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MUSICA IQ

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ISSUE

MUSIC,
LITERATURE,
AND
INNOVATION:

INTERDISCIPLINARY
INSIGHTS

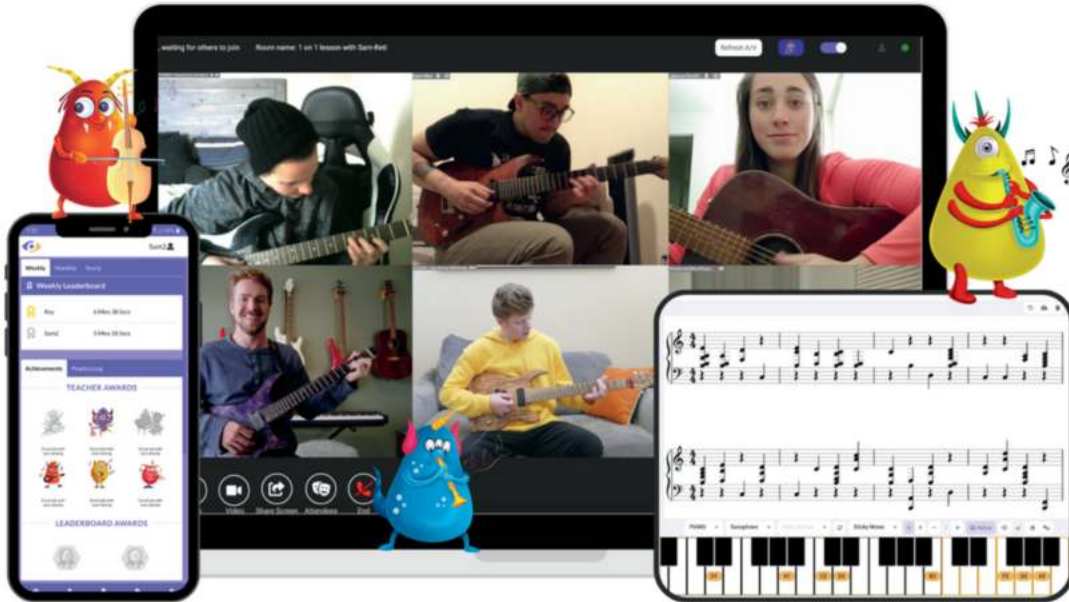


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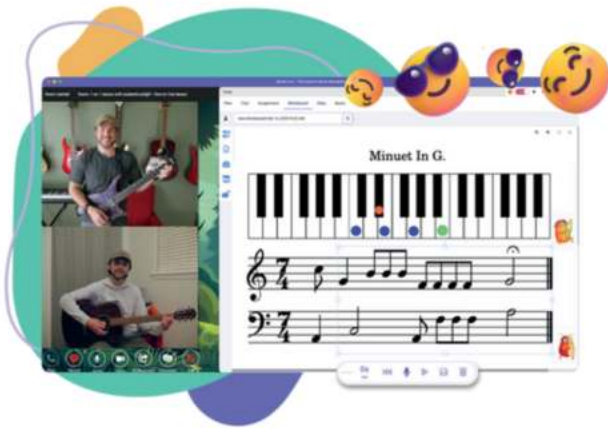


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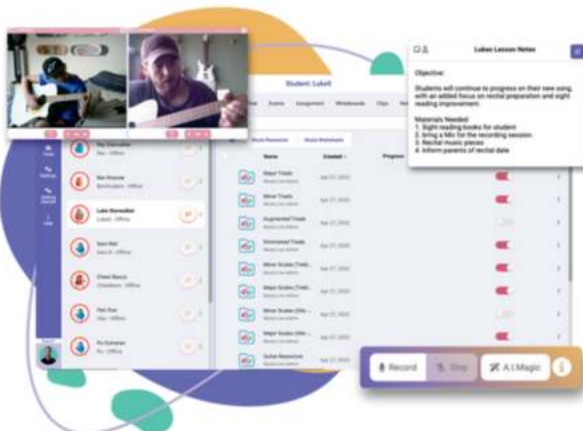


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FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

As we approach the end of the year, we find ourselves in a season of reflection—a natural moment to consider the intertwining themes of art, human connection, and well-being. With this issue of MusicalQ, we invite you to explore not just the intellectual dimensions of music, but also the emotional and human landscapes it inhabits.

This past season, I had the opportunity to witness firsthand how art and human connection intersect in complex and unexpected ways. While supporting a friend during a significant performance, I observed how easily miscommunication, stress, and a lack of sensitivity can cast shadows over what should be joyous and transformative experiences. This moment of reflection has deepened my appreciation for the role of empathy, care, and mutual understanding in the creative process.

The arts demand so much from us—our energy, creativity, and emotional investment. Yet, how often do we neglect the psychological and emotional well-being of the very people who sustain our art? As artists, educators, and administrators, we may focus so intently on the work itself that we lose sight of the individuals who bring it to life.

A Shared Mission: Music, Ideas, and Humanity

In crafting MusicalQ, our mission has always been to bridge the intellectual and practical dimensions of music. This issue continues to build on that foundation, offering articles that highlight the multifaceted ways music shapes our world and connects us as humans.

From the transformative role of solfège in music education to the influence of artificial intelligence in reshaping musical training, this edition invites you to engage with music as both an intellectual pursuit and a deeply human experience.

We are particularly thrilled to feature an exploration of how music influenced Milan Kundera's literary work, an insightful interview with Sam Reti, founder of Muzie, and interdisciplinary perspectives on music theory. Each piece reflects the magazine's commitment to examining music as a dynamic, evolving force that touches every corner of our lives.

An Invitation to Nurture Creative Spaces

As you engage with this issue, I invite you to reflect on the environments in which we create and experience music. How can we, as a community, foster spaces that celebrate not only artistic excellence but also empathy and care? Let us be mindful of the humanity behind every note and idea, and commit to nurturing both the art and the people who make it possible.

The pages of this December issue explore these connections between art, intellect, and humanity. Through the intersection of music with fields like literature, technology, psychology, or the passion for cooking, we aim to provide you with perspectives that both challenge and inspire.

Looking Ahead

As we step into a new year, let us carry forward a renewed commitment to cultivating environments that support creativity, collaboration, and well-being. Music has the power to bring us together, but it is our shared care and understanding that sustain the art we love.

On behalf of everyone at MusicalQ, thank you for joining us on this journey. Your engagement, insights, and passion are the heartbeat of this magazine. Let us continue to explore the boundless possibilities of music.

With gratitude,



Antonella Di Giulio

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF AND FOUNDER

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GIAOCOMO PUCCINI

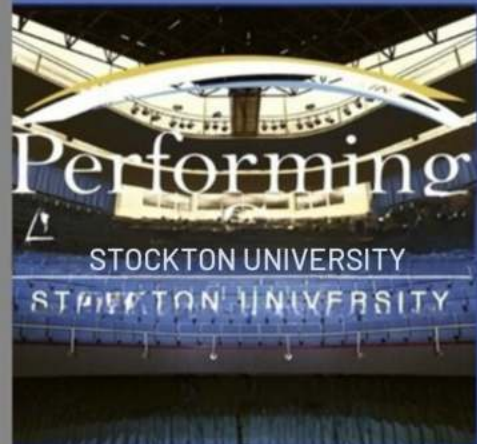
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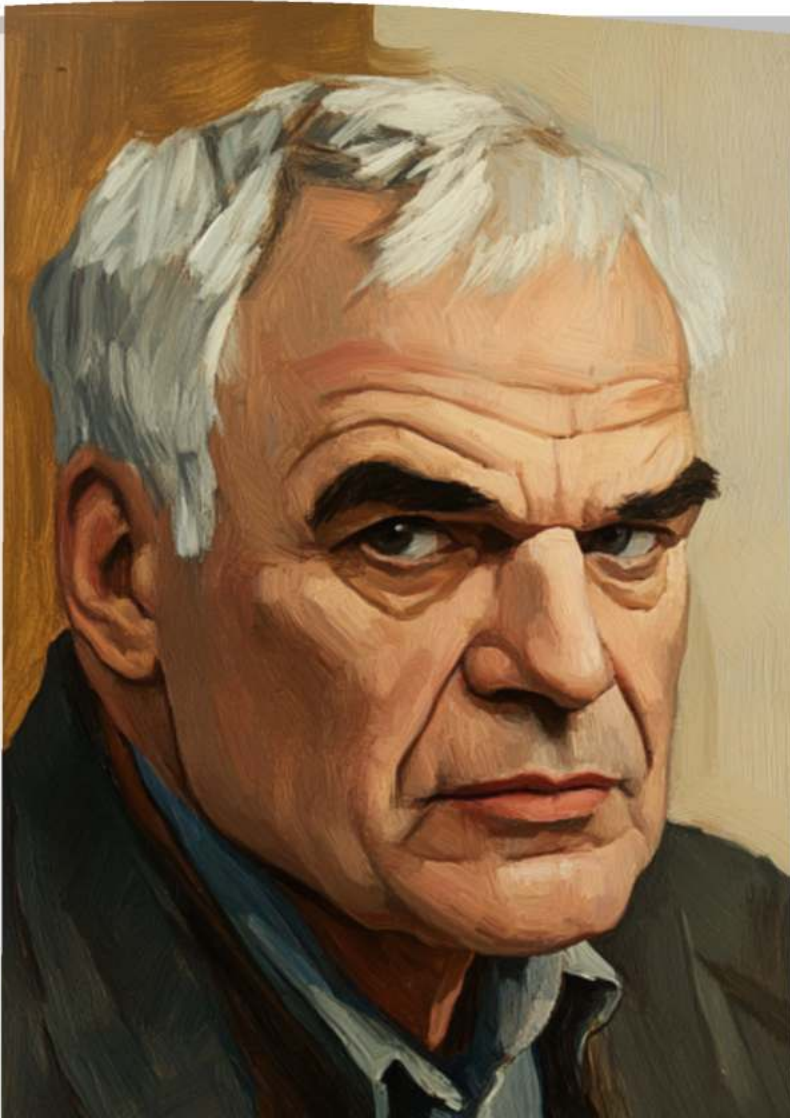
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MUSIC ANALYSIS:

HOW MUSIC SHAPES LITERATURE

“The stupidity of people comes from having an answer for everything. The wisdom of the novel comes from having a question for everything..”

