagship Portland store and in their satellite locations in Bellevue, Denver, Boston, Anchorage, Las Vegas, and Albuquerque.

There *can* be a long winter. American author, Laura Ingalls Wilder, in *The Long Winter* recounts her family story and their harrowing survival during one of the worst South Dakota winters on record at that time. This novel served as one of my childhood inspirations, and as a parent, I read this book numerous times to my own children. Wilder's account brings us up close and personal to the life-threatening environment of a Dakota winter. She also details her family's path of survival in isolation: reading, story-telling, music, crafts, family, community, faith. As we are facing an indeterminant time frame with regard to the worldwide Covid pandemic and the challenges of contemporary isolation, there may be lessons learned from Wilder's tale of that 1880 winter.

I know a bit about isolation, sudden shifts from the Universe, hey, this isn't my plan. When I was pregnant with my second child, I ran into a bit of trouble. Well, actually a lot of trouble. At the 15th week, for various reasons, I became confined to bed for the duration of the pregnancy. Now this is no small assignment for anyone, but for me (hyper-active, fully engaged in my university job, touring artist, the mother of a *very* rascally 5-year-old, and in the first year of a new marriage), this was something otherworldly. I remember telling my doctor that yes, I could accept the medical leave, but certainly I would be able to continue to assist my college piano students with concert, audition, and competition preparation in my home. I would simply recline on the couch. No, and in fact he delivered the final blow. "You must remain in bed for the duration of your pregnancy and the *only* thing you can do is to use the bathroom.

The Long Winter: After Laura Ingalls Wilder

A nurse will be coming to your home once a week to check your vitals." It was, to put it lightly, a reorganization of self. Breathless at times . . .

Honestly, I don't remember much about those first few of weeks of "bedrest." But from there, I moved forward, albeit furtively. What was off the table, however, was making music at the piano or teaching, the two things that have always given passion and purpose to my life. I had to find new ways of moving through what would be my own *long winter*.

I read (all those things I had put off), I studied scores and explored new repertoire, I turned to my lifelong love of grant writing, I delved into my passion for cinema, and I created a richly-textured life with my daughter in my bedroom. We read all of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the entire Wilder *Little House Series*, Lemony Snicket, Nancy Drew, *Aesop's Fables*, *A Wrinkle in Time*, and explored her favorite subject, reptiles. We played games, watched movies, sang, created art projects. We talked about how a baby grows, what could we name him or her, how will this expand our family in new ways? What would she need? How do we celebrate? Yes, I am okay, and all will be well. My husband took on the lion's share of new responsibilities . . .

I have drawn on this period of my life a number of times, and especially now during this pandemic. Many things have changed in my life of course. All children are out of the nest. I am now running my own business, no longer in academia, and until March, I was happily roaring around the world playing, teaching, connecting, supporting other artists. But something feels unpleasantly familiar. A sudden and tectonic shift has been thrust upon all of us; truly worldwide, and with a significant measure of danger. Like most of us, I have little control over much these days. Required are many of the same skills I had to fundamentally and newly implement during my "confinement" and *that* very long winter, not unlike the Wilder family.

This is what I think it comes down to: what must you face honestly both within yourself and the outer world, what has viscerally changed in your current life and the ways you operate, where must you adapt, what is no longer a priority, where can you let go? Sure, that's a pretty tall order. But I think there is a balance to all of this. I ask this of all my clients each week. "Where is the opportunity? What is there to celebrate? How can you thrive? What do you want to create through your music? Or even how can you live to fight another day?"

So today, here is what I would offer most tenderly to all who are perplexed, challenged, working to keep a teaching studio or business afloat, caring for families and friends, doing good work, searching for some locale of joy. Each of us in our own way radiates into the collective. If we can turn to our own personal compass, our way of living passionately and with our highest integrity, we cannot only find a path to thriving, but we also may offer a way of uplifting the collective. It starts with us. Whether we are streaming an inspirational performance, teaching on one of the many Internet platforms,

encouraging a home-bound student, giving a listening ear to a colleague, or expanding our own musical creativity, we can be the agent of uplifting and supportive action. Each person's path will be unique but will be echoed by those who seek some higher meaning. Moreover, all of this transcends a previous quotidian life. In truth, it may just be our own call to greatness.

My story right now? I recently moved from the Oregon coast, happily returning once again to my home roots in the Willamette Valley, all during this past summer of Covid. I'm practicing not only the *Goldberg Variations*, but also acceptance—going with the flow. In this case, it is Covid. Next time, it will be something else. As things unfold, I for one am going to reread Wilder's tale of a very long winter.

As you move through this time, attending to your music studios, your students, your own artistic work, remember those who are less fortunate and may need shelter, food, and advocacy at the very least. Lastly, help to end the pandemic by following the guidelines of international science: wear a mask, keep a distance of at least 6 feet, postpone large gatherings. This is not a political issue, any more than it was in the 1950s in saving millions of children from polio. *Together*, we can do better. Oh, and learn that piece that is on your bucket list! When are you going to have *this* kind of time available again?

Best wishes from afar (at least six feet!).

Some Thoughts on the Nature of Musical Interpretation and How We Arrive There

by Paul Roberts

About Paul

Pianist, writer, lecturer, inspiring teacher—and a leading authority on the music of Debussy and Ravel—Paul Roberts has earned the admiration of audiences, critics and fellow professionals worldwide. In Europe Roberts is the artistic director of the international summer school for pianists Music at Chateau d'Aix in southern France. In London he teaches at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, where he has been awarded an Honorary Fellowship (FGS), and where he is currently researching his next book, Reading Liszt: Words Becoming Music. His acclaimed Reflections: The Piano Music of Maurice Ravel (Amadeus, 2012) followed his first two books: a biography Debussy (Phaidon, 2008) and Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy (Amadeus, 1996). Images has become a seminal text on the subject. 'It is a complete picture of Debussy's poetic world,' Richard Goode has written, 'and is one of the few indispensable books on music that I know.' In addition, Goode writes: "Paul Roberts' excellence as a writer on music is matched by his superb talents as a pianist. I know of no other figure in the musical world who combines so impressively the roles of scholar and performer." "Paul Roberts is an exceptional musician, a fine and deeply sensitive pianist, teacher and an author of the greatest distinction. His books on Debussy and Ravel are quite simply the most outstanding and perceptive I have read." (Bryce Morrison).

Some Thoughts on the Nature of Musical Interpretation and How We Arrive There

From the Introduction to
Reading Liszt: Words Becoming Music,
by Paul Roberts,
to be published by Rowman and Littlefield in 2021:

I have been reading about the death of Franz Liszt. Why does this draw me? Why should this be relevant to a book about the inspiration Liszt drew from European literature? This second question I can only answer as a kind of thought experiment, which I will come to. As for the first question, what death wouldn't draw us?

