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manuscript of author’s speech
"AN EDUCATION IN MUSIC, MUSIC IN ALL EDUCATION"

Symposium, Boston University, April 22, 1995

c. 15-20 minute addresses by Dr. Joel Sheveloff and KGR, then discussion with 60% students, 20% recent grads of SFA, 20% dedicated alumni, in "Master Class", 11:00 to 12:15

Thank you very much, Dr. Sheveloff.

I am happy to be back at Boston University, (where I taught from 1948 to 1957, and directed your music library at the old College of Music.)

I am glad to see so many students and alumni here this morning, and perhaps we can have an hour of some value together. Dr. Sheveloff and I will each talk for some 20 minutes, and there may well be some fruitful overlap in what we have to say. Then we will throw the floor open to discussion and argument.

The topic I have chosen has the peculiar title, "An Education in Music--Music in All Education". Let me begin, logically, with the first part of that title, and then we shall see how it fits together with the second part. I suppose that musicians would call this the antecedent and the consequent phrases of a musical statement, something like the very symmetrical opening of Mozart's "Jupiter" Symphony.

Those of you who are still students, and those of you who have graduated from SFA, have had a good and solid musical education. Those of you who are dedicated alumni and supporters of SFA, not necessarily all professional musicians or artists, will also have had an education in music—at least as listeners to concerts, stage productions, and recordings. An educated audience is of crucial importance to the musical life of a community; it is the third link in a chain called composer-performer-listener; without any of these three, music is incomplete.

We musicians count on a high degree of musical literacy from our public; we expect our audiences to know what music is all about, how it is made, how it communicates, and what role the composer and performer play in the overall scheme of things. It is astonishing how performing artists can sense an audience, feel the nature of their response, and in turn
respond to it. Without that interaction, music itself is the loser.

Now those of you who are currently completing your studies in music or recently did so, know that a degree in music is not like one in computer science. I recall very early a walk I took with my father, on the Esplanade, some time in 1941, when I was graduating from high school. We talked about my college plans, and he said that I had several choices. I was good in languages, and might expand on that and become a teacher of languages. If I went into music, I should realize several things: I was not a particularly outstanding pianist, and would not make a career in that. To make a living (I was, at 18, not a prodigy in either branch of the art.) in composition—well, that was largely fantasy. I would certainly have to teach, or do whatever provided a living wage; I could hardly expect to buy the week's groceries with royalties from my yet unwritten first symphony. In short, my father helped me to be realistic in deciding what to do, and he was right. In my first year at B.U., I was a piano major; in my second year, I was a music education major, with a view toward public-school teaching; only in my third year did I switch to composition and musicology, to music history and the literature about music. Even with a two-year intermission for army service, this is what I remained; and for the rest of my career I pursued scholarship, music criticism, program annotation, the lecture platform, radio and TV commentary, and of course composition. Even so, I can tell you that particularly the first ten years of professional life were very difficult financially. And as I now consider your careers in music, I am sure—as most of you are—that you have taken on a life that may be deeply rewarding esthetically and emotionally, but will continue to present you with serious economic challenges.

Your education in music has prepared you for one or more areas (and we hope that it has done so realistically and practically) of performance, scholarship or creative work. Now comes the question of what the job market wants and needs, and how you can successfully
In an arts scene that is highly unstable, I hardly need to remind those instrumentalists that finding an orchestra in which to play and to make a living with is not at all easy. For every position with a major ensemble, there may be 200 applicants. You have to be very, very good even to audition, and from then on up it gets harder yet. If you play in smaller or regional orchestras, you may have to become a member of several of them at the same time, which could involve a good deal of traveling. It can be done, and your services will be needed. There is chamber music, for some of you, but with rare exceptions that's not a steady income. Teaching your instrument, as a faculty member somewhere or privately, is an important option. (or Roger Voisin.)