— from *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, by Milan Kundera



BY ROSSANO PINELLI

Milan Kundera (1929–2023), celebrated worldwide for his literary masterpieces, was more than just a novelist. However it is essential to uncover another dimension of his genius—his profound engagement with music. Kundera's life and works reveal an extraordinary interplay between the worlds of sound and text, making him a figure whose insights resonate deeply within the musicological and literary realms.

A NOVELIST BEYOND COMPARE

Born in Brno, Moravia, Kundera established himself as one of the most influential writers of the 20th century. His novels, from *Laughable Loves* (1963) to *Ignorance* (2001), offer sharp explorations of human nature, relationships, and the socio-political landscapes of his time. With a style characterized by precision and balance, Kundera demonstrated an unmatched ability to capture the instability of emotions while maintaining a natural and accessible prose style. His writing, often described as a “miracle of equilibrium,” reflects the same meticulous care that composers bring to their music.

Music: Kundera's Second Language

What sets Kundera apart from other literary giants is his deep connection to music. Born to a musical family—his father was a noted pianist—Kundera studied piano and composition under Pavel Haas, a disciple of Leoš Janáček. Haas's tragic death in Auschwitz left an indelible mark on Kundera's consciousness, heightening his sensitivity to the intersections of art, life, and politics.

For Kundera, music was not merely a theme but a structural and philosophical cornerstone of his work. His essays on music showcase a remarkable level of professional knowledge, exploring its intellectual and emotional dimensions with a clarity and depth equal to his literary critiques.

His respect for composers like Bach, Beethoven, Stravinsky, Xenakis, and Janáček stemmed from their commitment to structure and truth, qualities Kundera championed in all art forms.

REJECTING KITSCH: THE PURSUIT OF AUTHENTICITY

Central to Kundera's philosophy was his rejection of kitsch—the aestheticization of clichés and sentimentality. To Kundera, kitsch was not just bad taste but a dangerous vehicle for ideological manipulation. He saw this excess sentimentality as a tool of oppressive regimes, from Soviet socialism to fascism, which weaponized emotion to control and deceive.

“Kitsch causes two tears to flow in quick succession.

The first tear says: How nice to see children running on the grass!
The second tear says: How nice to be moved, together with all mankind, by children running on the grass!

It is the second tear that makes kitsch kitsch. And no one knows this better than politicians.

Kitsch is the aesthetic ideal of all politicians and all political parties and movements. In the realm of kitsch, the dictatorship of the heart reigns supreme.”



This perspective informed his admiration for Iannis Xenakis, the Greek composer who rejected Romantic subjectivity in favor of mathematical rigor and the raw sounds of the natural world. Xenakis's music, inspired by phenomena like rain, clouds, and cicadas, reflected what Kundera called "the beauty purified of emotional grime." Kundera saw in Xenakis a prophet of a more objective and honest art, freed from the trappings of sentimentality and kitsch.

MUSIC AND LITERATURE: TWIN HISTORIES

Kundera's intellectual breadth allowed him to draw striking parallels between the histories of music and literature. He described these art forms as evolving through two distinct epochs. The first emphasized structural integrity, where the individual's expression was subordinated to formal balance. In music, this era culminated with Bach's polyphony, while in literature, it found its voice in the works of Cervantes and Sterne. The second epoch introduced Romanticism, marked by a surge of subjective expression. While this shift brought innovation, Kundera viewed it as a dilution of artistic depth, often leading to the sentimentalism he abhorred.

In Kundera's view, the first epoch of polyphonic music and literature represents an unparalleled richness, blending intellectual rigor with artistic beauty. This duality informed his belief that Bach's *The Art of Fugue* exemplifies the peak of musical achievement, a masterpiece of structural clarity created in defiance of the emerging frivolities of the Rococo style.

Musical Structures in Literary Form

Kundera's novels reflect his musical sensibilities, often adopting compositional frameworks. For example, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* is structured as a series of variations on a theme, much like a musical composition. He also admired writers like Hermann Broch and Salman Rushdie, whose works echoed the rondo form, alternating recurring themes with novel elements.

Moreover, Kundera's sensitivity to the sound of language—its rhythm, melody, and repetition—distinguished his prose. He criticized translators who overlooked these qualities, especially in works like Kafka's, where repetition creates a musical resonance. Kundera also praised Hemingway's ability to craft melodic dialogue, where the repetition of phrases evokes both natural conversation and musical motifs.

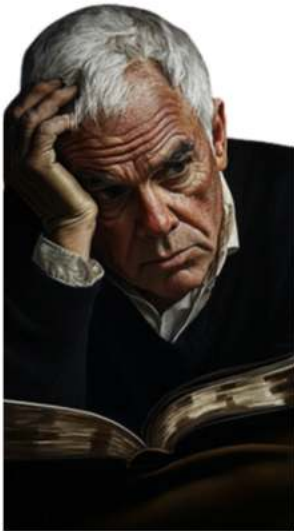
JANÁČEK'S REVOLUTIONARY INFLUENCE

Milan Kundera's connection to music reached its zenith in his deep admiration for Leoš Janáček, a fellow Czech whose work Kundera regarded as a cornerstone of modern musical innovation. For Kundera, Janáček was not just a composer but a revolutionary artist who broke away from established conventions, transforming the way opera communicated human experience. In *Testaments Betrayed* and other essays, Kundera explored Janáček's daring contributions to opera, underscoring his unique ability to strip the art form of unnecessary artifice and infuse it with a raw, unmediated authenticity.

Janáček's approach to opera was groundbreaking in its focus on spoken rhythms and natural intonations. Instead of adhering to the lofty, poetic stylization typical of traditional opera, Janáček drew his inspiration from the patterns of everyday speech. He believed that the natural cadences of spoken language, when translated into music, could convey emotion and meaning with far greater immediacy. This method represented a radical departure from the Romantic and *bel canto* traditions, which often prioritized lyrical beauty over narrative truth. Kundera regarded this shift as an audacious redefinition of operatic art, one that aligned perfectly with his own disdain for sentimentality and rhetorical excess.

Central to Janáček's innovation was his meticulous study of Czech speech. Over many years, he transcribed snippets of conversations he overheard in the streets, capturing the precise intonations, rhythms, and emotional nuances of spoken language. These studies informed his operatic melodies, which mirrored the natural ebb and flow of human dialogue. In works like *Jenůfa* and *The Cunning Little Vixen*, this technique allowed Janáček to craft music that felt both deeply personal and universally relatable. Kundera celebrated these melodies for their unparalleled directness, viewing them as the musical equivalent of his own literary ideals: concise, truthful, and devoid of ornamental distractions.

For Kundera, Janáček's work was not just a triumph of music but a representation of the enduring power of art to reveal deeper truths about humanity. By rejecting convention and embracing the natural rhythms of life, Janáček created a body of work that continues to inspire and challenge. Kundera's reflections on Janáček illuminate the profound connections between music and literature, offering a powerful reminder of the potential of art to transcend boundaries and connect with the essence of human experience.



Milan Kundera's work offers a masterclass in how music and literature can inform and elevate each other. His novels and essays challenge us to resist the easy seductions of sentimentality and rhetorical excess, advocating instead for art that prioritizes clarity, balance, and intellectual integrity.

Kundera's insights into music, his critique of kitsch, and his interdisciplinary approach remind us that the boundaries between art forms are fluid. His legacy shows the power of art to provoke, inspire, and endure. For musicians, writers, and thinkers alike, Kundera remains an invaluable guide in the pursuit of creative excellence. ■



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THE ROLE OF SOLFÈGE IN MUSIC EDUCATION

EDITORIAL TEAM

The Transformative Power of Solfège

Music is often compared to a language, but learning to "speak" it fluently requires a methodical approach. For centuries, solfège—a system of associating syllables with musical pitches—has been one of the most effective tools for teaching classical musicians to understand and internalize music.