In Liszt's case his death at the age of 76, as narrated by Alan Walker at the end of his huge three-volume biography, is especially moving because, as readers, we live a life in the imagination so vividly that at its end we feel an emptiness akin to grief. For Walker, as writer, it even seems Liszt never died. So absorbed was he over decades with the minutiae of his research that he forgot his subject was a phantom: a few years after the publication of the third volume that I have just put down (*Franz Liszt: The Final Years*), Walker addressed an open letter to his "highly esteemed Master." It began, "I have long cherished the notion of writing to you, and I am grateful beyond measure that I now have opportunity to do so."[1] Such a position might attract ridicule, but we know that stories of all genres, whether biography or fairy tale, soap opera or novel, the bible or Shakespeare, have a deep and essential psychological impact on our wellbeing. For Walker, in the telling of his story—and there can be few stories from the 19th century more compelling than the life of Franz Liszt—his protagonist became a living companion.

I had a similar experience writing my far shorter biography of Debussy. I found the end of his life extraordinarily moving, and alongside the fact, the finality, came a sudden sense of wholeness. This is difficult to describe (and it is all the more difficult to articulate the effect this might have had on my experience of his music), but it was similar to the finality of a novel, indeed any story, even one that we have read before. This is what stories do, they reconfigure time. And with completion comes insight, a sense that everything one has previously known—about life, about music—is now more concentrated, more vital, more meaningful in some inchoate way. I did however resist writing Debussy a letter.

And now immersed in Liszt's music, pondering its stature, its meaning, its expressive power—reaching for the means to perform it, as well as the words to articulate my thoughts—I find the fact of his death as profound as if he had died only yesterday.

Liszt or "Liszt"?

Anyone experiencing this music, either as practitioner or listener, will have an image in their minds, an entity, that goes by the signifier Liszt. But the particular signifier I am concerned with contains not just my experience of the music but a wide paraphernalia of literary references specific to Liszt's interests, to the world of his imagination, to his

[1] Alan Walker, *Reflections on Liszt*, Cornell 2005, p. 239

creative demon—in a word, to his life. When I play my particular "Liszt" I am playing—performing, recreating—the world of his titles and his epigraphs, the fountains of the Villa d'Este, the sonnets of Petrarch, the valley of Obermann. I don't have to think this way – the music after all has a life of its own—but I choose to. Liszt asks us to as well: in his scores the titles proclaim as much, the poems are there before us, Senancour's novel *Obermann* is present in our minds (and on my shelf). The music is its own entity, but the "Liszt" I perform and teach, in relation to the poems and prose and epigraphs attached to it, is a different entity. This entity connects somehow to his life. That is my theme.

I recognise that this attempt to distinguish two entities is problematic. It risks weakening the validity of the music as music, which is the very opposite of my intention. But it is worth a try, a thought experiment, in order to grasp the extraordinary originality of Liszt's conception. I accept that in the B minor Sonata we can access Liszt's total command of the art of musical composition through analysis. His greatest compositions withstand the most scrupulous analytical scrutiny in the same way as Beethoven's or Wagner's. But analysis cannot reveal that other dimension, that ineffable expressive power that is the nature of artistic experience. To simplify, analysis reveals the brain not the heart—or we might say the workings not the purpose.

Perhaps that is at it should be, leaving the field "wide open to the imagination of the performer," as Cortot has it in his magnificent commentary on the Sonata for *Editions Salabert*. So let us follow the analytical path for a moment and recognise that expression comes from form, from what is demanded of us as performers by the exigencies of structure—this is indeed my living experience when performing the Sonata and it is what I wish to teach my students. (We might notice the Latin roots of the word perform: "per"—through, "forma"—shape.) Without a sense of the form of the B minor Sonata pianists cannot capture, or indeed control, its expressive power other than in passing moments, in localized disconnected vignettes. Without the form there is no emotional strength—the expression becomes either hysterical or sentimental, or indeed no expression at all, just empty gesture. It is Liszt's command of the structure of his massive edifice that enables its expressive power. And it enables the performer's resilience, without which we would be lost. We know where we are going.

Form works as localized structures too. Each motif has the formal strength to draw attention to itself, to exist in the moment—Liszt's material in the B minor Sonata is never less than transfixing. But the pianist must sense, and then fully realize, how a motif can transform itself, and how it links effortlessly to the material around it like a sequence of DNA. Certainly structural analysis can reveal how this operates.

But still something remains unexplained, and just possibly that something is everything. So we move back and forth from the analytical view, which is defined, verifiable, to the imaginative view, which is ambiguous, speculative. My thought experiment is an attempt to understand how a performer might grasp the second viewpoint more confidently, how we might make the ineffable effable—if only to keep an eye, an ear, on how

we are doing. What is it that reaches our listeners? How can we judge its effectiveness if we cannot somehow articulate what "it" might be?

Liszt, we can say with complete conviction, understood such questions early in his career. The following quotation comes from his Preface to *Album d'un voyageur* (1837), the first version of what was to become Book 1 of *Années de pèlerinage*:

> *As instrumental music progresses, develops and frees itself from its first bonds, it tends more and more to take on an ideal quality that is the perfection of the plastic arts; it tends more and more to become not a simple combination of sounds but a poetic language, more apt than poetry itself perhaps to express all that transcends within us our customary horizons, all that escapes analysis.*
>
> *The musician exhales the more personal mysteries of his destiny in sounds. But as his language, more arbitrary and less explicit than any other, lends itself to a multitude of interpretations, is it not without value for him to state the fundamental idea of his composition?*

And the implication is "at the outset"—which is what Liszt does with his titles and epigraphs. This question stayed with him all his life—witness the third book of *Années de pèlerinage* from the 1870s, with its meditations on the cypresses and fountains of his beloved Villa d'Este. I've always seen this extraordinary music, marked by an almost visionary quality, as a parallel to self-portraiture, akin to the calm all-seeing gaze of Rembrandt in old age. *Les Jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este* contains a quotation from the bible expressing man's desire (and Liszt's) for spiritual fulfilment. The deeply personal contemplations of the cypress trees in the two threnodies, *Aux Cyprès de la Villa d'Este* (I and II), achieve a universal symbolism that enacts an acceptance of death—of the pain and suffering that was Liszt's experience—that are assuaged by the very act of musical expression.