Now some of you may indeed be incipient Itzhak Perlman or Yo-Yo Ma; in that case, cheers! But the vast majority of instrumentalists will not turn out to be stars of the concert world, but they will be planets revolving around those stars, and fulfilling crucial functions in the musical cosmos, with a minimum of jealousy and envy, with a maximum of satisfaction in one's own gifts and their positive application. In a highly competitive environment, professionalism also means being a "good colleague". "Success" does not need to mean musical stardom, fame and fortune. That is not how the musical universe works.

You will find in most orchestras people who love to be there; people who hate to be there because they expected to be great soloists; and yet others for whom it is a job and little more. It is an individual decision how satisfying a player finds his work, his lot in life, and whether he or she can derive from it the inner satisfaction that makes it more than a weekly paycheck. Of course, some of it also has to do with how good the conductor is! But those of us who watch great orchestras at work, like the Boston Symphony or the Cleveland Orchestra, marvel night after night at the incredible teamwork of such an ensemble, the fabulous quality of the individual players and their devotion to the making of good music; together, "ensemble". If that sense of giving a superb concert does not provide immense satisfaction to a performer, a team players, then that is very regrettable.
Among musicians, those who have a particularly hard row to hoe are the pianists. In orchestras, you will find one or at the most two staff keyboard players. The Rubinstein, the Horowitzes, the Garrick Ohlssons and John Brownings are few and far between. What will all the rest of the pianist-graduates do? The good ones will enter the concert circuit in one form or another, or will join a faculty somewhere, or both; yet others will become highly useful accompanists or coaches, perhaps branching out into some conducting or work in stage productions; others, perhaps the majority, will teach, in conservatories, high schools, elementary schools, settlement schools, and privately. Yet others will turn to piano tuning or restoring.

All of these are useful pursuits, and when they are well done they will provide both a living and some personal satisfaction. And I cannot emphasize strongly enough that teaching is not a "last resort" but a calling, a noble profession. A good teacher is one of the most important individuals in the life of dozens if not hundreds of students. Singers, too, have multiple career options. I do not need to list them, except to emphasize that the Metropolitan Opera can be a goal for only a minuscule few. You all are aware that the operatic life in this country is not comparable to that of Europe, with its year-round repertory companies. There was a time when American singers had to go to Europe to start their stage careers; then, many of them could return in triumph, having already established themselves abroad.

But again and again, it is necessary to stress that the musical life is difficult and demanding, that there are physical as well as psychological stresses, and that those who enter it because they have real talent to develop are to be praised and saluted for their courage as well as for their gifts.

A good musical education implies that a degree of competence has been acquired, a set of skills that add up to what is called musicianship. Of course we all have our strengths and our weaknesses; the all-round or complete musician, like Lukas Foss who was featured in Bostonia not long ago, is still a rarity. William Schuman once mentioned a skill often overlooked. "The first requisite of any musician," he said "is that he or she be a virtuoso listener." Yes; not to be able to hear and listen precisely and with insight (shall we call it in-hearing?) has disqualified or hampered many an otherwise competent performer.
And to encounter a musician in any field who knows hardly anything beyond his or her instrument is a saddening spectacle. Can you imagine a violinist playing in a Mozart Symphony who does not know his operas? Can you imagine a clarinetist who plays in an orchestra who does not know Mozart's and Brahms's clarinet quintets, Copland's and Mozart's clarinet concertos? And, for that matter, Mozart's oboe concerto? In addition to that, why should the clarinetist be totally unfamiliar with the literature for strings, or the voice? If the clarinetist or oboist plays the Fantasiestücke of Schumann, does he or she also know the song cycle called Dichterliebe? And if not, why not? In short, it is essential that the musician have not only a practical education but a well-rounded one: that he or she be aware and familiar with the vast range of musical literature, that musical facility also be accompanied by knowledge. Nowadays, when recordings have thrown open to us the entire musical repertoire of the last one-thousand years, at the flick or a switch or the pressing of a button, must our curiosity not compel us to get to know as much of it as humanly possible? If that is not done, if that does not continue to be done all our lives long, we cannot claim to have or to have had an education in music, to new ideas and to the vast reservoir of knowledge that is available to us.