From its earliest roots in medieval chant to its modern applications in classrooms and conservatories, solfège continues to be a cornerstone of music education worldwide.

At its heart, solfège bridges the gap between abstract notation and the lived experience of sound. It gives students the tools to decode musical patterns, hear relationships between notes, and reproduce them accurately. Beyond its immediate practicality, solfège also fosters creativity, enhances memory, and strengthens cognitive skills, making it an indispensable element of musical training.

This article explores the enduring power of solfège, tracing its historical origins, examining its pedagogical benefits, and offering practical strategies for integrating both spoken and sung solfège into music education. By the end,

readers will see why solfège remains one of the most valuable methods for teaching and understanding music, whether in a beginner's classroom or an advanced conservatory setting.

THE HISTORY OF SOLFÈGE

The roots of solfège stretch back nearly a millennium to the early days of Western music notation. Around the 11th century, the Benedictine monk Guido of Arezzo introduced a system to help singers learn Gregorian chant with greater efficiency and accuracy. Drawing inspiration from a hymn to St. John the Baptist, Guido assigned syllables—ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la—to the notes of a hexachord, providing a way to map pitch relationships within a scale. This revolutionary method became the foundation for what we now know as solfège.



As music evolved, so did solfège. The syllable *ut* was replaced with *do* for ease of singing, and *si* (later adapted to *ti* in some regions) was added to complete the diatonic scale. Over time, two main systems of solfège emerged:

1. **Movable-Do Solfège:** In this system, *do* represents the tonic, or the first note of any scale. For example, in C major, *do* is C, but in G major, *do* becomes G. This method emphasizes relative pitch, allowing musicians to internalize the relationships between notes regardless of the key. Movable-*do* is widely used in English-speaking countries and is central to methods like Kodály pedagogy.
2. **Fixed-Do Solfège:** Here, each syllable corresponds to a specific pitch, regardless of the key. For instance, *do* is always C, *re* is always D, and so on. Fixed-*do* is prevalent in many European conservatories and is particularly useful for developing absolute pitch recognition.

While solfège originated as a tool for singers, its principles have transcended vocal music to become a universal system for teaching and understanding music across instruments and genres. From classical training to jazz improvisation, solfège equips musicians with the ability to navigate melodic and harmonic structures intuitively.

SOLFÈGE IN MODERN CONTEXTS

In contemporary music education, solfège serves as more than just a method for teaching scales and melodies. Its adaptability allows it to flourish in diverse cultural and musical traditions. For example, Indian classical music employs a similar system called *sargam*, while African and East Asian musical practices incorporate comparable syllabic methods to teach pitch and rhythm.

The enduring relevance of solfège lies in its simplicity and universality. Whether used to teach a child their first scale or to train a professional musician in advanced harmonic analysis, solfège remains one of the most versatile and transformative tools in music education.

Solfège is more than just a method for learning music; it is a framework that transforms how musicians perceive, internalize, and express sound. Its unique ability to bridge theoretical concepts and practical skills has made it indispensable in music education. Beyond its immediate usefulness, solfège fosters long-term benefits, such as enhancing aural skills, memory, and cognitive development.

At its core, solfège develops the ability to hear and identify musical intervals, melodies,

The image shows a musical score for the beginning of 'Tantum Ergo'. The lyrics are: T que- ant laxis re-soná-re fi-bris Mi- ra gestó- rum fámu-li tu- ó- rum, Sol-ve pollú- ti lá-bi- i re- á-

The score is written on a five-line staff with square notes. A large 'U' with a Roman numeral 'II' above it is on the left. Red circles highlight the notes corresponding to the underlined syllables: 'T', 're', 'Mi', 'fá', 'Sol', and 'lá'. The website www.musicalq.com is visible in the bottom right corner.

and harmonies—skills collectively known as relative pitch. By associating pitches with syllables, solfège helps students build a mental map of tonal relationships, enabling them to reproduce melodies and recognize harmonic progressions.

For instance, the leap from do to sol is a perfect fifth, a foundational interval in Western music. Practicing this relationship repeatedly through solfège solidifies it in the student's ear, making it easier to identify in various musical contexts.

Sung solfège, in particular, takes this a step further by connecting the ear with the voice. When students sing pitches using solfège syllables, they internalize not just the sound but also the physical act of producing it. This integration of hearing, singing, and understanding creates a profound and lasting connection to music.

BRIDGING THEORY AND PRACTICE

One of solfège's greatest strengths lies in its ability to transform abstract musical notation into tangible sound. Many students struggle to "hear" music directly from a written score, but solfège bridges this gap by associating written notes with audible syllables.

For example, a simple melody like Twinkle, Little Star might first be introduced as notation. Using solfège, the teacher assigns the syllables do-do-sol-sol-la-la-sol. Students speak these syllables while clapping the rhythm, building a connection between what they see and hear. Once the rhythm and pitch relationships are established, they transition to singing the melody, reinforcing their understanding through vocal expression. By linking theory to sound, solfège makes music more accessible, empowering students to move seamlessly from reading to performing.

MEMORY AND COGNITIVE BENEFITS

Solfège also enhances cognitive abilities by engaging multiple sensory modalities. Speaking or singing solfège syllables involves auditory, verbal, and kinesthetic processes, which work together to reinforce learning. This multisensory approach is especially effective for developing musical memory and recall.

Research in cognitive psychology has shown that musicians who practice solfège exhibit improved working memory and greater neural plasticity in regions of the brain associated with auditory processing. These benefits extend beyond music, supporting skills like pattern recognition and problem-solving.



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Twin-kle twin-kle lit - tle star, How I won-der what you are. Up a-bove the world so high,
 Like a dia-mond in the sky. Twin-kle twin-kle lit - tle star, How I won-der what you are.

For example, when students learn a melody using solfège, they are not just memorizing notes; they are internalizing patterns of sound and structure. This deeper understanding makes it easier for them to recall and adapt the material in new contexts, whether they are improvising or analyzing complex compositions.

SPOKEN VS. SUNG SOLFÈGE

Solfège is a versatile tool that can be adapted to suit different educational goals and contexts. At its core, it functions as a bridge between the theoretical and practical aspects of music. Within this framework, solfège can be practiced as either a spoken or sung exercise, each with its distinct benefits. While spoken solfège emphasizes rhythm, pitch recognition, and cognitive precision, sung solfège develops vocal accuracy, musicality, and emotional expression. Together, they form a comprehensive approach that engages students holistically.

Spoken Solfège: Precision and Rhythm

Spoken solfège focuses on rhythmic accuracy and pitch recognition without the added complexity of vocal performance. By removing the act of singing, students can concentrate on the structure of the music—its intervals, rhythms, and patterns—while reinforcing their theoretical understanding. This approach is especially effective in sight-reading exercises and rhythm training, where clear articulation of syllables sharpens the student's ability to internalize and reproduce musical ideas.

Example in Practice: A teacher presents a simple melody written in quarter and eighth notes. Students clap the rhythm while speaking the corresponding solfège syllables (do-do-re-re-mi-mi-re). This exercise integrates pitch reading and rhythm, helping students hear the melody in their minds while focusing on its structure.

Spoken solfège also encourages quick thinking, as students must process visual notation, translate it into solfège syllables, and articulate those syllables in time. This mental agility is a crucial skill for musicians, especially in ensemble settings where rhythm and timing are paramount.

Sung Solfège: Expression and Intonation

Sung solfège takes the learning process a step further by engaging the voice, an instrument every student possesses. Singing solfège allows students to connect the theoretical understanding of intervals and scales with their physical expression. It is particularly effective for developing pitch accuracy, intonation, and musical phrasing.

In sung solfège, students learn to reproduce pitches accurately while maintaining the flow and dynamics of the melody. This process reinforces their understanding of intervals and tonal relationships in a way that is both auditory and tactile.

Example in Practice: Students sing a major scale using solfège syllables (do-re-mi-fa-sol-la-ti-do), focusing on smooth transitions between notes and clear intonation. As they progress, they can practice arpeggios and chromatic scales to refine their vocal control and expand their tonal vocabulary.

Sung solfège is particularly valuable in ensemble training. By practicing harmonic intervals and chord progressions, students develop a stronger sense of pitch in relation to others, an essential skill for choral and instrumental groups.

Combining Spoken and Sung Solfège

While spoken and sung solfège offer unique benefits, their true power lies in their integration. By combining the two approaches, students can develop a well-rounded understanding of music that

encompasses rhythm, pitch, and expression. For example, a teacher might begin a lesson by having students speak the solfège syllables of a melody while clapping the rhythm. Once the students are comfortable with the structure, they can transition to singing the melody with the same syllables. This progression reinforces their understanding of the music's components while encouraging them to internalize its overall sound.

Spoken and sung solfège also complement each other in advanced exercises, such as harmonic dictation. Students can speak the solfège syllables of each note in a chord to identify its harmonic function, then sing the notes individually to refine their pitch accuracy.