The Thought Experiment: Hermeneutics

Objective assessment of musical meaning is difficult ground. Indeed talking about music, other than analytically as we have seen, is always difficult ground. But however much we wish to be objective when we prepare our scores (with the aid of *urtext* editions), we know music is also inescapably subjective. Which brings me back to my thought experiment, to which I will now give a name—hermeneutics.

Hermeneutics is a philosophy of interpretation, it seeks to understand how we understand, how we arrive at what we think and feel. It has its roots in language (it was originally a method of interpreting biblical texts), but has now taken all branches of the humanities into its orbit. As a philosophy it is fundamental to my question about the relevance of the death of Liszt to my theme, even to my performances of Liszt. In my at-

tempt to answer that question, and the broader question of musical interpretation, I will be practising hermeneutics.

"For hermeneutic thinkers," writes Jens Zimmermann, "construction of meaning is always a hypothesis, that is a well-meaning guess."[2] Our duty as interpreters is to make as plausible a hypothesis as possible, remove ourselves as far as we can from speculation that is merely fanciful, but recognise nevertheless that speculation, the thought experiment, has every chance of illuminating our understanding and deepening our art; and to be aware of other interpretations, of inherent ambiguities. The struggle for meaning, for validation, is always worth the guess work. The prolific American musicologist Lawrence Kramer has written of the necessity for "a general effort to recuperate the value of subjectivity and to redefine ambiguity not as a deferral of truth but as truth itself."[3] I sign up to that.

Hermeneutics is a daunting subject, and I have no intention of grappling with it any further, other than to say I have been practising hermeneutics most of my life without realizing it. "Hermeneutic thinkers," says Zimmermann, "insist that we need to redefine objective truth as something we take part in rather than something we merely observe from a distance."[4] This surely is what performers do when recreating a piece of music, what actors do when inhabiting a role, what we all do when reading a novel or watching a film. My aim in the course of this book is to examine how this might work in building an interpretation of a Liszt piano score, what part my knowledge of Liszt's life and death plays in this process, and in particular, narrowing the focus, what a performer might bring to the music from a knowledge of the literary sources of Liszt's inspiration.

Hermeneutics in Operation

As an illustration of hermeneutics I will digress briefly into two parallel art forms, film and dance. When I first began my musings on the nature of interpretation I happened to see the film *The White Crow* (director Ralph Fiennes), the story of the Russian ballet dancer Rudolf Nureyev. The film is a vibrant example of the connections and associations we make when we experience all forms of art.

Nureyev's experience of himself and his formation as a man and artist—and our own understanding of Nureyev—is conveyed in the film through a combination of experiences from his childhood and early adulthood that we see both in the present and as flashbacks. Memories of his past are combined with memories of art and sculpture: he remembers gazing at pictures, and we witness him remembering and intently focussing on images of arms and muscles and shapes in the paintings; we witness him touching the smooth surfaces of sculpture in the Louvre, and his reactions to the straining of limbs. His growing self-knowledge—and in turn our knowledge of him, all that we learn about the essence of what he is and what he becomes—is drawn through a holistic presentation of every facet of his consciousness and acted out through the art of cinematography.

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[2] Jans Zimmermann, *A Very Short Introduction to Hermeneutics*, Oxford 2015, p. 13

[3] "Dangerous liaisons: the literary text in musical criticism'"—19th Century Music 13 1989, p. 166

[4] Zimmermann, p. 13

We see *The Raft of the Medusa* (Delacroix), Greek sculpture, Rembrandt portraits; we see a scene where his father is holding him as a little boy which morphs into an image from a Rembrandt painting where this same scene is distilled, frozen in time. As he dances (acts) as an adult on stage he remembers (becomes) moments from his past: a scene with his mother, a forest in snow, a train, the visual art he has stumbled upon. As a dancer he finds this "story" of himself and relives it, becomes it. And the story becomes the vital end product, constantly impressed on him by his teacher. "Story," his teacher insists, is the aim and purpose of technique. Nureyev's own story, from which he makes his art, is his life in all its facets, dominated by memories, images which the film weaves into the narrative. A toy train and a real train provide a constant backdrop (but how real a train?—after all this is a film, a flat moving image on a screen). Nureyev as a young adult had a passion for toy trains, a familiar trope of childhood but also an image which focuses the real circumstances of his birth—he was born on a train. By the simplest means the film provides images of past and present fused, but which we at once understand. We ourselves respond to the film hermeneutically.

"We don't DO hermeneutics, we ARE hermeneutics," says Zimmermann. "We are self-interpreting animals, beings whose very nature is to negotiate a complex world of meaning relations into which we are thrown at birth."[5]

The White Crow shows us, demonstrates through the medium of film, that this "complex world" is the foundation of how we see and make art, how we relate to art and interpret it. And it was to this world that Nureyev's teacher connected his pupil, to his story, his "play," to the events, emotions, joys and traumas that made up his early life. "It is only by being deeply involved that any understanding of the play can take place. For hermeneutic thinkers this is how knowledge works. Objective understanding of the world, others, and ourselves requires personal engagement and passionate curiosity."[6]

Passionate Curiosity

The relevance of Liszt's life and death, his biography, to my theme might be seen then in terms of Zimmermann's "passionate curiosity." So we return to the question with which we started. It is a big claim that such curiosity has any bearing on the way we perform his music, but hermeneutic thinking permits the thought.

In musical terms the decades from the Liszt of the *Etudes* and the *Album d'un voyageur* (1834–5) to the Liszt of the third book of the *Années de pèlerinage* and beyond (from 1877 to the year before his death in 1886), embrace a remarkable creative journey, ever changing, ever experimenting. But to see this journey only as a history of music, of an evolving style, is to subtract it from the life that undertook it. My practice of hermeneutics leads to the contention that context, the life, enriches our understanding of art. (Indeed is not this the premise of the art gallery today, where we are rewarded not only with paintings but with detailed written and video commentary on them?)

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[5] Zimmermann, p. 35

[6] Zimmermann, p. 18

Some Thoughts on the Nature of Musical Interpretation and How We Arrive There

I am aware of the strong arguments for treating an artist's work as autonomous, and I am perfectly willing to wear that hat too—indeed I find it an essential antidote that can without strain parallel my contextual approach. I am more than happy to live with this ambiguity. This is particularly relevant to the B minor Sonata, which no more demands the context of Goethe's *Faust* (a conjunction repeatedly made) than does Beethoven's C minor Sonata, Op. 111 (a conjunction I have never heard of, but not totally implausible). I will follow up on *Faust* and the B minor Sonata in a later chapter.

