

Nancy Finney

As a child, I was always drawn to music. I have pictures of myself playing the piano at two, and I've always wondered what definitive force drew me to music and sound. I remember my mother telling me that my father played the guitar and sang folk songs to me while she was pregnant, and that the sounds would elicit lots of kicking and movement from me. I consider now the possibility that music has had a huge effect on my interactions with myself and others.

My fondest memories of my life can be easily remembered while coinciding with music. I hear "Ace of Base" and remember the clogging dance that my team did back in third grade. Along with this memory comes every other moment in my mind from that time period: my crush on Allan, my best friend Emily, my birthday party at the Rollerama, and sadly my grandmother's death. I often wonder if I remember these things simply because they remain in my mind, or because the music rekindles them. Usually I feel that the music is what provokes these memories to replay, and quite possibly the music is a perpetual backdrop to my life's events. Music doesn't solely seem integral to me, I have seen it create and release emotions with others too. In fact, the most memorable times I have shared with others have coincided with music.

My grandfather and I shared a unique bond that was reinforced by faith and music. Growing up we weren't extremely close, but as I practiced the piano and surrounded myself with church music our relationship began to change. In my piano lessons I was working on "Amazing Grace", and Grandpa suggested that I accompany him for his next church solo. We practiced it frequently, and performed it on a few

occasions. Looking back, that song molded our strict grandfather-granddaughter relationship into something entirely different. It would appear that the time spent is what changed us, but realistically the song is what tied our bond. Whenever that song is spoken of or heard, I immediately am reminded of the bond we once shared, and the relationship that grew so strong. The music spoke volumes more than words that we could use to express our love and appreciation towards the other could.

The sharing of this song led to many other songs and memories, and evoked in us emotions that could not be explained by any definition in Webster's Dictionary. Eventually Grandpa and I performed "The Garden", which was his favorite song. We performed it shortly after Grandpa was released from the hospital with a bowel obstruction, and Grandpa amazed the church with the beauty and strength of his voice. Strange that a fragile eighty-seven year old man could perform so gracefully, and woo the church's congregation to the point of inspiration. That song was my grandfather's strength, and always reminds me of his stability among instability. "The Garden" was the song that I performed at his funeral, and gave me the same strength that it had once given him.

My aunt Ellen and I have never been extremely close, though we see each other quite often. Her children (my cousins), Sara and Michael are always around and Ellen is my mom's best friend. My mom used to have two sisters, Ellen and Nancy, but Nancy passed away at thirty-two. Strangely, Nancy had played piano just as I had, and had also played bells in the church bell choir. Sometimes my mom is reminded of Aunt Nancy when she is listening to me play, and Aunt Ellen would get nostalgic while I was playing as well. After Thanksgiving dinner one year, I was playing Pachelbel's "Canon in D", and

everyone had stood around the piano listening. While I was playing, I heard some muffled noises, and turned around to find Aunt Ellen sobbing. Though I never asked her why she was crying, it seemed clear that she had been blind-sided with a memory of her sister. It was the music that had elicited this response.

My dad has two siblings: a brother, Don, and a sister, Deb. Growing up they shared many moments, but are reminded of them when music is involved. My uncle seems happiest when he and my dad have their guitars out and play folk songs. My dad seems happiest then too. Whenever they play "Long Black Veil" or "Banks of the Ohio", Aunt Deb and I are in bliss. It is a moment we share that brings out the best in us all as we sing along to the rhythms. The songs so gracefully sweep us into the happiest times of our past.

My dad and I have shared many moments that involved music, whether at the symphony or a concert, or just playing our instruments and singing. I remember when my dad moved out of our house, I stole a few of his old cassette tapes, because they were constant reminders of the music that was once shared in our home. I would play the tapes every night as I fell asleep, because the songs not only reminded me of our performances together, but of our shared adoration for many of the same artists. I suppose my dad and I never really had our own music collection, because our interests in it were so shared.

The band Fleetwood Mac sings a song called "Landslide". I have trouble hearing lyrics, so one thing that my parents and I would always do was write the lyrics down to songs so that I would know what was being said. My dad and I were writing the words down to "Landslide" and came to a profound line, "Time makes you bolder, / Children get older, / I'm getting older too." As I wrote down the words, I turned to my dad and saw

tears streaming down his face. For the first time in my entire life, I saw pain echoed in his eyes that the tears were falling from. My dad had never shown me his vulnerability like that before or after that time, and the moment that that song created is now eternal.

My mother and I have a lot of trouble getting along, as much of what we express towards each other is anger and resentment. When we sing together, all of our negativity towards each other dissipates. Often after an argument with her, I will sit down at the piano and begin playing songs so that I can calm down. Sometimes she comes up, sets out a book, and will start singing along with me. She has a beautiful alto voice, and it complements my higher soprano voice beautifully. In the moments that we sing "Rubies & Gold" or "Somewhere", we are reminded that we do still share beauty together. I don't have a large number of positive experiences with her, but we can always count on fixing things by pulling out a beloved song and singing to each other. Without the music to soothe our anger, I'm not sure that we'd get along at all.

I consider now the possibility that music is an integral part of my mind's psychology and understanding. Bonds have been made that were possible only through the passion that music can evoke. My life has proven that music is the one thing that can express that which cannot be explained. It makes sense that music so often accompanies and elicits memories and emotions. The music is so severely important to the human psyche, and each person finds that the dissonance in their life can be expressed in a note or lyric in a song. Music is vital for expressing the things that either we cannot say or choose not to say. Each note is a lingering tone that reminds us of a memory we once shared with another in our life.