

TALENT: *A Gift from God*

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The question of talent and especially artistic talent is a complex one with many facets. As a musician-educator I encounter the question of talent from day to day; first from within myself, and secondly from my students. I find that as I mature the quiet little man inside my brain has changed his tune. His questions have shifted from "do I have talent" to "do I have enough talent." I hear questions like: am I capable of doing what I ask my students to do, is my imagination developed sufficiently; are my listening skills refined suitably; and finally, are my technical skills adequate enough so that I can both demonstrate and teach? My response to these questions is to continue with my practice, continue with my study, and continue with my teaching because I am doing what makes me happy. Because of that I have become enabled to detach myself from the countless expectations that I have developed in my psyche over the years and to trust the judgment of people who loved and taught me.

The questions however, from my students and in fact from all students who display artistic talent just like some of the students you will see performing tonight are more pressing and far more important. Even if they have not verbally expressed it, these young people want to know if they should pursue a future in the artistic world with all the uncertainty that it involves. There can be only one response: the true road to happiness is the one that follows the heart.

It is very difficult in today's world to follow your heart because the message that it is safer and more practical to pursue science, mathematics and business rather than the arts is promulgated loud and clear. What our talented children are hearing is to sow the seeds of science and math you will reap security and happiness. Furthermore, what you really want does not necessarily matter and pursuing a career in the arts is foolish and far too risky in today's world. However, if they fail to listen to their heart and deny its path, they risk, at great peril, not becoming who they were meant to be. I realize that

trusting ones instincts and one's "gut feeling" is scary business, yet denying who and what we are is the worse folly and, in fact, an affront to our Creator.

When we as teachers and parents ignore the talent in our children, dismiss its significance in their lives, and demean its importance in and to society, we commit a sin against them and against God. His gifts are to be treasured, nurtured, cultivated, and developed. Children created with talent were done so by design. God knows what He is doing. Our job as parents and educators is to fulfill God's plan by encouraging our artistic children in every way possible. We must assure them that we will all be there to help and support them at every turn. We must insure that as they develop we will provide the necessary background and training so that their journey will be a smooth one. We know that they are different and yet we respect and treasure that difference. If we fail in our task, we fail them and society. How can we allow them to throw this gift away? How could we live with ourselves if we fail to provide them with a vehicle to expand their talent, teach them the craft of their art, help them develop their skills, guide them so that they may discover what is in their heart and encourage them to follow their true path.