

Coda: Entrepreneurial Spirit Required

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In addition to being the president of Wheaton College in Massachusetts, I am also a professional cellist. I have performed in Carnegie Hall and currently perform with the Klemperer Trio of London, England. While I did not begin to play the cello until I was 13, within a year of taking up the instrument I performed the first two movements from the Bach *Suite No. 1 in G Major for Solo Violoncello* in a competition at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. Professor Elizabeth Potteiger, the cellist in the Oxford String Quartet at Miami, heard me perform. When she learned that I had been playing the cello for only eight months, she invited me to attend a summer music camp at the university. At the conclusion of the one-week camp, she made an extraordinary offer: She would teach me free of charge if my parents would transport me from Cincinnati to Oxford, a distance of about 35 miles.

The offer had a profound impact on my life. Liz Potteiger was, by all rights, a renaissance woman. As one of the founders of the Oxford Quartet—one of the first string quartets in residence at a university in the United States—she was also widely read and a world traveler. She became the most influential mentor in my life, aside from my parents. Every Saturday at 7:20 A.M. I would board a bus in Cincinnati for the 90-minute journey to Oxford and would not return home until 6:00 P.M.

Intentional Practice

I was a natural, a self-taught musician, but Liz taught me how to play the cello as a thinking performer. She taught me how to execute goal-oriented movements, how to ensure that the cello ultimately produced what was in my mind's ear. She also taught me that the type of practice routine necessary to perform consistently well in public is analogous to the training of an athlete preparing for world-class competition. Every practice has to be intentional and goal directed. In addition to an excellent technique, she taught me the style, historical background, and musical architecture of compositions. In essence, she taught me how to find my own voice through the cello.

Because I was raised in a household in which the discipline to perform a task was instilled in me and reinforced every day by my father, I made rapid progress with the cello. I practiced for many hours every day. It was as though I was possessed. Soon, I won an audition for my first professional position as a member of the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra. By the time I was 17, I had performed a concerto with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra as a winner of its young artists' competition.

In addition to teaching me cello, Liz introduced me to George Klemperer, a German émigré, amateur violinist, and first cousin of the renowned conductor, Otto Klemperer. George lived on Chanticleer Farm just south of Richmond, IN, where once a week he

convened a group of three other musicians for string quartet “readings.” I would perform sonatas for George and read chamber music with him and his daughters. And for the past 33 years, his daughter, Erika Klemperer, and I have performed with Erika’s husband, Gordon Back, as the Klemperer Trio.

When it was time to decide on which college to attend, I considered several institutions. But Berklee College of Music was not one of them. In fact, I probably wasn’t aware of Berklee at the time, because I had not decided to major in music. Since the third grade, I had wanted to become an architect. My high-school counselor recommended Carnegie Mellon University and Oberlin College because both institutions offered strong music programs as well as an opportunity to study architecture. Miami University also had a fine architecture department. In the end, I received a full alumni merit scholarship to Miami and changed my major to music and German language and literature.

Over the past eight years as a member of the Berklee College of Music Board of Trustees, I have come to admire the artistic and educational experience that Berklee provides for its students. In fact, I was so impressed with Berklee that, several years ago, I donated a cello to the college. American violinmaker, Edward Campbell, made the instrument, which won the grand prize in the International Violin Competition in the late seventies. Numerous times I have told my friends that Berklee is the best school for preparing young musicians for the realities of the music profession in the 21st century.

A Need for Additional Skills

In addition to honing their musical skills, today’s musicians need several complementary skills that have not historically been part of the music school or conservatory curriculum, including business and entrepreneurial skills, such as marketing, financial management, goal setting, project planning, and communication (both written and oral). Students at Berklee have numerous opportunities for honing these skills.

In the early 1990s, I served as the vice president for academic affairs and the dean of the conservatory at the Cleveland Institute of Music. During my tenure, I introduced changes to our chamber music program that focused on entrepreneurship. Each chamber music group had to organize a performance in at least one unconventional venue per semester. Groups also learned how to market and execute their performances from the members of the string quartet in residence, the Cavani Quartet. My plan was to make these learning experiences more pervasive throughout the institute. But I left to lead the School of Music at the University of Texas at Austin, and eventually the “unconventional” aspects of the chamber music requirements disappeared from the curriculum.

During the 1990s, I gave two presentations about the need to transform a music curriculum to music executives and also published an article on the same topic. I spoke and wrote about the challenges that musicians would face in the 21st century if we did not inculcate in them an entrepreneurial mindset along with requisite skills. This was particularly the case in the field of “classical music” (though I despise that term!), where for centuries musicians were taught that the primary educational goal in a conservatory was to perfect your performance skills—your chops. You did not need to be concerned

about creating an ensemble, locating performance venues, or collaborating with artists in other fields. You simply needed to be prepared for a successful audition to become a member of an orchestra, chamber ensemble, opera company, chorus, band, etc. Those ancillary (and, for some, onerous) responsibilities would be taken care of by someone else.

My, have things changed! While at some fine artistic organizations musicians do not have to be concerned about these “ancillary responsibilities,” there are far fewer of them. We now live in a world of continuous change and constantly shifting paradigms. In this cultural environment, all musicians must have an entrepreneurial mindset and take charge of their careers. Only over the past decade have conservatories or schools of music begun to understand the importance of advancing and encouraging these extramusical capacities. As a contemporary music school, Berklee has always attracted students who have an entrepreneurial spirit and then provided them with the opportunities to grow and develop.

Today, if I were choosing a college based on what I know now, Berklee College of Music would be high on my list. Through transformation and discovery, Berklee offers the best opportunities for young musicians to receive a holistic contemporary music education. I am convinced that having found my voice under Liz Potteiger’s tutelage, Berklee would have taught me how to bring out dimensions in my voice that I never knew existed.