

TESTIMONIAL FOR MUSICIANS

There we were, the Sparks choir, singing our hearts out:

*"And a crack of light comes streaming through,
And I find myself here singing with you- "*

And the music was ALIVE! A friend reported that she and her companion got cold chills listening. Somehow our director helps us inhabit the music we are singing, and then something magical happens that moves us all, something that brings the music to life. And we get goosebumps!.

I got that same feeling when another friend told me what happened to her flute-playing daughter. When her daughter found out she had to play scales for her Junior High orchestra's Scale Test, she told her flute teacher that she only wanted to practice scales that week. What teacher wouldn't be ecstatic! We all know that playing a naked scale on any instrument is the most revealing thing you can play - it exposes all your deficiencies. At the test, as she played her first scale, the chatty room grew very quiet. After she played the last tone of her third scale, still surrounded by silence, the teacher turned and announced to the other students, "That's the way a Scale Test should be played.!" Goosebumps again.

What is this magic that happens sometimes, moving us in such extraordinary ways? Lily Tomlin's Trudy, the crazy and wise Bag Lady talks about the goose-bump experience in Jane Wagner's play SIGNS OF INTELLIGENT LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE. Trudy says her "space chums" are in awe of the "*goose bump experience*" here on Earth and she recommends daily *awe-robics*.

Sometimes I get my awe-robics exercise by reading a poem or listening to artists like YoYo Ma, Bobby McFerrin and Josh Groban. (Once late at night I got entranced listening to Frank Sinatra sing "It was a Very Good Year.") When I'm really paying attention, I get sucked into the sound and I goosebump. (How about that- I created a verb!)

We recognize that quality of sound and still ourselves to sense it more fully. It seems to have added dimensions. And when we musicians are able to elicit music from ourselves with that special quality, we KNOW something has

happened. A man I know told me more than once after church that there was something special in the way I play, but he couldn't describe what it was. I knew. We realize that we have been intermediaries for that magic and have passed it through to our listeners. And for many years, BRINGING MUSIC TO LIFE has been my musical goal for myself and my students.

We begin to understand the phenomenon more deeply when together we sing,

*"What a gift we can bring when we learn to sing out
In wonder, in wonder, oh wonder."*

On rare and treasured occasions, as teachers, we realize we have able to elicit that ability from a student. This week I realized that a young boy student had crossed into musicianship. His older sister is already there. And I recently worked with a young man who had learned to play the whole first movement of the "Moonlight" Sonata from a youtube tutor- an astonishing feat, and when he played it for me, it came ALIVE!" Goosebumps all around.

Our musical mentor, Dr. Suzuki, said it in a different way. I treasure the words in his Japanese calligraphy on a shikishi, a watercolor painting of a mountain on a Japanese art board that I got at a Suzuki workshop where, at the age of 90, he spoke to us. The translation on the back reads *"Music has the living soul."* I wondered for a long time if it should be translated as *"Music has A living soul,"* but now I think he translated it to say exactly what he meant, that it's part of the greater whole, not a separate entity.

Maybe we're touching on that far-out idea when we sing in choir about the Aboriginals' invisible pathways of song deep in Australia. We sing:

*"Songlines are running, songlines are running all around,
When we sing out with joy we keep the lines alive."*

Trudy would be proud of us! She'd invite her space chums to listen for sure. She tells us:

*"I like to think of them out there
in the dark, watching us.
Sometimes we'll do something and they'll laugh.
Sometimes we'll do something and they'll cry."*

*And maybe one day we'll do something so magnificent,
everyone in the universe will get
goose bumps."*

Liz, 1/25/13