

Music - The Hope Raiser

Prose:

Dr. Karl Paulnack pianist and director of the music division at The Boston Conservatory, gave this fantastic welcome address to the parents of Incoming students at The Boston on September 1, 2004:

One of my parent's deepest fears, I suspect, is that society would not properly value me as a musician, that I wouldn't be appreciated. I had very good grades in high school, I was good in science and math, and they imagined that as a doctor or a research chemist or an engineer, I might be more appreciated than I would be as a musician. I still remember my mother's remark when I announced my decision to apply to music school she said, "you're wasting your SAT scores!" On some level, I think, my parents were not sure themselves what the value of music was, what its purpose was. And they loved music: they listened to classical music all the time. They just weren't really clear about its function. So let me talk about that a little bit, because we live in a society that puts music in the "arts and entertainment" section of the newspaper, and serious music, the kind your kids are about to engage in, has absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with entertainment, in fact it's the opposite of entertainment. Let me talk a little bit about music, and how it works.

One of the first cultures to articulate how music really works was that of the ancient Greeks. And this is going to fascinate you the Greeks said that music and astronomy were two sides of the same coin. Astronomy was seen as the study of relationships between observable, permanent, external objects, and music was seen as the study of relationships between invisible, internal, hidden objects.

Music has a way of finding the big, invisible moving pieces inside our hearts and souls and helping us figure out the position of things inside us. Let me give you some examples of how this works.

One of the most profound musical compositions of all time is the Quartet for the End of Time written by French composer Olivier Messiaen in 1940. Messiaen was 31 years old when France entered the war against Nazi Germany. He was captured by the Germans in June of 1940 and imprisoned in a prisoner-of-war camp.

He was fortunate to find a sympathetic prison guard who gave him paper and a place to compose, and fortunate to have musician colleagues in the camp, a cellist, a violinist, and a clarinetist. Messiaen wrote his quartet with these specific players

in mind. It was performed in January 1941 for four thousand prisoners and guards in the prison camp. Today it is one of the most famous masterworks in the repertoire.

Given what we have since learned about life in the Nazi camps, why would anyone in his right mind waste time and energy writing or playing music? There was barely enough energy on a good day to find food and water, to avoid a beating, to stay warm, to escape torture why would anyone bother with music? And yet even from the concentration camps, we have poetry, we have music, we have visual art; it wasn't just this one fanatic Messiaen; many, many people created art. Why? Well, in a place where people are only focused on survival, on the bare necessities, the obvious conclusion is that art must be, somehow, essential for life.

The camps were without money, without hope, without commerce, without recreation, without basic respect, but they were not without art. Art is part of survival; art is part of the human spirit, an unquenchable expression of who we are. Art is one of the ways in which we say, I am alive, and my life has meaning."

In September of 2001 I was a resident of Manhattan. On the morning of September 12, 2001 I reached a new understanding of my art and its relationship to the world. I sat down at the piano that morning at 10 AM to practice as was my daily routine; I did it by force of habit, without thinking about it. I lifted the cover on the keyboard, and opened my music, and put my hands on the keys and took my hands off the keys. And I sat there and thought, does this even matter? Isn't this completely irrelevant? Playing the piano right now, given what happened in this city yesterday, seems silly, absurd, irreverent, pointless. Why am I here? What place has a musician in this moment in time? Who needs a piano player right now? I was completely lost. And then I, along with the rest of New York, went through the journey of getting through that week. I did not play the piano that day, and in fact I contemplated briefly whether I would ever want to play the piano again. And then I observed how we got through the day.

At least in my neighborhood, we didn't shoot hoops or play Scrabble. We didn't play cards to pass the time, we didn't watch TV, we didn't shop, We most certainly did not go to the mall. The first organized activity that I saw in New York, on the very evening of September 11th, was singing. People sang. People sang around fire houses, people sang "We Shall Overcome". Lots of people sang America the Beautiful. The first organized public event that I remember was the Brahms Requiem, later that week, at Lincoln Center, with the New York Philharmonic. The

first organized public expression of grief, our first communal response to that historic event, was a concert. That was the beginning of a sense that life might go on. The US Military secured the airspace, but recovery was led by the arts, and by music in particular, that very night.