"A writer should leave nothing behind him but his works,"[7] proclaimed Flaubert. Nor should a composer. But the reality is different. Flaubert had very strong views on the autonomy of art, the essentially impersonal nature of the creative process. So did Ravel. But Liszt didn't. The caricature of Ravel, in his immaculate buttoned-up clothes, is of one who had a horror of "being interpreted;" while of Flaubert it is of one whose aim was that every word and sentence should hide him from view, one who sought a militant objectivity. Liszt as an artist believed and did the opposite. "Liszt's music . . . projects the man," writes Alfred Brendel. "With rare immediacy it gives away the character of the composer as well as the musical probity of his executant."[8] It is all the more remarkable that he attained in his greatest music a universality that effortlessly transcended his ego.

Liszt's artistic journey from those early piano compositions to the very last works, embracing over fifty years, was dependent on a consistent belief in the transcendental power of music and its relation to the multiple complexities of human experience. We have already seen this in the Preface he wrote to the Album d'un voyageur. From the beginning Liszt held to this ideal, notwithstanding his forays, during his stupendous career as a virtuoso, into crowd pleasing virtuosity and brilliant transcriptions of popular opera. "It is utterly impossible for me," Liszt wrote, "to enjoy anything that appeals only to my ears, without my mind and my emotions also taking a part, a very large part, in my enjoyment."[9] He was 27. The remark is lofty, but remove Liszt's egotism and we are left with his essential and ever consistent credo. As David Trippett has pointed out, the remark "posits an aesthetics of comprehension, the need to engage the other hemisphere, as it were, which we might interpret as a yearning for literary fulfilment."[10]

Liszt's music, the music that is the subject of this book, manifestly arises from a need for "literary fulfilment," from a quest for musical meaning of the kind embodied in the greatest imaginative literature.

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[7] Quoted in *Something to Declare* by Julian Barnes, Picador 2002, p. 253

[8] Alfred Brendel *Music Sounded Out*, Robson 1990, p. 157

[9] Charles Suttoni (trans. and ed.) *An Artist's Journey*, Chicago 1989, p. 136

[10] David Tripett, *An Uncrossable Rubicon: Liszt's Sardanapalo Revisited*, Journal of the Royal Musical Association, Volume 143, Issue 2 , 2018 https://doi.org/10.1080/02690403.2018.1507120

When You Walk Through a Storm: Thoughts on Music and Resilience

by Deborah Ingram Cleaver

About Deborah

Deborah has lived in Portland, Oregon since 1994. She holds a Master of Music degree in piano performance from Boston University School of Fine Arts. While at Boston University, she studied with the legendary pianist and pedagogue Leonard Shure, and from 1980 to 1983, was his teaching assistant at New England Conservatory. After 10 years of performing and teaching in West Berlin, Germany, she came to Portland and joined the piano faculty at Reed College.

Although her early training was heavily weighted toward the music of the Classical and Romantic eras, Ms. Cleaver's interest in early music performance practice has led her to study with such luminaries as Edward Parmentier, Sandra Rosenblum, and Elisabeth Wright. She has given workshops and lecture recitals throughout the Northwest, Southwest, and Alaska, and is a frequent adjudicator for festivals and competitions.

She is an active performer, and has appeared with the DeRosa Chamber Players, the Fear No Music Ensemble, the Friends of Rain Ensemble, and the Makrokosmos Project, and has had performances aired on OPB's classical music programs, 56666

Just recently retired from Lewis and Clark College, she has also taught at Reed College, Willamette University, Laurinburg College (NC), and The South Shore Conservatory (Boston). She is also a faculty member of the Golandsky Institute, and teaches at its annual summer

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When you walk through a storm
Hold your head up high
And don't be afraid of the dark
At the end of a storm
There's a golden sky
And the sweet silver song of a lark
Walk on through the wind
Walk on through the rain
Though your dreams be tossed and blown
Walk on, walk on
With hope in your heart
And you'll never walk alone.

—Rodgers & Hammerstein

When adversity in any form strikes, the possible outcomes range from crushing defeat to triumphant victory. The latter is known as resilience . . . the ability to bounce back. Of all the influences that contribute to human resilience, music is one of the most profound.

One needs only to Google "music, the brain, and resilience" to access a world of scientific research which has spawned significant therapeutic methods in treating everything from autism to Alzheimer's. The chemical reactions in the brain have been documented and peer reviewed over decades. We know that music can trigger the release of endorphins, which deliver a sense of well-being and even joy. Very few people are immune to the spirit rousing effects of music. The Rogers and Hammerstein lyrics above, set to music of course, are a paean to the ability of humans to weather any storm and music's power to convey that message.

This has never been more apparent than during the present horrid pandemic which has deprived us of the company of family and friends, and for many, livelihoods. We've witnessed our musical colleagues reaching out to share their art through social media; chamber music groups stretching to set up virtual rehearsing and recording systems; concerts happening al fresco with masked and socially distanced players and audiences; teachers learning the best methods for giving lessons online; and quarantined apartment dwellers across the world singing from their windows to lift the spirits of their fellow citizens. Hearing a cellist sitting on his balcony sending the soul lifting phrases of a Bach Partita out into the universe could not fail to give heart to the lucky listeners. Musicians are resilient!

For people of faith, music has been an integral part of services and memorials that enable survivors to move past the grief of lost loved ones. The memory of sitting in church listening quietly to music after the death of President Kennedy, and the communal sense of shared emotion is vivid to this day. Arthur Rubinstein wanted the Adagio of

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Schubert's Quintet in C to be played at his funeral. Why? Because probably no other work provides a more direct line to infinity. It is impossible to come away from a performance of this movement without being lifted up. How wonderful that Rubinstein wanted this work to be his send-off.

Faith was never more at the heart of resilience than when expressed through the spirituals of African American slaves toiling in cotton and rice fields. When cruel and inhumane conditions made life as close to unbearable as can be imagined, songs gave them the courage, grit, and hope to continue. How else but through music could such evil have been endured? "We Shall Overcome," the anthem of the civil rights movement during the 50s and 60s, is still sung today in the fight for racial equality.

In times of war and political conflict, music has served to inspire and give courage to those in great danger and fear. Trumpet calls on the battlefield were know to invigorate faltering troops; soldiers wearily marching from death field to death field sang of home to ease their flagging spirits; revolutionaries spread inspiring lyrics from corner to corner of oppressed regions to rally the people. What better example is there than the Chilean protest chant, "The People United Will Never Be Defeated," captured passionately and movingly in Frederic Rzewski's monumental and soul shattering set of variations on this theme?

