

Parting Thoughts - Some Ideas for Music Students

by Dan Haerle
upon his retirement
from UNT May, 2002

If you don't have a natural curiosity about the musical world and the sounds you hear every day, a musical profession is probably not for you.

Share the wealth. Pass on what you know to others. Music is an aural tradition that is continually handed down from generation to generation. You must listen to and assimilate the good qualities of great musicians.

Music is composed of notes and rests. Space is as important as sound.

Every instrument is hard and every instrument is easy; it all depends on your attitude.

Playing music is the ultimate high, with no retribution!

It only takes two people who want to make music to have a band. Nothing is ever missing. Each instrument may add to and enhance a group but music can be played with any combination.

You don't have to practice. You can sell your instrument and get out of music. Better yet, give your instrument to someone who is really hungry to play.

Never care about what anyone thinks of your playing, only what you think of it.

Don't play music to glorify yourself, give of yourself to glorify the music. Give up your ego and make the music more important than you.

Adopt the Hallmark philosophy of music. Care enough to send your very best!

Performing in a group is as much social interaction as it is a musical experience. A good performance by a musical group is an excellent example of the whole being greater than the sum of the parts.

At any time, you are perfectly alright and simply in some stage of your growth. There will always be musicians who are more or less experienced than you. Be inspired by all of them.

In addition to the usual, practice away from the instrument, study with the instrument in hand.

Learning the melodies to songs correctly is a simple matter of respect for the composers.

It is the performer's responsibility to make a piece sound as the composer intended or else to write his or her own composition. An artist learns how to recognize the ways in which the composer indicates what the sound of a composition is.

There is only one tempo for a tune, the one that was counted off. Subtle differences in tempo can create entirely new experiences with the same music.

Music is sound, not notation on a page. Learn pieces by ear and be able to sing them.

Bring something strong to any performance; don't be the weak link in the chain.

The standard of excellence in music is well documented on recordings. Wherever you may be, you must aspire to that standard.

Music is not the olympics. There are no medals awarded for the highest notes, greatest number of notes in a solo, or the fastest notes.

Life goes on, with or without you. You may choose to take part wholeheartedly by being prepared and on time for classes and rehearsals or any other commitments.

All music speaks to someone and therefore has value even if you are not prepared to receive what it has to say.

Just around the corner is someone who plays better than you, can be on time, be prepared, wear the right clothes for the job, and is a person who is easy to get along with.

Musical performance at a high level demands everything in terms of commitment and guarantees nothing in terms of employment.

There will always be someone who likes your music and someone who dislikes your music. Get over it and focus on the music as being the most important thing.

Now and then, make a point of going to hear some music that you are pretty sure you don't like. You may confirm your suspicions or you may come away from the performance changed in some slight way.

As you learn to play better, remember it is okay to play less. You don't have to use everything you know every time you play.

Daydream about music, hearing yourself singing or playing and sounding great. This will strengthen your conviction of what you want to sound like.

Always get a good sound; it is the representation of your musical soul.

No one can teach you anything, only guide your learning. You learn by an investment of effort (practice or study). The best way to learn is by discovery through searching for the answers.

Finish your degree. It says something very good about you, mainly that you were able to persevere and see it through to completion. It is less important what your major is.

There are only two kinds of music in the world, good and bad. Always try to involve yourself in music of any style that is well done with conviction.

No music degree guarantees or excludes the possibility of employment in any field.

When you improvise in a jazz setting, you are baring your soul musically and there is a chance that someone will ridicule you. Believe that you have something that deserves hearing as much as anyone.

Music of integrity can have wide appeal. Commercially successful music may still be artistic.

There is never enough time in life. Learn how to use your time efficiently and try to accept the tasks that have to be done even though they interfere with the things that are important to you.

Some people may try to demean you or make you feel inferior. You don't deserve to be treated this way and should not acknowledge this kind of behavior.

Competition is an illusion. If you have the needed skills, you are competitive, if you don't, you aren't.

All human beings deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. Plus, what goes around comes around.

Try to see problems in music or life as opportunities for growth.

You are often expected to perform at a high level when tired, wearing uncomfortable clothes or in a bad environment. Deal with it; you can rest, change clothes and take a shower later.

He who has imagination without learning has wings but no feet.

Everyone has to be from somewhere. John Coltrane and Dizzy Gillespie were from small towns in North and South Carolina. Believe that potentially you can play or sing as well as anyone.

Guilt is a useless emotion. Rather than feeling guilty, take action to correct or improve the situation.

Never give up, there are always other choices if something doesn't work out.

We must all be both teachers and students of music and life. There is always more to learn and there are those who can benefit from our knowledge and experience.

Don't worry about things that are out of your control and that may not really matter anyway. Continue to try to determine what does matter to you.

Be a positive force in the universe and always try to see the good in life.

Don't be afraid to take risks. It is by taking risks that we learn to be brave.