

Sing the Music

Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. wrote this essay to honor the 80th birthday of William Warfield, who is one of the great Classical singers and pedagogues of our time.

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All too often, when today's supposedly literate American, or European recites a poem or sings a Classical song, one hears the notes, but not the music. I witnessed a simple but elegant attack on that problem some years back, in William Warfield's coaching of a young singer. The matter addressed in that session was the strophic form of a well-known Negro Spiritual.

The general principle of so-called interpretation involved, was the same repeatedly emphasized by Pablo Casals: "always variation." It is the same principle which distinguishes the conducting of the late Wilhelm Furtwängler, sometimes described as "performing between the notes."

In the instance of any composition by a great Classical composer, the notes provided by the text are the clearly intended selections of carefully considered reflection. Those selections which, generally speaking, the performer must not defy. However, those notes as such remain merely symbols; they are the footprints of a creative process of composition. The finished score provides the footprints; it is that creative process which the performer must replicate within himself or herself. That replicated creative process must then serve as the controlling agency which governs the way in which the performer attacks each note from the standpoint of that creative process. It is that creative connection among not only individual notes, but among the polyphonic voices each uttering the notes, which is what the mind of the audience must hear.

To my present knowledge, the earliest trace of formal reference to such principles comes from a contemporary of Plato's Academy, the Sanskrit philologist Panini, whose work emphasizes the pre-eminence of the verb over the noun, and points out the similar significance of vocalization respecting an understanding of the sung-spoken language. In modern times, we have evidence, in the stone of the Florence Cathedral, of the methods of Florentine *bel canto* voice-training and registration. The principles for Florentine *bel canto* vocalization in Classical Italian were documented by Leonardo da Vinci.

Sometimes, the legacy of Classical singing of poetry can be glimpsed lurking, vestigially, in the background of even

platitudinous utterances of contemporary university graduates, even here in the cultural flatland known as today's U.S. itself. The very idea of composing either Classical poetry, or song, in any language, in today's classroom definitions of pure prose, without hearing a lawful quality of *bel canto* vocalization in the background, is a too-frequently demonstrated contradiction in terms. True poets, by definition, sing when they speak or compose; otherwise, they are not poets. True poets, and singers, vocalize in their mind, even as they appear to walk the streets silently, probably even much of the time they are sleeping.

Albert Einstein, performing on the violin for a 1920s religious service in the famous Jewish temple in Berlin, is typical of the great scientists of all modern times. The notion of a great creative scientist who is not also a practitioner or at least a cultured audience for Classical musical composition, is a contradiction in terms. This is no coincidence. The principle of creativity underlying validatable discoveries of universal physical principle, and that underlying the generation and replication of creative artistic discoveries, are the same faculty, as this is sometimes expressed in one profession, sometimes another, sometimes in both. The point to be made is not of a merely technical-professional nature; there is, as the Negro Spiritual reflects this, a deep moral principle underlying this connection.

It is said, in *Genesis* 1, that man and woman are each made equally in the image of the Creator of the universe, and set apart from and above all other species, by a special power which qualifies mankind to rule over all other things in this Creation. That is no matter of mere blind faith. It is a provable principle of physical science, for example. This is the same principle which is expressed in all those forms of artistic composition and performance known rightly as "Classical." Return to the way in which William Warfield coached that younger singer in the method for presenting the progressive succession of strophes in that Spiritual.

He showed the singer and the others present, how the utterance of the strophes must vary, to lead the mind of the audience (and also the singer) to the idea of that song as a whole, an idea to envelope the mind of both the audience and the singer in the conclusion of the song. Variation? Yes! But, how shall the variation be ordered? What is the principle

which sets the right choice of variation apart from a merely arbitrary one? Recite the concluding line of the strophe, hear the possible variations, and then suggest, and also demonstrate which ordering serves to bring the audience, at the end of the song, to the right idea.