On the popular front, sharp-witted humor has always been delivered in musical form during difficult times, never more so than before and during World War II in the form of the German and French Cabaret songs. Who can forget the stunning performances of Liza Minelli and Joel Grey in the movie "Cabaret," or Kurt Weill and Bertold Brecht's contribution to the war efforts through their satirical "Ballad of the Nazi Soldier's Wife?" Other tongue-in-cheek sarcasm was delivered by Tom Lehrer in the US and Georg Kreisler in Germany, among many others. The biting humor of these artists gave heart to people in the throes of difficult and contentious times.

After WWII the spirit of the French people was uplifted by their national songstress, Edith Piaf, helping to restore a nation ravaged by a severed country. Here in America the likes of Joan Baez and Judy Collins directed the youthful protests of the 60s, and James Taylor soothed the troubled mind with his soft and meditative voice and guitar playing.

Throughout the ages music in all its forms has been the instrument of resilience, whether through meditative transcendence or rousing inspiration. Our civilization would be bereft indeed without music's power to help us survive the storms and walk on with hope in our hearts.

Bach, Beethoven, Brahms and Resilience

by Rhonda Rizzo

About Rhonda

Rhonda (Ringering) Rizzo is a writer and a former performing and recording pianist. Her novel, *The Waco Variations*, was released in the summer of 2018 and her numerous articles have appeared in national and international music magazines, including *Pianist Magazine, American Music Teacher, Clavier, Piano & Keyboard,* and *Flute Talk*. A specialist in music that borrows from both classical and jazz traditions, Rizzo released four CDs: *Made in America, Oregon Impressions: the Piano Music of Dave Deason, 2 to Tango: Music for Piano Duet,* and *A Spin on It.* She is a passionate advocate of new music and living composers.

The list of "No's" was a long one: no movies, popular music, jazz, dancing, jewelry, competitive sports, unsanctioned reading material, friendships with non-believers, public school, activity on the Sabbath, or skimping on tithes and offerings. This was a world where eternal salvation required keeping every jot and tittle of the law, a world of "altar calls" and renouncing the Devil who lurked behind every shrub. This was a world in which God Almighty rewarded "faith" over reason and blind obedience over thought. This was a world that could, at any moment, pitch into "The Time of the End" as depicted by the Biblical books of Daniel and Revelation. This was a world of control and fear.

But this was also a world where piano lessons were encouraged, and a student was allowed to learn music by Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms along with 4-part hymns because classical music was "harmless." That was the most dangerous "Yes" this cult could have granted, because in a world where every thought was policed, Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms taught a young piano student to think. And because that student learned to think, she found her way out of that world of "No" into a universe of color, vibrancy, and life.

Resilience is commonly considered to be an individual's ability to be flexible under pressure, to remain optimistic in the face of failure, and to find opportunities in the darkest times. Regardless of whether these traits are innate or acquired, one thing is certain:

resilience requires the ability to think. When adversity arrives, it appears as reality's slap across the face. All the comfortable half-truths and outright lies dissolve, leaving us groundless in a world that seems to have lost all meaning. Without the ability to reason, we can't sort fact from fiction. We can't discern who we are and what truly matters to us. Without the ability to reason, we can't make wise decisions, nor can we find opportunities lurking in adversity.

I know of few educational tools more powerfully suited to teaching a child to think than immersion in serious music study. Sadly, rather than giving students a firm foundation in critical thinking skills, most of our schools are graduating people who have been taught to parrot back correct answers. This is done to prepare them for university degrees that are all-too-often pursued more to obtain job training than to hone the mind. Not only does this fail to train minds, it fails to give our students high rankings in education. According to the *Worldwide Educating for the Future Index*, the US doesn't make the top 20 in any of the educational areas measured. Within the US, Oregon ranks number 40, behind West Virginia and just ahead of Arkansas, in school quality. This lack of training has dire consequences for individuals and for society—something we've seen play out this year as many fall prey to conspiracy theories and unscientific data.

Music is one of the few areas of study taught from childhood that turns rote and utilitarian learning upside down. Within a structured framework of absolutes—correct notes played at the correct time—music students find a world of subtle nuance that requires them to engage with the music physically, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. Rather than being fed correct answers, students are challenged to develop the ability to find their own. This, I believe, is because serious music making requires us to challenge easy answers. It forces us to grapple with our limitations every time we practice, and to face our weaknesses with honesty in order to find solutions to problems. Because we make music, we work to find the truth of a passage or a work. From symbols on a page, we look for this truth in structure, in melody, in harmony, in the composer's intentions, and, ultimately, in ourselves. We do this because we know that the technical weaknesses we gloss over in practice will become glaringly obvious in the harsh light of the concert stage. We do this because borrowed performance ideas or slapped-on interpretations lead to shallow, false performances. We do this because without a reasoned search for the truth in the music and in ourselves, we have nothing more to offer a listener than correct notes and flashy technique.

This commitment to excavating truth serves us well in our careers. Even a cursory look at music history yields stories of economic and personal hardship. Yet, music and musicians survive. In this current crisis, even technology-phobic musicians moved their performances and lessons online, set up support chat rooms on social media, and are finding ways to survive. We're musicians. Adaptation is what we do. We've been training in this sort of resilience all our lives.

Of course, not all musicians are innately resilient. Everyone can cite examples of musicians who succumbed to mental illness or substance abuse. Being trained to reason and think is no guarantee that we'll choose to do so, nor is it a guarantee that these skills will make us better or more resilient than other people, nor will it save us from bad decisions. What our musical training does offer us is training in sorting through options, acknowledging our own mistakes, and reasoning our way to better choices. The music we love and have been taught to play offers a glimpse of human truths that existed before we were born and will exist long after we die. Music may not save our souls, but it can teach us how to find true answers upon which to build our lives. The truth will set us free, but first we have to be able to capable of seeing it.

What do you do when everything you know about life is upended? What truth do you hold on to when all that you've taught to believe about life has been proven to be false? We're living in a world where too many of us, like the Biblical figure Pilot, are asking "What is truth?" The fact that so many fall prey to misinformation is an indication of how badly we as a society need to train deep thinkers. The price of believing the lie is too high because all lies eventually crumble to dust, and individuals or societies who have built their lives on these lies fall apart as well. Without the ability to think, there's little chance of surviving when a foundation of lies evaporates.

The story at the start of this article is my own, and my journey out of that upside-down religious boarding school world was one of disorientation and culture shock. When I first described the religious beliefs I was raised with to my husband, who grew up in a normal Lutheran church, he found the tenants of "the faith" so extreme that he thought I was making it all up. It's a difficult world to describe to normal people, which is why I rarely talk about it to outsiders and haven't chosen to share my story until now. Other than borrowing fragments of this journey for my main character in my (fictional) novel, *The Waco Variations*, it's been something I've preferred not to dwell on because, as my 92-year-old Aunt Fran says, when you "go through Hell in gasoline underpants," you choose to leave those memories in the past. It is because music and resilience are deeply embedded in my identity that I feel compelled to share it in this article.