WHY BOTH ARE ESSENTIAL

The combination of spoken and sung solfège engages the mind and body, fostering a deeper connection to music. Spoken solfège trains precision and mental processing, while sung solfège enhances musical expression and vocal skills. Together, they create a dynamic learning environment that prepares students for all aspects of musicianship, from sight-reading and performance to improvisation and analysis.

At its core, solfège equips students with a language to decode and internalize music, sharpens rhythmic precision and pitch recognition, deepens intonation and expressive capabilities. ■





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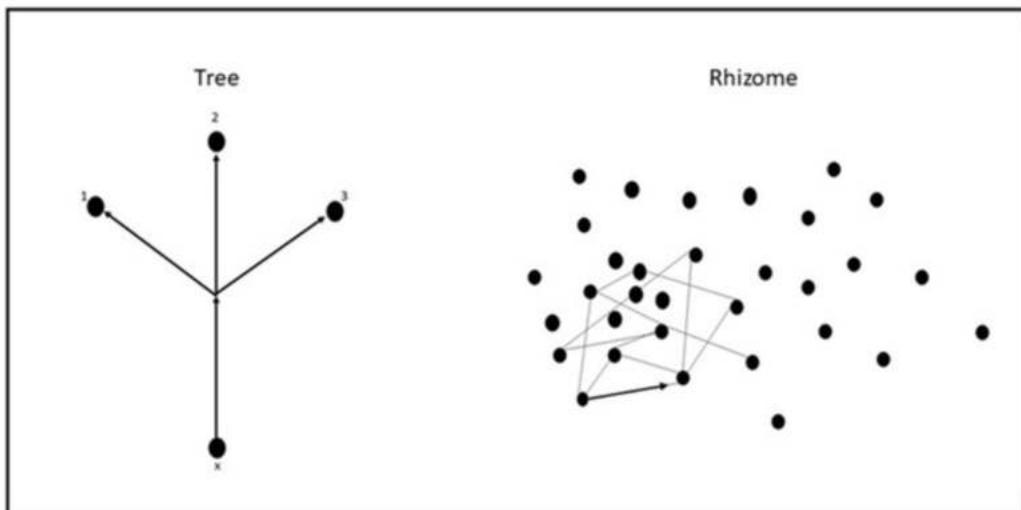
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BY DR. ANTONELLA DI GIULIO

INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

Beyond the Notes: How Interdisciplinary Insights Transform Music Theory



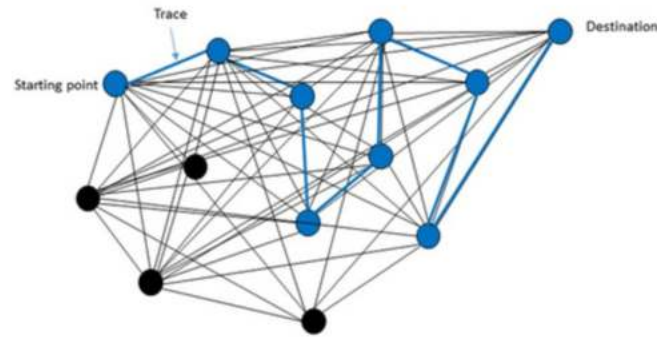
Music theory has traditionally focused on the internal mechanics of harmony, rhythm, and form, dissecting compositions to uncover their structural blueprints. However, music is not just a technical endeavor; it is deeply tied to how humans think, feel, and communicate. By looking beyond the notes and embracing interdisciplinary approaches, we can uncover new dimensions of meaning, opening the door to richer analyses and more profound understandings of music.

This article explores how concepts from semiotics, linguistics, and psychology provide fresh perspectives on music theory, helping us see music as a cognitive, cultural, and communicative phenomenon.

MUSIC AS A SYSTEM OF SIGNS

When we think about meaning in music, we often turn to semiotics—the study of signs. Unlike language, music does not have fixed semantics, yet it communicates powerfully through association, structure, and context. A motif, for example, can act as a "sign," evoking emotions, cultural references, or narrative ideas.

Take Wagner's leitmotifs, those recurring musical themes in his operas. These motifs are not merely melodic ideas; they are charged with meaning. The "Siegfried" motif, for instance, evolves throughout The Ring Cycle, reflecting the character's development and



his impact on the story. Semiotic analysis helps us decode these layers, revealing how music constructs narratives without words.

In contemporary works, the use of semiotics becomes even more crucial. Luciano Berio's *Sequenza III*, for example, challenges traditional notions of musical meaning by using fragmented text and vocal techniques. The result is an abstract soundscape that invites active interpretation, illustrating how composers encode meaning beyond conventional tonal structures.

THE LINGUISTIC LENS: SYNTAX AND DEIXIS IN MUSIC

The parallels between music and language are striking. Both rely on syntax to organize smaller units into coherent wholes. In language, words form sentences; in music, notes and rhythms form phrases and periods.

A cadence in music functions much like a period in language, signaling closure. Similarly, antecedent-consequent phrases mirror the question-and-answer dynamic of conversation, creating a sense of dialogue.

Linguistic concepts like deixis—expressions that rely on context, such as “here” or “now”—are also present in music. A sudden shift in key or rhythm can act as a musical deixis, reorienting the listener’s perception. Consider the opening of Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 5*. The iconic four-note motif serves as a deictic point, drawing attention and creating a sense of urgency.

This ability to guide focus and reshape context demonstrates how music operates as a dynamic system of communication.

PSYCHOLOGY AND THE POWER OF EXPECTATION

Cognitive psychology offers another dimension to understanding music. At its core, music engages the brain in processes of memory, pattern recognition, and emotional response. Leonard B. Meyer’s theory of musical expectation explains how deviations from established patterns generate tension and release, the emotional essence of musical experience.

For example, a dominant chord resolving to the tonic feels satisfying because it aligns with our cognitive schemas—mental templates formed through exposure to music. Composers often play with these schemas, delaying resolution to heighten anticipation. Mozart’s *Symphony No. 40* is a masterclass in this technique, where subtle harmonic shifts create a constant interplay of expectation and surprise.

Schemas also explain why cultural context matters in music perception. Western listeners might find a cadence resolving to the tonic satisfying, but listeners from other traditions, such as Indian classical music, may derive similar satisfaction from entirely different patterns. This interplay of universal cognitive mechanisms and culturally specific schemas highlights the richness of musical understanding.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER: A HOLISTIC FRAMEWORK

What happens when we bring these interdisciplinary perspectives together? We get a more dynamic and flexible framework for music analysis, one that accounts for both the technical precision of music theory and the broader cognitive, cultural, and emotional dimensions of sound.

For educators, this approach opens up new teaching possibilities. Instead of treating music as a closed system, we can introduce students to its linguistic parallels, psychological impacts, and semiotic layers. By doing so, we equip them with tools to analyze music not just as an art form but as a form of human expression.

For scholars, interdisciplinary methods offer ways to tackle challenging repertoire. Works by modern composers, who often abandon traditional tonal systems, demand innovative approaches. Semiotic mapping, for instance, can help decode the layers of meaning in atonal or experimental works, bridging the gap between abstract soundscapes and their interpretive potential.

CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF MUSIC THEORY

Music theory, enriched by insights from semiotics, linguistics, and psychology, becomes much more than a technical discipline. It transforms into a way of exploring how humans think, feel, and communicate through sound. These interdisciplinary connections remind us that music is not just about what is written on the page but about how it is experienced and understood.

By using these broader perspectives, we can ensure that music theory continues to evolve, remaining relevant not only as an analytical tool but also as a lens for understanding the profound ways music shapes and reflects our shared humanity ■



CASE STUDY

BY DR. ANTONELLA DI GIULIO

AI IN THE ARTS: A CASE STUDY

By leveraging properly designed AI prompts, organizations can maximize AI's potential to assess and evaluate complex behaviors.

Prompts act as the bridge between human insight and AI's computational power, ensuring responses are both precise and empathetic.

When used effectively, this approach not only resolves immediate conflicts but also fosters long-term trust and professionalism in arts administration.

The performing arts thrive on connection, not only on stage but also in the relationships between institutions and their patrons. As a professional musician and educator, I regularly travel to engage in workshops, performances, and professional networking opportunities.

My trip to Germany in November 2024 was planned to lead a workshop, and I hoped to attend a performance of an opera at a very small Theater in Switzerland (STIS= Small Theater In Switzerland thereafter) on November 1st. The motivation was deeply personal and professional: attending the performance would allow me to support a friend performing in the production while also engaging with the artistic community, enriching my experience as a professional in the field.

Unfortunately, when I attempted to book tickets online, the performance was marked as sold out.

Determined to explore alternative options, I reached out to a staff member at the theater, let's call her Ms. X., via social media. Initially, Ms. X. confirmed that collapsible seating was available, explaining that these seats were typically reserved for last-minute requests. I was relieved and excited about the possibility of attending the performance.

TOXIC BEHAVIORS

Minutes later, she retracted the offer, citing an “internal error.” Shortly after sending this message, Ms. X. blocked me on social media without explanation, cutting off any avenue of communication. I wondered about her reasoning for that erratic action. I took screenshots of the conversation and asked my ChatGPT to analyze it. The AI assumed my messages had been polite and that something was surely wrong with the person in question.