At least two other facets are important to a well-rounded musical education. One, a temperament that can deal with momentary failure as well as with momentary success, without letting either one throw us or swell our heads. And two, an ability to be lucky. Now good luck may or may not come to you; it is unpredictable; but if and when it does come, we must be ready for it, pick it up and run with it. I could tell you many a story about serendipity, the unexpected event or contact that leads to something else, if one is ready. The great critic and writer on music, Sir Donald Francis Tovey, once said that "inspiration is akin to first-rate athletic form." One must be in shape and prepared to deal with a good idea, with a happy coincidence, and to know what to do with it. Similarly, Aaron Copland was once asked by
student whether or not he waited for inspiration. "Of course," said Mr. Copland, "every day." "And what do you do while you wait?" said the questioner. "I work," said Mr. Copland. Music is not a hobby; it is, for us, a profession, and we are expected to be professionals.

We have talked about the nature of a musical education. We have realized that we cannot be specialists in every branch and aspect of it--there is always someone who will know more about Baroque performance practice than we do, will be more familiar with the Renaissance motet than we are, will be more conversant with the acoustics of concert halls than you or I. But there is one thing every musician should know, and learn as part of his or her education: that this work is not a fad or a frill upon the life of a community, but crucial to its well-being and perhaps even to its survival.

What musicians do is something that society needs. The old saying that we do not live by bread alone means that we must have, in addition to fuel that stokes our bodies, in addition to the shelter that keep us warm and dry, a spiritual and aesthetic dimension. It may be provided for many by religious faith and practice, but also by the arts--all of them. A house must not only fulfill its basic functions; it can--and should--also be beautiful. Painting, sculpture, architecture, literature, poetry, music in all its facets, ceramics--one of the most ancient of the arts--, print-making, theater, costuming, lighting, dance and artistic motion in general--can a society really live without all that and call it living? The great poet Friedrich Schiller, whose "Ode to Joy" Beethoven set to music, once wrote an "Ode to the Muse". It begins: "What I would be without you, I know not; but I shudder when I see what without you hundreds of thousands are." Today, we may speak of millions so afflicted. Musicians, along with all other artists, must know that they bring to humanity something essential, something of fundamental importance. To quote another great thinker, the 19th century philosopher Herbert
Spencer: "Music, of all the arts, best ministers to human welfare." The word welfare has taken on some negative connotations lately; let us call it well-being to which music ministers best, the sense of enrichment, indeed fulfillment, that music so abundantly provides.

And this is what brings up to the second part of our inquiry today: "Music in All Education." To be an educated person may mean that in addition to being able to read and write and balance our checkbooks, we should have an awareness of the arts, particularly music, and feel the way in which it enriches us. All right, there are fine people who are totally unmusical, to whom organized sound means nothing; but they are few. Most people have a strong response to music, and it can be a marching band as well as a Bach fugue, a song by Cole Porter as well as a Beethoven string quartet, a big-band number by Glenn Miller as well as a Puccini opera. Music need not be exclusive; in fact, it should be the most inclusive art of them all.

The current flap over the National Endowment of the Arts, which we cannot deal with in detail today, is doubly sad exactly because it betrays the widespread misunderstanding of what the arts are all about. Not only is the arts budget to be cut, but everywhere you look you see that the arts are the first to go when money needs to be saved. Why? Because they are not important; we can do without them, as long as we have basketball, and all sports, are important to the human body; the arts are important to the human mind, the human soul.

The arts are important because they last; they outlast virtually everything else. Think of a violin or a concerto made 250 years ago, consider a bronze figure or a drama made 2500 years ago. They are with us still; we own them; and they tell us the most crucial things about us, who we were, and where we came from.

