

Reading, writing, and musicianship

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Reading, Writing, and Musicianship On Christmas morning, my eight-year-old self was bubbling with excitement. I was the first awake and I hurriedly skipped into my parents' room and belly flopped on the bed, hoping to jostle them out of their sleepy stupor.

Grudgingly, they opened their eyes and helped me wake my peacefully sleeping younger siblings. I took the stairs three at a time, knowing that in a few minutes I would be surrounded by crinkled wrapping paper, twinkling Christmas lights, and a plethora of new toys. I almost face planted when, instead of seeing tightly wrapped, bow laced presents neatly arranged under the tree, I saw a polished wooden piano smugly taking up the center of the room. I looked at my brother and sister quizzically as if to ask, " Was this on your Christmas list?" Bewildered and cautious, we proceeded towards the mammoth musical instrument as we would a vicious looking mutt we weren't sure we could pet without parental permission. " I guess you kids get to take lessons now," my mother exclaimed as if proudly announcing a family trip to Disneyland. I replied to her upbeat comment with what I'm sure was a look of pure outrage.

And with that, I reluctantly began my music education. Knowing the impact music has on me, I am grateful that my mother forced me to set the designated practice timer and sit down at the piano for, what seemed to me, an eternally long thirty minutes each week. She insisted a music education would benefit me and she was right; music has been a positive influence in every aspect of my life, particularly academics. When dealing with head-spinning fractions in math, I recall the simple, yet solid structure of fractions I learned by patting time in fourths, then thirds, and then halves against my

teacher's worn-in, cushioned piano bench. Seeing a seven fourths fraction brings nostalgia for the piece I sang in the Arizona All-State Choir, which had the same tricky time signature.

In writing for classes, I recall emotional and personally monumental moments to find inspiration. These moments occurred when I was on stage, singing and felt most vulnerable to the scrutinizing eyes of my peers; however, I always left feeling filled with a sense of belonging in the world. Working with lab groups in my science classes can be a struggle, but because I learned teamwork in school choir, I can deal with people who lack commitment. Music education was crucial in my development and should be an essential discipline for all children, implemented by both parents and schools. Walking down Hayden Mall on ASU campus, I find it hard not to notice the obscene amount of derogatory slurs, discriminatory gestures, and acts of intolerance that are nonchalantly bandied about.

Rather than finding similarities between peers and ourselves, we dwell on differences, leading us into the competitive mindset of me versus you. This is why now, more than ever, it is necessary for children to learn music at a young age. Not only is music a basic knowledge like math, reading, writing and science, but music rises above them, helping us make connections to others without having deep, spoken conversations. Language barriers don't exist in music; to be part of a group, you only need to contribute in whatever way you can, whether it be through proudly belting out a solo or providing the final clash of symbols at the end of a dramatic symphony. Music brings quick unification, no matter the depths of the differences.

When hundreds of strangers can come together and give part of themselves to create music, bonds are made that can not be achieved in such a short amount of time in any other way. By teaching children music in both the home and school, you are not just giving them academic tools that will help them succeed – you are teaching them to connect with other human beings in a uniquely personal way for a lifetime.