This abrupt and unprofessional behavior left me confused and uncertain about how to proceed. To seek clarity, I wrote a polite and professional email to STIS’s administration. Below is the text of my initial email, translated into English:



Subject: Request for Assistance Clarifying Ticket Availability

Dear Sir/Madam,

I hope you can assist me in clarifying a situation I recently experienced with a staff member at your theater, Ms. X.

This morning, I contacted Ms. X. regarding the possibility of obtaining last-minute tickets for the performance of Y Opera on November 1. Since I am traveling to Germany to lead a workshop and some of my friends are performing in this production, this was very important to me. I was unable to book tickets online as they were sold out.

Ms. X. appeared to reserve a seat for me on the collapsible chairs, which made me very happy. However, only minutes later, I received a message from her stating that the theater had made a mistake and these seats were no longer available. This left me quite confused, especially as Ms. X. then blocked me on social media shortly after sending that message, making the situation even less clear.

Could you please clarify why these seats were available at 10:00 a.m. but unavailable only an hour later? I want to ensure I understand the situation correctly and hope it can be resolved.

Thank you for your time and assistance.

Best regards, ...

ADMINISTRATIVE SILENCE

Despite the clarity and professionalism of my email, STIS's administration failed to respond. Concerned that my email may have gone unnoticed, I followed up several times, but days passed without acknowledgment, while my flight and hotel were already booked.

Believing that my emails might have been filtered into a spam folder, I decided to send inquiries from alternate email accounts under different names. These emails were promptly answered, confirming that my original messages had been deliberately ignored.

This pattern of selective responsiveness raised serious concerns about the professionalism and inclusivity of TOBS's administrative practices. I assumed discriminatory practices. Finally, after days and days of silence, I received a single response, which was faceless, accusatory, and dismissive. Instead of addressing my concerns, the theater's management escalated the situation by banning me from future performances and threatening legal action.



THE FACELESS AND ESCALATORY RESPONSE

Subject: Ban from Theater Performances

Dear Ms. Di Giulio,

We are writing to inform you that we will not grant you access to our performances. Your behavior toward several of our staff members has repeatedly been perceived as obstructive.

This is unacceptable and violates our guidelines and corporate culture.

Please refrain from any further contact, whether in person, by phone, via social media, or through third parties (e.g., fake email addresses). We hope you take note of this. Should you attempt further contact or request tickets, we will be forced to take legal action.

Sincerely,

The Management (this is not redacted!)
STIS

Problems with the Response

1. Faceless Communication

The response was signed generically as “The Management,” with no individual or department identified as the author. Faceless communication conveys a lack of accountability, detachment, and unwillingness to engage personally with the patron. By failing to attach a name or role, STIS’ response reinforced the power imbalance and dismissed the relational dynamics of the situation.

Research Insight: Personalizing communication, even during conflict, fosters trust and creates a sense of accountability. Studies by Rosette et al. (2013) demonstrate that responses signed by named individuals are perceived as more credible and empathetic. A signature such as “Jane Doe, Customer Relations Manager” would have signaled accountability and conveyed a willingness to resolve the matter constructively.

2. Accusatory and Escalatory Tone

The email accused me of being “obstructive” and escalated the situation by threatening legal action. This language framed me as an adversary without evidence or context and dismissed the legitimate concerns raised in my original email. Instead of addressing the miscommunication or clarifying the theater’s position, the response ignored the root cause of the conflict.

Research Insight: According to Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987), accusations and threats are face-threatening acts (FTAs) that undermine social harmony and escalate conflicts. Mitigating language, such as, “We regret that this situation has caused confusion,” would have maintained dignity while asserting boundaries. Negative FTAs, particularly when paired with threats, signal hostility rather than professionalism.

3. Lack of Empathy

There was no acknowledgment of the emotional impact of the situation or recognition of the confusion caused by STIS’s earlier communication. Empathy is critical in service-oriented industries, especially during conflict resolution, as it humanizes the interaction and builds trust.

STIS’s response not only failed to resolve the issue but also caused significant emotional harm, financial losses, and reputational damage for both parties. The accusatory tone and lack of accountability alienated me as a patron and risked undermining the theater’s image as a professional and inclusive institution.



HOW AI COULD HAVE PREVENTED THE ESCALATION THE POTENTIAL OF AI-ASSISTED COMMUNICATION

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT offer solutions to the shortcomings demonstrated in TOBS's response. By integrating AI into their communication workflows, organizations can promote timeliness, empathy, and professionalism while minimizing the risks of personal bias and escalation. This section outlines a hypothetical AI-assisted communication scenario and analyzes how it could have mitigated the issues in this case.

AI-ASSISTED SCENARIO: RESOLVING THE CONFLICT

Subject: Clarification Regarding Ticket Availability

Day 1: Initial Response

Dear Dr. Di Giulio,

Thank you for reaching out to us and for your interest in Y Opera. We are thrilled that you are considering attending one of our performances as part of your travels.

Unfortunately, the collapsible seats, which were initially available, are no longer an option due to an internal error. We sincerely apologize for the confusion this may have caused.

We value your interest in our theater and are currently reviewing alternative options to accommodate your request. We will get back to you shortly with further updates.

Thank you for your patience and understanding. Please feel free to reach out with any additional questions.

Best regards,

*Jane Doe
Customer Relations Manager*

Subject: Update on Your Ticket Request

Day 2: Follow-Up Response

Dear Dr. Di Giulio,

Thank you for your patience as we reviewed your inquiry. While we regret that collapsible seating is no longer available for this performance, we have added your name to our waiting list in case of cancellations. Additionally, we would be happy to recommend other performances during your visit.

We deeply apologize for any inconvenience this situation may have caused and appreciate your understanding. Should you have any further questions or special requests, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Best regards,

*Jane Doe
Customer Relations Manager*

WHY THIS SCENARIO WORKS

- 1. Timeliness** : AI ensures that inquiries are acknowledged immediately, signaling respect and reducing frustration caused by delays. The first response would have been sent within hours, ensuring that I felt heard and valued as a patron.
- 2. Empathy:** The language in both responses conveys understanding and care, demonstrating emotional intelligence. AI tools like ChatGPT can simulate empathetic phrasing, such as, “We understand that this situation may have caused inconvenience,” which helps maintain positive relationships even in contentious situations.
- 3. Personalization:** Including a named contact (e.g., “Jane Doe, Customer Relations Manager”) fosters accountability and humanizes the interaction. AI can automatically append this information to responses, avoiding the impression of faceless communication.
- 4. Constructive Solutions:** The AI-generated follow-up suggests practical steps, such as adding me to a waiting list and recommending alternative performances. Offering tangible solutions demonstrates professionalism and commitment to resolving the issue.
- 5. Consistency:** AI eliminates variability caused by individual biases or emotional responses. By standardizing communication protocols, AI ensures that all patrons receive fair and professional treatment regardless of identity or circumstance.
- 6. De-escalation:** The neutral and constructive tone prevents misunderstandings from spiraling into conflicts. Instead of framing the patron as an adversary, the AI-assisted response focuses on collaboration and resolution.



HOW AI PROMOTES A HEALTHIER COMMUNICATION ENVIRONMENT

1. Mitigating Bias

- Research Insight: Implicit bias can influence decisions and communication styles, often leading to inconsistent or unfair treatment (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). AI-generated responses are based solely on the content of the inquiry, ensuring impartiality and fairness. By removing the human element from initial responses, AI reduces the likelihood of discriminatory or selective treatment.

2. Building Trust Through Empathy

- Research Insight: Empathy is a key component of Emotional Intelligence (Goleman, 1995) and is critical in maintaining positive relationships. AI tools can model empathetic communication, fostering goodwill even in challenging interactions. For example, language such as, “We deeply appreciate your understanding and patience,” helps to humanize the exchange and maintain trust.

3. Ensuring Accountability

- Faceless communication, like the response I received, signals a lack of accountability. AI can automatically generate personalized responses with named contacts, signaling responsibility and fostering transparency. Patrons are more likely to trust organizations that demonstrate accountability in their interactions.

4. Preventing Escalation

- Research Insight: According to Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987), negative face-threatening acts (FTAs), such as threats or accusations, escalate conflicts unnecessarily. AI avoids emotionally charged language, ensuring that responses remain neutral and constructive. This prevents misunderstandings from spiraling into hostility.

5. Enhancing Organizational Culture

- By standardizing communication protocols, AI promotes consistency and professionalism across all interactions. This not only improves the patron experience but also reinforces the organization’s commitment to fairness, inclusivity, and excellence.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

Had STIS employed AI-assisted communication, several key benefits could have been realized:

Resolution: A timely and empathetic response would have clarified the misunderstanding, ensuring that I felt heard and respected.

Reputation Preservation: Constructive communication would have upheld the theater’s reputation as a professional and inclusive institution.

Trust Building: By addressing the issue transparently and offering solutions, the theater could have strengthened its relationship with a loyal patron.

Conflict Avoidance: The absence of accusatory language and threats would have prevented the situation from escalating into a formal ban.