In March of this year, there was a three-part series on arts education in the schools, a set of eight articles that appeared in Cleveland's leading newspaper under the byline of its respected music critic, Donald Rosenberg. It was an extraordinarily detailed and insightful series, with many examples of what is being done and also what is not being done. We shall quote from some reader responses later on. The gist of the series
is quite simple; I quote from the article: "Educators and arts advocates agreed that the arts must be stressed and strengthened in schools if students are to realize their potential as human beings. One social worker-choreographer wrote to say that with the arts you feel and you see and you relate. The arts connect, she said. They have the power of connecting children with the world." Educators, writes Mr. Rosenberg, "have witnessed the power of the arts to engage students, draw out creativity, develop team players and enhance academic subjects. They are hard at work throughout America trying to reverse the situation which has reached its lowest point in two decades....Schools will need to change their way of thinking if the arts are to take a substantial place in primary and secondary learning...Although cutting the arts has been seen as a quick remedy to budget crises, it has deprived too many American students of their right to use intelligences in artistic areas that complement math, science, social studies and language arts."

You have most probably seen the marvelous TV specials about arts education in places like Harlem and the South Bronx, which show such activity as virtually life-saving. Young people who study instruments and practice for hours, who play in bands and orchestras, who express themselves in dance movement, are much less likely to get involved in drugs, in actions born of boredom, and in gang violence. Just recently, the music director of the New York Philharmonic, Kurt Masur, was a guest on CBS's 60 Minutes. He mentioned how shocked and disappointed he was to see the state of musical literacy so low in this country, and how essential it was to have good music available from kindergarten on. "For every two music teachers in the schools," he said, "you can have two less policemen on the street." Indeed, the discipline and sense of quality taught by the arts may well be a crucial factor in repairing the tattered
social fabric of our society.

Magnet schools in which the arts take a primary place have been another resource; every city has them, and it is sad to see how dilapidated their buildings often are, how low their stock of superior instruments. Yet there the arts are a central part of education, not a sideline, and it has been shown again and again that the performance of those students improves, that they have a better chance of passing, and that educational mediocrity so widespread today is prevented or counteracted.

Art teaching and availability must begin in pre-school, most educators believe. "That's when they really make an impact," one of them remarked. "My feeling is that our elementary schools should be saturated with the arts. They should be teaching 10 hours a week in the arts." The articles are full of suggestions and ideas, which would take us another half-hour to outline. I have given a set to Professor Sheveloff, and anyone interested may surely ask to see them.

I have spoken earlier of the fact that the educated musician has endless opportunities to put his or her skills to work in the community. The contribution that can be made is very significant, socially as well as artistically, and I urge you to become a part of that effort, each in your own way.

Speaking at Warm Springs, Georgia, just 10 days ago, at the house where Franklin D. Roosevelt had died exactly 50 years before, President Clinton said: "Education is the fault line in America today." And we may add, "the arts are one of the fault lines in American education today." The cultural seismograph has told us so, with clarity and emphasis; now it is up to us to take action.

I mentioned survival, the arts as "virtually life-saving". Do you think this was an exaggeration? A week ago Friday, on April 14, there was a television feature on the Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir, a gospel group. One of the soloists said, and I quote, "I would be dead today if I were not a member of this choir."
Let me close with a personal experience. About a decade ago, I was asked to give a talk about The Cleveland Orchestra in an inner-city high school. I arrived at that highly fortified and forbidding building, was met by no one, and made my way up to the third floor where the class was to be held. Suddenly I stopped dead in my tracks in the corridor, and listened. Out of the room in which I was to speak came the unmistakable strains of a Bruckner choral motet. When it ended, I went in and was welcomed by the young woman teacher and conductor. I had a friendly and cordial time with the 20-or-so eager and courteous youngsters, talking about the Orchestra's service to the arts and to the community. I left that fortress of a school building shaking my head in disbelief—no, in renewed belief. Here was a demonstration of the power of music to bring people together, to calm feelings of tension and discontent, and of a young teacher whose individual initiative and charisma made it possible to celebrate our common humanity and potential for friendship through a joint activity in music.

And I remembered the saying of Herbert Spencer which I have quoted to you before: "Music, of all the arts, best ministers to human well-being."

Thank you for your kind attention, and now on to the rest of today's program. First, Professor Joel Sheveloff will take our subject a step further, by discussing "where and when music fits into the education process". Prof. Sheveloff?