

## MUSIC SPEAKS VOLUMES



When I was a freshman in college I signed up for my first "real" music class thinking it would be simple -- like Do-Re-Mi -- and I would get an easy "A." On my first day of class, however, I was astonished to learn that the Professor did not hail from my musical planet. He immediately told us we would be asked to write a term paper comparing Paul Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler* to Beethoven's 3rd

Symphony, the *Eroica*. A pre-requisite for writing this paper was to attend 3 live, classical symphonies of our choice and analyze what the music communicated to us. At first I sat there and said "Holy Cow, how am I ever going to do this?" But then, as with anything in life that requires change and growth, I said "I can do this", although I had no idea how!

That course turned out to be one of my most meaningful learning experiences and it taught me how music -- if you really listen -- speaks to all of us. Some of us like Jazz; for others it's Hard Rock, Reggae, Hip Hop, Classical, Western, New Age or Rock 'n Roll. Yet when done "well", when it stirs our emotions and reaches our inner being -- and "well" will always be defined by the listener -- music is effective communication, and frequently can be a true work of art.

When I attended my 3 symphonies the music spoke to me in different ways emotionally -- sometimes it made me happy: Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture* -- sometimes it made me want to dance: Ravel's *Bolero* -- and sometimes it "depressed" me: Mozart's *Requiem*! But each contained and communicated its own beauty. The real lesson I learned in that course -- other than the basic one that music is so much more than the current "Top Forty Hits" -- is that music communicates a message sent through the conductor and musicians to the audience. Whether there is a standing ovation or the audience boos, it teaches a profound lesson in effective communication.

With music, it is the:

- *Space between the notes*
- *Exquisite balance and synchronization of the instruments*
- *Timing of the conductor and orchestra*
- *Ability to "work together" and achieve a beautiful rhythm and sound*
- *Practice, thought and hard work*

that are the building blocks of a great performance conveying emotion, thought, visual images, and interpretative opinion -- the attributes of communication.

My college professor helped me learn how, to use Leonard Bernstein's words, "***Music ... names the unnameable and communicate[s] the unknowable***" by stretching my mind to think about music as life and as an art form of communication. Life is music that we all make. It is how we manage the high and low notes, how much we commit to making the music powerful, emotional and beautiful that makes all the difference in how our wonderful *symphony of life* is received by the audience.

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