When I left that religious tradition, everything I knew about the world, everything I knew about the "god" I'd been taught to follow, and everything I thought I knew about myself and my place in life, dissolved under my feet. I learned about society like an immigrant, through TV, movies, magazines, and music. I read everything I could—from Greek mythology to Russian novels, evolution to world religions. I undid a few disastrous mistakes (and made a few new ones). I went through a deep depression. It took me years—years of lots of stops and starts. But I didn't implode. This was in contrast to many friends who shared my background—people who succumbed to alcoholism or other forms of self-destructive behavior when they broke away from "the faith." Others were (and some still are) consumed with conspiracy theories and extremely fringe religious

beliefs. I'm convinced that I'm not more innately intelligent or resilient than my peers. The difference is, when my world proved false, I found myself standing on the shoulders of the great composers. When people ask me how I managed to find my way out of that world without blowing apart, I tell them this:

Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms taught me to think. The piano allowed me to express what I couldn't say verbally. Classical music allowed me to play "at the doorstep of eternity"—throwing open the narrow, concrete doors of a closed religious system into a universe of timeless beauty. It healed me. Any doubt I felt, any loss I mourned, I knew that music not only accompanied me, but it had been there first. Where words failed, music remained. When the words I'd been taught proved false, music pointed me toward truth.

Music and Resilience

by Susan Mark Todd, NCTM

About Susan

Susan Mark Todd, NCTM is an independent piano teacher who taught in Kansas, California and Iowa before settling in Oregon in 1995, where she loves teaching her students of all ages. She immediately became active in Portland District of OMTA, holding local, state and division offices, including State President and NW Division Certification Commissioner. Susan is currently OMTA District Enrichment Grant Coordinator, bringing programs to districts throughout the state. She holds a Bachelor of Music degree from Wichita State University. An active performer, Susan is a church pianist and organist and performs piano 8-hand music with "Too Grand" in Portland.

Sitting next to my psychologist daughter while beginning work on this article, I was inspired to consider the psychological aspects of resilience, rather than simply accepting the dictionary definition, which reads "the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties." The key elements in my reading on the subject were strengthening adaptability and building coping skills. How does music study relate to this? I find many parallels when I compare these resilience building tactics with our efforts as teachers, working in every lesson to equip our students for their musical journey.

In 2020 our lives were turned upside down by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as a host of other external stressors. Suddenly we had to reinvent our approach to nearly everything we did. At first we were in a mad scramble, learning new technologies, grabbing tables from the living room, and putting phones, laptops or tablets on stacks of books to try to get a good viewing angle. We had to deal with poor sound quality, aching backs from hunching over our computers and screen and voice fatigue from online lessons.

We had to adapt, and we had to cope.

Adapting to new situations can be difficult without the right knowledge or the right tools. Fortunately, as members of a community, we did not have to do it all by ourselves. Thanks to a generous programming grant from Nellie Tholen through the Oregon Community Foundation, the Oregon Music Teachers Association (OMTA) was quickly able to give its members new, relevant resources for building skills to cope with these challenges.

Music and Resilience

Videos were created to help our members learn how to teach online, from the nuts and bolts of setting up the technological end to how to communicate about technique and musicality with students who are not right beside us in the studio. Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) put together a list of recommended video resources for online teaching. As the restrictions on gathering continued, both organizations made their annual conference programs available virtually, giving members even more support in learning new ways to do our work. Most OMTA districts have been meeting virtually, with the added bonus that members anywhere can join in, connect with their peers and learn together. We have a wealth of resources to continue building skills to meet our teaching challenges with resilience.

Similarly, we help our students build skills every day to give them tools so they can cope with musical challenges. We train our students to work on scales, arpeggios and chords in our OMTA Syllabus program. In expecting them to work on these elements in each daily practice session and at every lesson, we help them develop a reservoir of musical resilience. In addition to building the physical skills needed for the repertoire we want them to master, this type of study increases their understanding of the music we are working on. We encourage students to listen to recordings of their repertoire. In doing so they can repeatedly hear the correct notes and rhythms and begin to hear how other musicians have chosen to interpret the score. Listening to a variety of performances gives our students guidance in deciding their own response to the music. Teaching sight reading, rhythm reading and ear training helps our students build skills for dealing with the challenges of learning new music. In working to give our students well-rounded teaching we are equipping them with essential components necessary to become resilient, independent, lifelong musicians.

When meeting a bump in the road of life, whether it be a sudden relationship change, a health scare or a world-wide pandemic, taking time to carefully look at the situation is essential to forming a resilient response. Talking about our challenge with a friend, counselor or colleague can help us understand what we are facing. As in music study, looking for patterns, relying on structure and asking for help from colleagues and friends can help smooth our journey.

When introducing a new piece of music, I often ask a student to tell me several things they notice about the piece. We discover patterns and structure and work together to begin the journey from unknown marks on a page to a beautiful performance. I am always curious what students will say when I ask what they think will be most difficult about learning the new piece. My experience can zero in on the challenging parts, but they do not necessarily have the skills to see all the possible obstacles between the beginning and a successful, polished piece. We work together to find the spots that need more concentrated effort and decide how to tackle them. Helping students see patterns in the music they are playing can help them see the way forward, whether it is a simple four-

line piece with one contrasting line or a sweeping sonata-allegro movement. It is beneficial to discover sections that are unique and parts that are similar yet not identical. We can encourage students to devote extra practice on the B section in an ABA or rounded binary piece, or parallel practice on the second theme of the sonata-allegro—comparing the variations from the exposition's statement in the dominant to the recapitulation's in the tonic. Students can get help from friends and peers when they play their music in playing class and get different perspectives on their work.

Sometimes, however, even a good toolkit full of diverse knowledge is not enough. Sometimes the source of challenge is something outside of our control and will test our personal ability to cope beyond what knowledge we can bring to the situation. To remain resilient in the face of such challenges we have to take care of ourselves mentally and physically. In times of stress, we can lose track of our coping skills. We may develop negative patterns, perhaps responding to stress with clenched jaws or tight shoulders, eating, sleeping, or drinking too much or not enough, or just shutting down. This is where our coping skills come into play. When we are aware of these negative patterns, we have the opportunity to move towards more constructive responses. When my shoulders start to rise, I take a moment to cross my arms and run my hands down the opposite arms. This simple gesture reminds me to take a breath and is surprisingly calming.