To compare this Spiritual with a typical Classical song, try the “*Ungeduld*” from Franz Schubert’s *Die Schöne Müllerin*. In all the Classical Lied, from Mozart’s *Das Veilchen* on, the same principle of variation pervades the intent of both composer and able performer. There is no infallible formal rule for such variations. The proper variation is determined in a function of the individual human mind which lies above and beyond a merely formal logic. It lies within those natural potentials of the individual human mind which set every person above the beasts, as made in the image of the Creator. It is the power of the mind by means of which an individual person is able to discover a validatable universal physical principle. It is also the power to re-enact an original discovery of such a principle by someone who long preceded us. Thus, just as the great composer discovers an idea reflected in his or her original Classical artistic composition, so the cultivated mind and skills of an accomplished performing artist bring the original composition back to life for both the performer and the audience.

In both creative physical scientific work, and in great art, the principle involved is the same. No great discoveries of universal principles, either in science or art, could ever be conveyed by formal logic, or any other symbolic mechanism. Discoveries of validatable qualities of universal principles, whether in science or art, can be conveyed only in the same way the original discoveries were generated, by cognition, an act of cognition which occurs entirely within the sovereign creative powers of the individual human mind. The audience for that discovery can capture that idea only by re-enacting the original discovery. The sharing of such knowledge, shared in that way, is the characteristic feature of all valid ideas within the domain of social relations, whether the ideas we associate with physical science, or art.

So, in scientific education, the school or university does not tell the student what to believe. It guides the pupils to re-enact the original discovery, and the method of validation of that discovery. It is the same in artistic training. That is the difference between the victim of textbook education, the poor student who says, “I have learned,” and the student whose re-enactment of the discovery and validation of universal principles permits that student to say, “I know.”

That is the proper function of all educational programs, to guide the pupil into those re-enactments of validatable original discoveries of principles, the discoveries which warrant the pupil’s report, “I know.” The students who benefit from that kind of education, rather than the textbook variety, may be described as persons of cultivated minds. By re-experiencing the great discoveries of mankind’s past, the cognitive

potential within them is exercised. The divine spark of reason, which the Creator has given to all persons, is brought to fruition as the cultivated, knowing mind. The brief span of individual mortal life, then becomes a permanent personal identity in the eternity of all valid discoveries of principle, past and future. This is so for art, as it is for knowledge and application of universal physical principles.

So, behold the cultivated art of the great artist.

The validatable universal physical principles mankind acquires through cognition, pertain to man’s mastery over the universe in which we live. Art pertains to those principles of social relations, on which we depend for the spirit of cooperation which allows us to employ discoveries of physical principles for the general good. Classical art, as defined in European civilization by the Classical tradition of ancient Greece, addresses those cognitive principles of the individual mind on which effective cooperation depends, on which the sense of individual human identity depends. Thus Percy Shelley defined poets as the true legislators of mankind. The function of the composition and performance of great Classical art, is to cultivate the creative powers of the minds of both the artists and the audience, alike, to foster the development of those better people who leave the performance of great art better, more optimistic, happier people, than they were before that performance.

In what are called the non-plastic forms of Classical art, the difference between the bare, mechanistic text of deductive logic, and art, lies in those passions which are reflected in the verb-centered features of polyphonic, sung prosody. As we should have recognized from our own personal experience, as individuals, from the sovereign act of cognitive discovery or re-enactment of validatable universal principles, all validatable discoveries occur as an act of passion. We experience the passion of concentration needed to effect the discovery, the passion which impels us to break through barriers to cognitive insight.

Thus, in conveying such a discovery to another, especially an artistic discovery, it is indispensable that that special kind of cognitive passion which Plato identified in the Greek as *agapē* be the medium which permeates and controls the mere dots of words and notes. That expression of *agapē*, as passion, through the polyphonic voices, registrations, and other colorations of prosody, is that accompaniment of what is otherwise bare text, which makes the idea expressed by the composition an intelligible experience for the performing artist, and for the cognitive insight of the audience.

It is the great artists who lead their students and audiences to locate within themselves the cognitive insights necessary to choose the right choice of ordering of variation, who produce in their students and the audiences, the kind of qualitatively better people which the improvement of society demands. So, the singers and others who followed William Warfield’s coaching in that Spiritual, left all more optimistic and happier people than a short time before.