From these two experiences, I have come to understand that music is not part of 'arts and entertainment' as the newspaper section would have us believe. It's not a luxury, a lavish thing that we fund from leftovers of our budgets, not a plaything or an amusement or a, pass time, Music is a basic need of human survival. Music is one of the ways we make sense of our lives, one of the ways in which we express feelings when we have no words, a way for us to understand things with our hearts when we can't with our minds.

Frankly, ladies and gentlemen, I expect you not only to master music; I expect you to save the planet, if there is a future wave of wellness on this planet, of harmony, of peace, of an end to war, of mutual understanding, of equality, of fairness, I don't expect it will come from a government, a military force; or a corporation'. I no longer even expect it to come from the religions of the world, which together seem to have brought us as much war as they have peace.

If there is a future of peace for humankind, if there is to be an understanding of how these invisible, internal things should fit together, I expect it will come from the artists, because that's what we do. As in the concentration camp and the evening of 9/11, the artists are the ones who might be able to help us with our internal, invisible lives.'

Dr. Karl Paulnack, a pianist has been an artiste, teacher, music director and conductor for more than two decades at the Boston Conservatory, Massachusetts. He has performed in many concerts and has been hailed as firecracker of a pianist and masters of his instrument.

The Boston Conservatory is a top musical school which provides students with technical skills and performance experience in a variety of musical styles and settings to become musicians.

Do you know what happened in the Nazi camps?

The Nazi Germany established about 20,000 camps to Imprison many millions of victims, between 1933 and 1945. These places were called 'concentration camps', because those imprisoned were physically concentrated in one location. In these forced labour camps thousands of prisoners of war (POW) were shot or gassed.

Gas chambers (rooms filled with poisonous gas to kill those inside) were created to kill thousands of Jews everyday.

2. Who is Messiaen? Oliver Eugene Prosper Charles Messiaen of France was a child prodigy in music and was academically qualified at a very early age. During the World War II, he was enlisted as a medical auxiliary owing to his poor eyesight

What happen to September 11 2001?

3.The 'twin Towers of the World Trade Centre, New York, USA, were attacked and destroyed on September 11, 2001 by terrorists who hijacked and drove the planes Into the Twin Towers thereby causing the collapse of the Twin Towers.

4. Johannes Brahms composed the German Requiem between 1865 and 1868. It comprises seven movements, which together last 65 to 80 minutes making this work Brahma' longest composition.

The New York Philharmonic (officially the Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York) is a symphony orchestra based in New York City in the United States.

5. 'We shall Overcome' is derived from Charles Tindleys gospel song 'I will Overcome Someday.'

'America the Beautiful' was a song adapted by Guy Caravan, Cindy Caravan and a few others, near Tennessee.

6. Did you Know : Zubin Mehta, then one of the youngest of a new generation of internationally known conductors, became the Music Director of the Royal Philharmonic In 1978. His tenure was the longest In Philharmonic history, lasting until 1991.

Ilaiya raaja, an Indian Tamil film composer, singer, lyricist was the first Asian composer to score a symphony for the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. He was awarded the Padma Bhushan, India's third highest civilian honour, in the year 2010,

Summary:

About the author and his lesson:

Karl Paulnack was a pianist and the director of music division in the Boston conservatory. This speech was delivered by him to the parents of incoming students in the Boston conservatory, on Sep – 1, 2004.

Summary of the lesson: Paulnack's parents feared that if he chose music as his career; he would not be appreciated by the society. As he was good in math and science during his school days, his parents wanted him to become a doctor, an engineer or a research chemist. Though they loved music, they didn't want him to be a musician.

You are what you do : The Greeks expressed the function of music clearly in words. They said that music was a study of invisible, internal and hidden objects. They also said that the music and astrology are the two sides of a same coin.