The mishandling of this situation is more than an isolated instance of administrative failure. It highlights systemic issues that many small organizations in Europe face in their communication practices, particularly in high-stakes environments like the performing arts. These broader implications encompass emotional, financial, and reputational consequences.

EMOTIONAL IMPACTS

1. Patron Alienation

- o The accusatory and faceless response left me feeling dismissed and unjustly targeted. The lack of acknowledgment for my legitimate concerns created emotional distress and fostered a sense of exclusion. Research Insight: Emotional validation is critical in conflict resolution. Studies by Goleman (1995) highlight that individuals who feel emotionally validated are more likely to remain engaged and cooperative. The theater's failure to empathize risked alienating not only one patron but potentially others in similar circumstances.

2. Increased Conflict

- o The threatening language and refusal to engage constructively escalated the situation, creating an adversarial dynamic. This approach disregarded the relational nature of arts institutions, which thrive on community building. Research Insight: Communication breakdowns in service industries are a leading cause of customer dissatisfaction. Escalatory tactics, such as legal threats, often exacerbate conflict rather than resolving it (Coombs, 2007).

FINANCIAL IMPACTS

1. Lost Revenue

- o Alienating patrons through poor communication has direct financial implications. Patrons who feel mistreated are unlikely to return, leading to lost ticket sales and diminished donor support. Research Insight: Repeat patrons and loyal donors are the backbone of many arts organizations. Studies show that acquiring new patrons costs five times more than retaining existing ones (Hargie, 2016).

2. Missed Networking Opportunities

- o For professionals like myself, attending performances is not just a leisure activity but an opportunity to network, collaborate, and engage with the artistic community. The loss of such opportunities diminishes the long-term value of the theater as a hub for cultural exchange.



REPUTATIONAL IMPACTS

1. Erosion of Trust

- The accusatory and impersonal tone of the response damaged its credibility and trustworthiness. Trust is foundational in the arts, where patrons often support institutions out of loyalty and respect for their mission. Research Insight: According to Attribution Theory (Weiner, 1986), organizations that deflect blame risk appearing untrustworthy. Accountability and transparency are essential for maintaining positive relationships.

2. Perceived Bias

- The differential treatment of my inquiries versus those sent under alternate names raises questions about inclusivity and fairness within the organization. Such perceptions can have long-term consequences, particularly in a cultural climate that increasingly values equity and diversity. Research Insight: Implicit bias in organizational practices undermines inclusivity and alienates underrepresented groups. Transparent protocols and standardized communication practices are necessary to rebuild trust (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995).

THE TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL OF AI IN ARTS ADMINISTRATION

How AI Addresses Systemic Challenges

1. Improving Consistency

- AI tools like ChatGPT provide standardized responses based solely on the content of inquiries. This eliminates variability caused by personal biases or individual misjudgments, ensuring that all patrons receive equal and fair treatment.

Application in this case: AI would have responded promptly and consistently to all emails, regardless of sender identity, preventing the perception of bias.

2. Promoting Empathy Through Language

- Advances in natural language processing enable AI to simulate empathetic language, fostering goodwill even in difficult situations.

Application in this case: AI could have acknowledged my concerns, apologized for any confusion, and offered practical solutions, such as adding me to a waiting list or suggesting future performances.

3. Ensuring Accountability

- AI-generated responses can be programmed to include a named contact and department, signaling responsibility and fostering transparency.

Application in this case: Instead of a faceless response, the email could have been signed by “Jane Doe, Customer Relations Manager,” creating a sense of accountability.

4. De-escalating Conflicts

- o AI excels at crafting neutral, constructive language that avoids face-threatening acts (FTAs). This approach prevents misunderstandings from spiraling into hostility.
Application in this case: AI could have avoided accusations and threats, focusing instead on resolution and maintaining a positive relationship.

BUILDING A HEALTHIER COMMUNICATION CULTURE

1. Fostering Inclusivity

- o AI's impartial nature ensures that all patrons are treated equitably, reducing the risks of implicit bias. This promotes a culture of inclusivity and fairness, aligning with the values of most arts organizations.
- o Long-Term Impact: Inclusive practices build trust and loyalty among diverse audiences, ensuring sustained engagement and support.

2. Streamlining Administrative Workflows

- o AI automates routine communication tasks, allowing staff to focus on more complex issues. This improves efficiency and reduces the likelihood of errors or oversights.
- o Long-Term Impact: Streamlined workflows free up resources for creative and strategic initiatives, enhancing the overall value of the organization.

3. Reinforcing Professionalism

- o AI-generated responses reflect the organization's commitment to professionalism, even in high-pressure situations. This reinforces the institution's reputation as a trusted and reliable entity. Long-Term Impact: Professionalism strengthens relationships with patrons, artists, and donors, fostering a positive and sustainable organizational culture.

THE PATH FORWARD

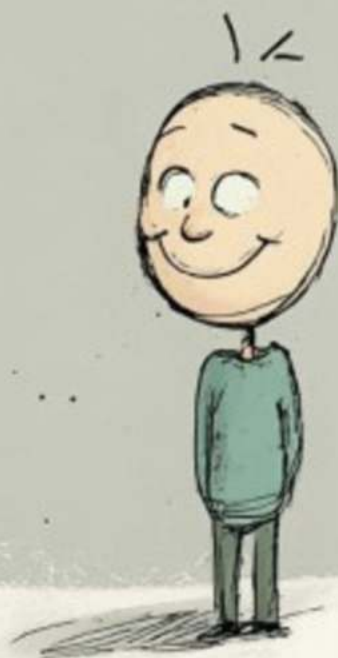
This not isolated case serves as a cautionary tale about the consequences of poor communication. By integrating AI tools like ChatGPT into their workflows, arts organizations can address systemic challenges, such as bias, inconsistency, and escalation. The benefits of AI-assisted communication extend beyond individual cases, transforming the broader organizational culture.

To transform communication practices and address systemic challenges, arts organizations can implement AI tools like ChatGPT in a structured and strategic manner. This section outlines a step-by-step plan for integrating AI into arts administration, emphasizing scalability. It would be interesting for institutions like this small theater in Switzerland, where individuals seem to lack training and accountability in customer relations, to create a handbook with ChatGPT prompts for each type of situation and standard responses.

A Meta-Reflection

Ultimately, AI would likely view this article as an important critique of systemic inefficiencies, grounded in personal experience and supported by thoughtful analysis. By combining human insight with technological possibilities, the article exemplifies how challenging situations can inspire constructive dialogue and innovation.





INTERVIEW WITH SAM RETI

Sam, with a rich background in music education and technology, including a Professional Music degree from Berklee College Of Music, what pivotal moments led you to blend your passion for music with technology, ultimately founding Muzie.Live?

When I was in college, I thought I would spend my entire musical career playing in a band. In hindsight, I can see how naive that was, but at the time, I was determined to be a professional musician. By the middle of my second year, though, the band had pretty much broken up, and I was left to pick up the pieces. I even ended up taking a semester off to figure out what I wanted to do with my life.

When I returned to college, I realized I needed some software to help me organize my workload and practice materials. Over the next year or so, I started working on the original version of Muzie, which was called "I Want To Practice"—a practice management tool for college students.

Fortunately, around that time, our school had just introduced a class called the Startup Lab, in collaboration with MIT. I was part of the first cohort, which gave me the opportunity to workshop and prototype my idea. By the end of my time at Berklee, I had a fully functioning version of the software, and students at Berklee were using it for their own needs as well.

After four years of running that software, we decided to sunset it and began working on Muzie as it is today. In 2019, we started building an online lesson platform for musicians. Little did we know that the pandemic was right around the corner and would change everything. Fortunately, we were in the right place at the right time, with the right technology, and were able to ride that wave to where we are now.



Launching Muzie.Live, especially transitioning to the comprehensive 2.0 version, must have presented numerous challenges. Could you share some of the most significant obstacles you faced and the innovations that helped overcome them?

Building software for education is challenging—especially in private education, where every teacher has their own approach and methods. This presents significant difficulties when trying to design user-friendly yet capable software. What works perfectly for one person might be confusing for another.

Fortunately, we rely heavily on user feedback from our teachers. During the pandemic, we experienced a huge influx of users, which allowed us to work directly with them to ensure we were providing exactly what they needed. Muzie 2.0 was a complete redesign with all of this in mind.

Muzie has many tools and features that enhance the quality of music education, but our main priority is ensuring these features are easy to use, accessible, and effective. Not every change is going to work, though, and that's where adaptability is key. We have to be willing to take constructive feedback and implement changes based on what users need, not just what we think is best. Striking that balance has been crucial.

Muzie.Live stands out for its dedication to enhancing the music education experience through technology. Can you elaborate on the core philosophy that drives the platform's development and how it caters to both educators and students?

Our belief is that technology should be a partner that enables you to do more—helping you be more efficient, effective, and engaging—without getting in your way. If you find yourself spending too much time troubleshooting or trying to get the tech to work, then it has defeated its purpose.

At Muzie, we believe education can be enhanced by pairing the skills of a teacher with the power of technology. The same principle applies to students: music practice can be enhanced by using technology to create a dedicated, distraction-free environment that helps students stay focused and empowered.