A key component of developing reliable resilience is working on our coping skills all the time, not just when we need them the most. In our lives, we can look for positive patterns and reinforce them. Practicing meditation, a daily pause for gratefulness or reflection, or writing in a journal are all ways to build the emotional resilience needed to weather times of stress and broaden our understanding of ourselves as individuals. The coping skills we use for ourselves can be modeled and taught to our students as well. From breathing exercises and stretches before beginning a lesson, to visualization techniques to prepare for a performance, working with students to develop a variety of ways to meet performance anxiety provides internal resources that are invaluable in performing, speaking or moving with confidence in both their music study and the rest of their daily lives.

Weekly time with colleagues and friends or family enriches our hearts, whether it is by phone, on a socially distanced walk through a local park, spread far apart on the patio, or via Zoom. One of my favorite things to do this summer was to drag my little side tables and lawn chairs out under the apple tree to create a wide-spread setting for a visit with an OMTA friend and colleague. We need each other. We laughed about our bumbling attempts to learn how to teach virtually, shared ideas that worked, and those that did not. We talked about family and how we were coping with the stress of the day. We shared gardening tips, teaching tips and parenting stories. We came away with our resilience levels replenished.

Structure in music gives listeners a way to focus and understand what they are hearing and gives musicians guideposts for learning and performing. Having and maintaining structure in our daily lives can help give a sense of grounding that will support us

through challenges. While our daily schedule may vary greatly with different numbers of students, varied combinations of masked in-person lessons and virtual teaching, more or less time to practice, and familial obligations, finding some regularity can be reassuring. We can begin our lessons with simple routines that our students can rely on as a touchstone in their week. For us as teachers it can be as simple as always planning 15 minutes before lessons begin to sit with a favorite cup of tea and simply to focus on enjoying that beverage.

Relying on music itself to help us cope with stress and emotions is a smart choice. Listening to a favorite piece, or an unfamiliar piece by a favorite or new composer is enriching. Working on a piece we love is gratifying. We can find music to play or listen to that matches our emotional state, helping us express our feelings in ways words cannot. We can also find music that encourages us to remember to hope or feel joy. I recall a particular opera performance when I felt like my tears were being pulled from the center of my being outward. I left that performance feeling enriched, awed, and deeply peaceful. I am very grateful to MTNA, OMTA, the many arts organizations in our community, and my colleagues that have made experiencing their musical offerings virtually a possibility during the pandemic. Their music has helped us stay connected, ready to take on the next day.

Last but not least, is rest. Taking time to rest is essential in music and in life. Our students often like to rush through rests, and we encourage them to take time and hear how the silence between the notes is also part of the music. Taking a moment here and there to notice a sunset, hear a bird's call, or just to enjoy a bit of silence can nourish us. I think of that magical, silent moment at the end of a brilliant performance when we listeners collectively breathe in and enjoy the beauty of the moment—then "Brava e Bravo," and we go on to meet life with richer, resilient, full hearts.

Beethoven: 2020's Redeeming Theme

by James Kreiling

About James

James Kreiling's solo career has focused on music of the early 20th century, particularly the piano works of Scriabin. James has performed in the major concert halls of London, notably as a soloist at the 2007 BBC Proms. In 2008 James became a Park Lane Group young artist with solo recitals at the Purcell Room and St Martin-in-the-Fields. James has broadcast for BBC Radio 3, presenting the music of Jonathan Harvey, David Matthews, Peter Eotvos, Thomas Ades and Pierre Boulez.

In 2017 he completed a performance-based doctorate at the Guildhall School of Music focusing on the interaction of research, analysis, and performance practice in the interpretation of Scriabin's late piano sonatas. He has recorded two discs encompassing the composer's complete late piano music, released by Odradek on October 19th, 2018 to critical claim, including a five star review in BBC Music Magazine. He is a co-founder of Multiphonic Arts, mounting concerts which mix classical piano with other performance arts—poetry, drama and dance, folk and jazz.

James performs throughout Europe and the UK in a piano duo with his wife, Janneke Brits. Highlights have included a tour of France with Stravinsky's *Les Noces* as well as four-hand recitals at the En Blanc et Noir piano festival in Lagrasse, France, where the duo are now associate artistic directors.

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When I quietly ushered in the new year in January 2020 it was with a degree of anxiety and trepidation regarding certain political and social concerns on either side of the Atlantic. These apprehensions were tempered only by the prospect of a year spent celebrating, listening to, reading about, and performing the music of Beethoven. Little did I realize that a few months later in March I would be giving my last recital for four months, as full lockdown came into effect just days later. Eight months have passed since and in London we are currently tentatively emerging from our second lockdown.

The impact on the Arts during this uncertain period is felt and seen by all in our field. Performances, many celebrating Beethoven's year, have been cancelled or postponed, venues closed indefinitely, and future recovery plans remain unclear. Seasoned performers have had to turn to other forms of income. Friends of mine have worked as delivery personnel, shelf-stackers, and even fishermen. Many smaller organizations have folded. My own performance venture, "Multiphonic Arts," has been fortunate to receive funds, but we find ourselves in limbo, not knowing when we will be allowed back into our beloved ruined chapel.

For myself, as for many, the purgatory in which we have found ourselves would be unimaginable without music. The lack of live performance has caused me to repeatedly turn to my recording collection, purchasing new CDs, and at times desperately seeking those rare and precious moments when one can just sit, listen, marvel, and escape—a nearly impossible feat when "locked-down" in a small flat with a toddler!

My two lockdowns have been characterized by two composers. During the first our little London flat reverberated with the Symphonies of Mahler, doors flung wide, neighbours (fortunately) sympathetic, as entire universes were heard on a scale never since matched. The second has heard an even greater obsession with Beethoven after returning to performing his Sonata Op. 111 in a rare public performance in France in August (a performance in which I was nervous and tired, one I would rather forget!). When asked to write a few words around the theme of resilience, either of these great composers would have suited the theme, but in honour of his 250th anniversary year, and current obsessions, Beethoven it is.

Beethoven was more than familiar with struggle and hardship, whether emotional, physical, or financial. His chronic deafness is well-known, the intimations of which began as early as 1797, before the realization that the condition was not a passing ailment but a permanent and progressive malady. Any musician or music-lover will empathise with the distress, devastation, and desperation caused, not by a sudden loss, but by a gradual deterioration of the very faculty required to perform music. Beethoven's genius was such that deafness did not blight his creative ambition but other problems followed. His finances depended, in part, on him presenting himself to the rich and connected. This chore he frequently despised and it was rendered far more problematic when grappling with the humiliation and practicalities of hearing loss. Writing to his friend Wegeler in

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1801, Beethoven declares: "I must confess that I lead a miserable life. For two years now I have ceased to attend any social functions, just because I find it impossible to say to people, I am deaf."