Music is a part of Human survival : Oliver Messiaen, a 31 years old French man joined in the war against the rule by Germans. He was fortunate to have a sympathetic prisoner to compose music. The camps were without hope, without basic needs, without recreation, without commerce, without basic respect but not without music. This shows that music is essential for life on the earth.

Music is one of the ways we say we are alive : The Twin tower, world Trade centre in New York, was attacked by the terrorists. The planes were hijacked by them and drove them towards the twin tower. It collapsed the building on Sep 11, 2001 many people died in this incident. But people around the fire houses and sang "we shall overcome" "America the beautiful". This shows that music is one of the ways to express the feelings when there is no word.

Music plays great role in everywhere: Karl Paulnack wanted his students not only to learn music but also to save the earth with the help of music because all the military forces, organizations, government and so on had failed to bring peace and to save the world.

Moral: Where there is a will, there is a way; where there is music, there is a hope .

World lies in the hands of Artists

Important lines and details:

- According to Paulnack, music is the opposite of entertainment.
- Greeks said that music and astronomy were two sides of the same coin. Astronomy was seen as the study of relationships between observable, permanent, external objects, and music was seen as the study of relationships between invisible, internal, hidden objects.

- Messiaen quartet was performed in January 1941 for four thousand prisoners and guards in the prison camp. Today it is one of the most famous masterworks in the repertoire.
- The first organized activity after the collapse of the twin towers was in New York, on the very evening of September 11th, was singing. People sang. People sang around fire houses, people sang "We Shall Overcome". Lots of people sang America the Beautiful.
- The first organized public event was the Brahms Requiem, later that week, at Lincoln Center, with the New York Philharmonic.
- Music is not a luxury, a lavish thing that we fund from leftovers of our budgets, not a plaything or an amusement or a, pass time, Music is a basic need of human survival.
- The artists are the ones who might be able to help us with our internal, invisible lives.

Questions taken from the prose :

1. How is music different from astronomy?

ASTRONOMY: Greeks saw astronomy as the study of relationship between a)Observable, b)Permanent c) External objects

MUSIC: Music was seen as the study of relationship between a)Invisible b) Internal & c) Hidden objects

2. How did Messian spend his time in Prison?

Oliver Messiaen spent his time in prison by composing music. He was prisoner of war. There was a cellist violinist & Clarinetist in the camp with him He wrote his "Quartet for the End of Time" in 1940.

3. Why did art find a place, even in concentration camps?

In concentration camps, necessities like food and water were not enough. People had to battle with cold without warm clothing. Torture and beating were part of life for them. The only conclusion there was art. " Art is a part of the human spirit and survival"

4. What is the significance of art?

Art is a part of survival. Art is part of human spirit. An unquenchable expression of who we are and our life has a meaning. Art is one of the ways we say,

“I am alive, and my life has meaning.”

5. Why didn't the narrator play the piano after the terrible incident?

The narrator thought that it was irreverent to play the piano on September 12,2001, as the Twin Towers were destroyed only the previous day. He thought that after the terrible incident, Music had no meaning. “The Twin Towers of the World Trade centre, New York ,USA, were attacked and destroyed on September 11,2001.”

6. How did people express their grief?

On The very evening of September 11, the first organized activity was singing. People sang “We shall overcome” and “America the beautiful.” The first communal response and expression of grief was a concert. “We shall overcome” and , “America the beautiful”

7. Why isn't music an extravagance or a hobby?

Music is a basic need of human survival. Music is one of the ways we make sense of our lives. It is one of the ways in which we express feelings when we have no words.

“Music helps us to understand things of life when our minds fails”

8. What are the two incidents that stress the importance of music as an essential art?

1. Life in the concentration camp.
2. The fall of the Twin Towers are the two Incidents.

9. What can artistes do to save the planet?

Artistes can save the planet by creating

- a) harmony b) peace and c)mutual understanding

10. What was the author's choice of career? How was this against his parent's wish?

The author's choice was music. But his parent's choices were doctor or a Scientist or an engineer. His parents was not sure what the value of music was, what its purpose was.

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