

## *The Gift of Music*



***By Courtney Cheng***

Since I was a little girl, music played a large part in my life. I remember sitting next to our stereo speakers singing with Elton John. “...*candle on water*...” I was three at the oldest.

We had an upright piano. My mom began teaching me when I was four. I enjoyed it, but hated practicing to the point where I timed every minute and bolted when my allotted fifteen minutes were up.

In second grade, my best friend played violin and I wanted to as well. I pestered my parents about letting me start violin. They warned me of the grueling practices and the dedication needed. I promised them I would carry through, and after a long discussion of how I wouldn’t pick up the instrument just to follow others, my parents caved and let me start. I quit piano then to focus on violin.

June 1, 2002. My family was en route to Walnut Creek, CA for my first violin lesson at 7:30AM. I was nervous and scared. Mrs. Peterson was loving and kind even when I got sick within the first 15 minutes.

Through the first few years, I was intimidated by various situations: the inability to play a new piece, the feeling of inadequacy, or the lack of finger agility to accommodate difficult passages. When I hit my musical lows, Mrs. Peterson, and later

Mr. Peterson, helped me ride through them. They always gave me solid advice and support to develop techniques to get out of these dumps.

Two years ago, I hit my lowest point yet, playing horribly at two competitions and continuing under par for the rest of the year. I hated music then; it constantly reminded me of failing. I was cranky and half-hearted with any music. This didn't pass by Mr. Peterson. He would tell stories about his life when I was frustrated. It was through his humor and gentle teachings that I regained my stride halfway through the next year. He would always say: "Many [violinists] can play fancy techniques, but the *really* good players play from here (he would press two fingers against his chest, just above his heart); they play from the heart." These words kindled a spark in my heart that still burns strong.

No matter how inspiring words may be, repetition is dull. Those wise words were repeated so many times, I exhausted of its redundancy. But in present, when I step away to see these moments from a distance I know that Mr. (and Mrs.) Peterson only hope for the best for me. They gave me support when I crumbled under pressure. It was through their dedication, hard work, and love that I inherited their music enthusiasm.

When 'music' comes to mind, appreciation builds inside me towards my parents for Elton John, the Bee Gees, and piano lessons and, undoubtedly, Mr. and Mrs. Peterson for the approximated minimum of 364 (and counting) lessons and love of classical music. It is them that I can credit my music love for.

I like to consider myself an all-around music lover. I take pride in appreciating, or at least tolerating, all music I feed off the world and Internet. From Mozart to the Jonas Brothers, to Eminem to Broadway tunes and more, I make the most of every note.

From experience, I know it takes some ability to listen to a diverse playlist. It is with that ability and love for music that I find inspiration. And it is because music is a universal language everyone understands that I feel anyone can appreciate the gift of music.

## EXERCISE

### *Play Your Music*

Open your mind and take the chance to explore the musical world.

- Turn on the radio, and change the station off your favorite. Take the time to listen to other stations; you never know what you'll discover.
- Instead of purchasing presents to exchange with your friends on holidays or birthdays, burn them a playlist of your favorite songs. (The 'Top 25 Most Played' list in iTunes really helps here.) Encourage them to do it in return.
- Take a few minutes each week to explore the home page of the iTunes store or the Media Guide of Windows Media Player. Free Singles and Artists of the Month are great places to start searching for new sounds.



*“The music is all around us; all you have to do is listen.”*

*-August Rush*