We see Muzie as two sides of the same coin: music education. It's not just about providing high-quality lessons and excellent teaching tools, but also about equipping students with everything they need to effectively engage with the content outside of lessons. While students may have weekly lessons for 30 to 60 minutes, which are vital for progress, true growth happens during the other six days of the week—when they're practicing at home. If we can enhance that experience and provide both teachers and students with the tools they need, then we've done our job.



The launch of Muzie 2.0 brought about a complete redesign for improved usability and user experience. How do these changes reflect your vision for the future of music education, and what impact have they had on the Muzie community?

The future of music education is incredibly bright, especially with the introduction of tools like AI—truly, the sky is the limit. We were one of the first music education companies to release an AI personal assistant for music teachers. When we talk about technology improving efficiency, this might be the single most impressive tool I've seen for educators.

Our AI can be activated during a lesson and listens to everything that is said during the call. Teachers can then choose from a dozen prompts to instantly create assignments, practice routines, lesson notes, reminders, and more. The content generated by the AI is entirely based on the lesson itself—it's like having a personal assistant in the room while you teach.

AI not only helps teachers be more efficient but also provides students with detailed, well-thought-out instructions for assignments and practice sessions. This allows teachers to deliver higher quality materials to their students without any extra effort. It also creates a distraction-free environment for teachers, who can focus 100% on their students without worrying about taking notes or writing homework assignments during the lesson.



SIGN UP FOR FREE AT WWW.MUZIE.LIVE

Feedback from teachers and students has been integral to Muzie.Live's evolution. Can you share how community input has shaped the platform's features, like the introduction of the News Feed and the differentiation between Public and Private Whiteboards?

As I mentioned previously, one of the trickiest aspects of building software is ensuring you're meeting users' needs effectively. We rely heavily on feedback to keep us on the right track, and our Public and Private Whiteboard features are a great example of listening to our community and developing an elegant solution for a complex problem.

In Muzie, we allow teachers to host group lessons online, and one challenge with online groups is replicating some of the dynamics that are easy to achieve in person. Some of our users who were teaching group lessons wanted the ability to create a shared whiteboard for all students—useful for playing games, annotating scores, or sharing general topics with the whole class. Others wanted to share content with just one student at a time.

Public whiteboards allow for a single shared document between all participants, like a traditional classroom whiteboard seen by everyone. Private whiteboards, on the other hand, allow teachers to share content directly with specific students, and anything the student adds to their whiteboard remains private between them and the teacher—much like handing out individual pieces of paper in a physical classroom.

To take this concept even further, at the suggestion of some of our teachers, we built a feature called "Breakout Audio." This allows a teacher to speak privately with an individual or group of students within a larger group session, offering incredible flexibility and enabling teachers to conduct online lessons almost identically to how they would teach in person. Listening to our users has been critical for us to be able to design and implement the tools that they need to succeed.

With your deep involvement in music education and technology, where do you see the future of this intersection heading, especially considering the rapid advancements in digital learning environments?

As we mentioned, AI will play a huge role in the coming years when it comes to education technology. As AI tools improve, teachers and students will be able to leverage them to become more efficient, engaging, and organized than ever before.

I'm also very interested in advancements in virtual and augmented reality. I have been teaching lessons in VR for the last couple of years with great success. Students can enter a virtual classroom from anywhere in the world and interact in a completely new way. As these technologies become more accessible, the quality of education will increase dramatically across the board.

I'm incredibly excited to see where this journey takes us—and even more excited to be a part of shaping this future.

Lastly, drawing from your journey with Muzie.Live, what advice would you offer to aspiring entrepreneurs looking to innovate within the music education sector?

Learn how to pivot. The most important advice I can share is to love the process, not just the results, and to never be too attached to your own ideas. If I had never moved on from playing in a band or realized that my first product wasn't working as intended, we wouldn't be here today. As much as I poured my heart and soul into those endeavors, you have to be pragmatic and know when it's time to move on.

With Muzie, we've shifted our focus at least three times, and each time we were leaving behind years of work. But each pivot ultimately led to more success and new opportunities. It's important to stay adaptable and open to change.

I would also caution against reading too many articles about "overnight successes." They are rarely true. You need to be in this because you love what you do, not because you think it will make you rich or famous. Being an entrepreneur can lead to those things, but 99.9% of the time, it doesn't. I'm not saying this to discourage you, but to highlight the reality of what you're signing up for.

I didn't take a paycheck from my work for almost six years. I could have given up and taken a day job at any point, but my ability to pivot and persevere is what got me to where I am today.

Reflecting on my journey, it's clear that passion, adaptability, and a deep connection to both music and technology have driven Muzie.Live to where it is today. What started as a way to organize my own practice routine evolved into a platform that supports music educators and students around the world.

This journey hasn't been without its challenges, but each step—each pivot—has reinforced the belief that technology can enhance education when designed thoughtfully and with the end user in mind. Muzie.Live is continually evolving, shaped by our incredible community of teachers and students, and by a vision for what music education can be when paired with innovative tools. I'm excited for what the future holds, especially with advancements in AI and virtual learning environments.

For those aspiring to innovate in music education, my biggest piece of advice is to embrace the journey, learn to pivot, and be in it for the love of what you do. That's what has brought me here, and it's what will continue to shape Muzie.Live into the future.

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The questions for this interview were generated with the assistance of MusicalQ AI, showcasing how artificial intelligence can enrich human interactions and professional dialogue. ■

DINING WITH THE DIVA

COMBINING
PASSIONS AND
LOVE AS A CAREER
CHOICE



BY CHRISTINA LAMBERTI

DINING WITH THE DIVA: MY STORY

A few years ago, on a cold and foggy Christmas Eve, I unknowingly embarked on a journey that would blend two of my greatest passions—opera and fine dining. At the time, I was working for a catering company and had been hired as both the chef and set-up person for an event at a private home. It was a gathering of about 20 to 25 people from a Mercedes dealership, and I remember navigating a catering truck loaded with ovens, propane tanks, and coolers to the venue.

As I set up for the evening, I noticed a keyboard player preparing to play holiday music. Watching her sparked an idea: wouldn't it be fun to surprise everyone by singing? After dessert, I approached her and asked if she could play "O Holy Night." She agreed, and at 9:30 that evening, after all the desserts had been served, I turned around and began to sing.

The guests were flabbergasted. Phones came out, and everyone started filming. In that moment, I realized something extraordinary had happened. I had stumbled upon the magic of combining live performance with fine dining. That night, the seed for Dining with the Diva was planted.

Opera and food are natural companions, like red wine and Bolognese sauce. Both require a solid foundation of technique, whether it's learning to sing or mastering the art of cooking. But once you have those skills, the possibilities are endless.

With Dining with the Diva, I get to explore those possibilities. Each event is tailored to the specific needs of our hosts and their guests. From intimate gatherings with simple charcuterie boards to more elaborate menus featuring lasagna Bolognese and risotto, every detail is designed to delight the senses. And of course, no DWTD event is complete without our homemade tiramisu.



Although I perform much of the Italian repertoire, my heritage is actually Scottish and English. My wonderful voice teacher, Claudia Pinza, who was the daughter of the legendary bass Ezio Pinza, once suggested I adopt an Italian stage name. My dear friends Richard Fleishmann and David McGill proposed “Lamberti,” and I loved it.

While I learned about Italian cuisine from Claudia and her family, my grandmothers also inspired my cooking. They taught me about style, presentation, and the joy of sharing meals with others—lessons I carry into every DWTD event.

Preparing for these events is no small feat. From creating multi-course meals to performing long concert programs, the balance can be challenging. But Lars and I have found ways to make it work.

We often prepare certain dishes, like lasagna Bolognese, in advance, spending two days crafting the perfect pasta and sauce. Other dishes, like risotto, are prepared on-site, requiring more time and focus. Despite the challenges, these events are deeply rewarding. Watching our guests experience the joy of music and fine food makes all the effort worthwhile.

When it comes to the music, Lars and I create programs that blend what we love with what our guests request. From opera arias like “O mio babbino caro” to Broadway classics, jazz standards, and even tributes to 007 Bond films, our performances are as varied as the events themselves.

Lars, my husband and a classical guitarist, often performs guitar solos, while I sing with orchestral backing tracks that bring the grandeur of an opera house into someone’s living room.



One of the most memorable DWTD experiences was in Denmark, where we performed for a small house concert of about 40 guests. The Danish concept of “hygge”—a sense of coziness and warmth—captured the spirit of the evening perfectly. Seeing the tears in people’s eyes as they recognized a song close to their hearts was transformative for me as a performer. These intimate moments remind me why I do this: to connect, to move, and to share something meaningful with others.

Looking ahead, we are excited to expand Dining with the Diva. We plan to host intimate salon concerts in our New Jersey home, combining light fare with live performances for small groups. We also dream of adding more musicians and exploring regional Italian dishes for future events.

For anyone looking to combine their passions as we have, my advice is simple: love what you do and do what you love. Dream big, take chances, and never let anyone tell you it’s not possible. For us, Dining with the Diva has been an extraordinary journey of creativity, connection, and joy. We can’t wait to see where it takes us next.