Beethoven reached crisis point in 1802 and penned his famous "Heiligenstadt Testament" whilst staying in the secluded village of Heiligenstadt outside of Vienna. It was intended as a semi-legal document and is a private declaration and will to his brothers, describing his ongoing suffering to the point of thoughts of suicide. It is a carefully worded text, the original showing signs of earlier drafts and corrections, and one of the most moving by any artist. Beethoven refers to the embarrassment he endured "when someone standing next to me heard a flute in the distance and *I heard nothing*." He declares: "such experiences brought me close to despair; a little more of that and I would have been at the point of ending my life. The only thing that held me back was my art." Beethoven resolved to carry on, his resilience due to an unerring belief in his musical destiny, for which he strived and sacrificed for the good of his fellow humans, proclaiming that his heart "is filled with love for humanity and a desire to do good." An overwhelming gratitude stirs in me when considering the music Beethoven would go on to create and the hole that would be present if he hadn't possessed the strength of will to continue.

Deafness aside, two other significant events had long-reaching consequences for Beethoven. Firstly, the loss of his mother in 1787 at the age of just sixteen, leaving him and his two brothers to an absent father. Such an event would have a lasting effect on anyone and is quite possibly the root of Beethoven's difficulty in forming lasting relationships with women—not for lack of desire—but a struggle exacerbated by the increasing isolation of progressive deafness. Secondly, much later in life, following the death of the composer's brother Caspar in 1815, Beethoven undertook a legal challenge for the guardianship of his nephew Karl, then just nine years old. Beethoven had been named sole guardian in Caspar's will but a codicil written on the same day cancelled this appointment in favour of the boy's mother, with whom relations were far from cordial. It took Beethoven five years to settle the dispute, amidst considerable costs and emotional expense, and some have questioned why he obsessed over the matter to such an extent. He struggled until his death to maintain care of Karl's health and educational needs.

It has always struck me as miraculous that, despite the turmoil, ill health (he often complained of intestinal upsets), financial worries, and the custody battle Beethoven experienced throughout his final decade, the music he created at this time is overall some of the most profoundly ecstatic, joyful, and generous of spirit of his entire output. These include the final Piano Sonatas, the Diabelli Variations, the *Missa Solemnis*, the Ninth Symphony, and the late String Quartets. He plunged himself into his work and found freedom from his isolation and ill-health in his art. He worked obsessively on new compositions, producing music which at times challenges works from decades to come for sheer progressiveness.

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Beethoven famously wrote on the score of his *Missa Solemnis*: "From the heart—may it go again—to the heart!," a statement which perfectly sums up the great warmth, passion, and humanity one senses in his Mass setting. His love for, and connection to, his fellow humans is heard throughout his musical output, and especially in his later works which, for me, capture everything it means to be a human being: suffering, ecstasy, anger, reconciliation, love, and much more, all of which are reflected in great art. Beethoven's choice of passages from Schiller's *Ode to Joy* in the Finale of the Ninth Symphony have never seemed more relevant and is a call for the peoples of the world to unite: "All people become brothers! . . . Be embraced, Millions! This kiss to all the world!"

Whilst further exploring the notion of Beethoven's love for humanity I have come to consider the significance of his fondness of compound time signatures in his late period. Compound time is the "secular" choice, the time signatures of dances and folk songs, of the people, a connection enriched further by his interest at this time in the music of the Renaissance—hence the astonishing use of modality in the *Missa Solemnis* and the extraordinary "Lydian" slow movement of the *String Quartet Op. 132*. Beethoven's choice of compound time in the most profoundly sacred and intimate moment of the *Benedictus* of the *Missa Solemnis* speaks volumes of his extremely personal consideration of divinity, devoid of the exterior pomp and show of religious ceremony, but reliant on private human experience. Also, consider the two ariosos and fugues of the *Piano Sonata in Ab Op. 110*, the arietta of the *Sonata in C minor Op. 111*, the great slow movement of the *Hammerklavier Sonata in Bb Op. 106*, the second movement of the *String Quartet Op. 127*, the third movement of the *Ninth Symphony*—the list goes on—all of which provide the hearts of these astounding works.

One senses in Beethoven the same love of humanity that many musicians feel. For many of us we chose to become musicians because we love sharing music with those around us, instilling in others the awe it inspires, and celebrating the ability of music and the arts to bring people together, especially in times of hardship, regardless of cultural or societal differences. Beethoven's generosity has been widely echoed in recent months amongst the many musicians who have seen the lives they knew upended and indefinitely halted, but who have continued to record, livestream, share performances online, and occasionally perform in person from front rooms with windows open with audiences around the world, often for free. Such feats of munificence should at very least convince us that classical music performance will always endure. Beethoven wrote in 1825 that "Art demands of us that we don't stand still," and never has this statement seemed more relevant as musicians, innovative by nature, find increasingly inventive ways of sharing their artform.

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It is impossible to fully express the gratitude I feel towards Beethoven for creating the music he did, it has been a source of solace my entire life, from the moment as a young baby my parents played me his *Sixth Symphony* as a lullaby, to my discovery of the late *String Quartets* in recent years. It is music of life, *about* life, and profoundly human, in which Beethoven lays himself bare for us all to witness and to reflect in, his struggles, anger, revelations, ecstasies, and above all his love for his fellow human beings.

The Poet Speaks

The New Piece

Sounds pouring out,
rising, ringing, repeating,
caressing, careening,
a deluge, splashing, washing
room after room,
a multicolored stream
cascading out and away and away . . .
The stream slows
forming languid pools,
where small, smooth rings,
exquisitely centered,
opening spreading, and spreading
out and away, and away . . .
and then exploding upward,
a tsunami blasting forth
overcoming, inundating,
drowning the house and all in it
in beauty, and radiance, and life,
rushing out and away, and away
expanding magically, majestically,
carrying the best of humanity
to Saturn and Jupiter and beyond . . .

Paul Baxter
May 1, 2008

Barter

Life has loveliness to sell,
    All beautiful and splendid things,
Blue waves whitened on a cliff,
    Soaring fire that sways and sings,
And children's faces looking up
Holding wonder like a cup.

Life has loveliness to sell,
    Music like a curve of gold,
Scent of pine trees in the rain,
    Eyes that love you, arms that hold,
And for your spirit's still delight,
Holy thoughts that star the night.

Spend all you have for loveliness,
    Buy it and never count the cost;
For one white singing hour of peace
    Count many a year of strife well lost,
And for a breath of ecstasy
Give all you have been, or could be.

Sara Teasdale