— Christina Lamberti



<http://diningwiththediva.com>



Christina Lamberti is an acclaimed American mezzo-soprano recognized for her versatile repertoire and dynamic vocal presence. Beyond her stage career, Christina contributes to the New Jersey Association of Verismo Opera as a consultant and outreach coordinator, demonstrating her commitment to the operatic community. She is the founder of Dining with the Diva.



Lars Frandsen, graduate of the Royal Academy of Music in London, Yale University, and the Eastman School of Music, holds a doctoral degree in performance and literature. He was the assistant to the renowned lute player Paul O’Dette while at Eastman, where he also studied in master classes and doctoral seminars with equally renowned forte-pianist Malcolm Bilson.

Lars directs the classical guitar program at Brooklyn College at the City University of New York and is an adjunct professor of music at Seton Hall University in New Jersey.



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BY CHRISTOPHER TOBIN

EMOTIONAL WELLNESS



The Therapeutic Power of Songwriting: Using Creativity for Emotional Wellness



Every song carries the echo of emotion, weaving tales that resonate deeply with both creators and listeners. In the realm of music therapy, songwriting transcends its artistic boundaries to become a reflective mirror, offering clients a powerful tool to process and express their emotions. As a music therapist, I have witnessed the transformative potential of songwriting, as it provides clients with a safe space to articulate their inner landscapes, facilitating personal growth and emotional healing.

THE ROLE OF EMOTIONS IN SONGWRITING

Songwriting in music therapy is more than

just putting words to music; it is an intricate process of exploring emotions and shaping them into a tangible form. Emotions serve as the foundation for this creative journey.

By incorporating tools like the Berklee Emotions Map of Music into sessions, I help clients draw connections between their feelings and specific musical elements such as melody, harmony, and rhythm. For example, a minor key may evoke sadness or introspection, while an upbeat tempo might channel joy or energy. These tools guide clients toward a deeper understanding of how music can mirror and amplify their emotional states.

TOP 10 THERAPEUTIC GOALS ACHIEVED THROUGH SONGWRITING

Songwriting offers a multidimensional approach to therapy, addressing emotional, cognitive, physical, and social goals. Below are some of the most significant benefits:

1. Emotional Expression

Songwriting enables clients to delve into a wide range of emotions, finding the words and sounds to express what they may struggle to articulate otherwise. Tools like the Berklee Emotions Map help guide this process.

2. Cognitive Development

Crafting lyrics and melodies requires mental engagement, enhancing cognitive skills such as memory, attention, and planning. This is particularly beneficial for clients recovering from brain injuries or managing neurological conditions.

3. Speech and Language Skills

Writing and singing lyrics support language development, helping clients improve their ability to articulate complex thoughts and emotions.

4. Social Skills Enhancement

Collaborative songwriting sessions promote communication and teamwork, fostering stronger interpersonal skills and group cohesion.

5. Motor Skills Coordination

Playing instruments or writing lyrics by hand strengthens fine and gross motor skills, which can be especially beneficial for individuals with physical challenges or developmental delays.

6. Problem-Solving Skills

The creative challenges inherent in songwriting encourage clients to think critically and find innovative solutions, building resilience and adaptability.

7. Self-Esteem and Confidence

Completing a song can be a significant confidence booster, instilling a sense of accomplishment and inspiring clients to take on new creative challenges.

8. Personal Insight and Reflection

The introspective nature of songwriting allows clients to explore their inner world, gaining deeper insights into their thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

9. Stress Relief

The act of creating music can be meditative and soothing, offering clients a constructive outlet for managing stress and anxiety.

10 Cultural Expression and Connection

Songwriting provides a platform for clients to explore their cultural identities or connect with other cultures, fostering a sense of belonging and shared humanity.



THE SCIENCE BEHIND THE ART

Research supports the effectiveness of songwriting in music therapy. Studies have shown that engaging in musical activities stimulates multiple areas of the brain, promoting emotional regulation, cognitive function, and overall well-being. Additionally, the collaborative nature of songwriting fosters a sense of community and shared purpose, which is vital for mental health.

LOOKING FORWARD

As a music therapist, I continually explore new ways to integrate songwriting into my practice. Tools like the Berklee Emotions Map of Music provide structure and inspiration, but the heart of this work lies in the unique stories each client brings to the process. No two songs are alike, just as no two therapeutic journeys are the same.

Songwriting is a uniquely powerful modality in music therapy, combining emotional expression with creative exploration. By transforming feelings into lyrics and melodies, clients embark on a journey of self-discovery and healing. As they craft their songs, they gain not only a deeper understanding of themselves but also the confidence and resilience to face life's challenges. For me, witnessing this transformation is the most rewarding part of being a music therapist.

*Chris Tobin, MT-BC
Board Certified Music Therapist
Adjunct Professor of Music Therapy
Mercyhurst University
Erie, PA*



COLLABORATING WITH US: ENGAGE, SHARE, AND ELEVATE YOUR EXPERTISE



MusicalQ is a vibrant platform advocating for music and musicians worldwide. It offers professionals the chance to share insights, engage with peers, and contribute to the evolution of music education and performance. Here's how you can collaborate with MusicalQ through the platform, the monthly blog, and the magazine:

This is a dynamic space where educators, performers, and scholars can share their expertise and ideas. By collaborating on the platform, you have the opportunity to contribute articles, research findings, lesson plans, and innovative teaching methods. Whether you're an established professional or an emerging voice in the field, your contributions can help shape the future of music education and performance. The platform encourages a collaborative approach, fostering a community of professionals who are passionate about music and education.

HOW TO COLLABORATE WITH MUSICALQ

- **Writing for the Monthly Blog**

The MusicalQ monthly blog is your platform to share insights, experiences, and perspectives on current trends, challenges, and innovations in music education, performance, and research. This blog is accessible to professionals at all levels, offering an opportunity to present fresh takes on established subjects or introduce new concepts. Whether you're discussing emerging trends or reflecting on personal experiences, the blog is your space to inspire and educate a diverse audience.

- **Publishing in the MusicalQ Magazine**

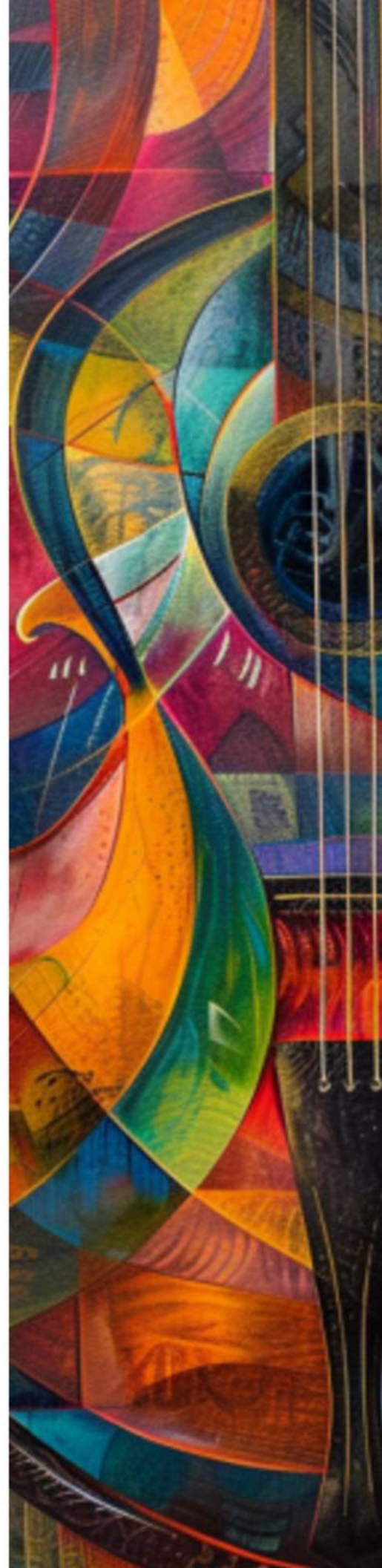
If you're interested in providing more in-depth analysis, consider contributing to the MusicalQ Magazine. This platform is ideal for longer articles, interviews, and features that explore complex topics in music education and performance. The magazine is committed to publishing content that informs, challenges, and inspires its readers, encouraging thoughtful discourse on the future of music. By writing for the magazine, you can help shape the conversations that will influence the music industry for years to come.

- **Advocating for Music and Musicians Worldwide**

MusicalQ is dedicated to promoting music and supporting musicians on a global scale. Your collaboration helps amplify the voices of musicians and educators, ensuring that music education remains relevant and accessible. By contributing, you become part of a larger movement advocating for the importance of music in our culture and educational systems.

How to Get Involved

To collaborate with MusicalQ, start by reaching out with your ideas or proposals. Whether you're interested in writing a blog post, contributing to the magazine, or sharing resources, the MusicalQ team is eager to hear from you. Submissions are reviewed for quality, relevance, and originality, ensuring that all content aligns with MusicalQ's mission to advance music education and performance.



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