

Follow-up

AUTUMN 2003



Sing your own song in your own special way

My parents were most concerned that I should learn some socially acceptable musical skill, so I slaved away at the piano for 12 years or so. I guess I was pretty good at it, completing all the exams by the time I was fourteen. However, in spite of the numerous “performances” I gave, the cups I won, and all the certificates, for all that daily “15 minutes of scales and 30 minutes for the pieces,” I have had little desire to play the piano — let alone perform on it — since then.

If not the piano or the violin, maybe you have childhood memories of enjoying singing but at some point being told to “be quiet

and mouth the words.” Whoever it was who told you this was deemed to know better, so you obeyed and obeyed and obeyed. Now you are older. Do you still believe them? Is it time to revisit some of them?

Music is part of our most early experience and an intrinsic part of most human existence. The need to make sounds comes before spoken language. Specific music may have come into our lives through parental or teacher influence. Music stirs us with a variety of feelings. It can be connected to specific events: the first record bought – *Georgia on my Mind* (Ray Charles), a first love – “All I Have to Do is Dream” (Everly

Brothers), a TV show – “Mars the Bringer of War” (from Holst’s *Planets* – strange choice that one!), an important moment – “I’ve Never Had It So Good” (Barbra Streisand), end of the school year – we always sang “Jerusalem” and I still love it, especially sung by Billy Bragg.

Is it not wonderful that there is so much music out there to entangle us in its grasp? Each of us is able to passionately enjoy our selection while completely mystifying those who live with us with our choices. I am grateful to our son, who when he lived with us had an outstanding CD collection of to-our-ears “modern” music. As Stokes¹ and his colleagues say, our “private collection of music is highly evocative, has sets of place and boundaries — demonstrating our profusion of identities and the selves we possess.” (Well, they are academics, but you get their drift!)

In almost every case, a “good tune” seems to be a prerequisite. We seem to want and need to be able to remember, often to the extent that for some music, the first chord or two is all we need to hear to recognise the melody. I am sure you can think of some of them, like Beethoven’s Fifth, Elvis’s “Wise Men Say,” and the Beatles’ “Hey Jude,” to name a few.

Send us your list by November 30th of the 5 pieces of music you would have to have if you were stranded on a desert island with an endless supply of batteries ...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

One entry will be picked at random for a prize CD – your choice of title. We will also publish some of the selections submitted by November 30, 2003.

Send us your list on-line at www.janedurant.com/desertisland.htm, or fax us this page with your entry filled in.

For up-to-date info,
check the Web site
regularly — we
update it at the
start of each
month.

So back to that music you still only listen to and don't participate in. Revisit some of those old authority figures you have allowed to stay with you to this point in time, never questioning the validity of their comments. Other people in our lives have played a more positive role in our learning and development. Follow their inspiration and try to take a stab at something you always wanted to do but were afraid to try. As Susan Jeffers says in her best-selling book of the same name: *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway*.²

I know I can play the piano, but it does not give me the thrill that using my voice well does, either speaking or singing. You never know, in spite of earlier frowns and requests, you may find you can:

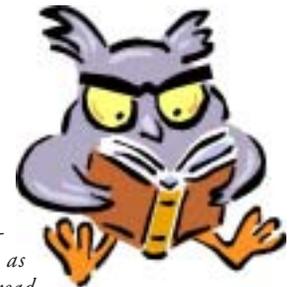
- Sing in tune
- Hold a tune
- Have a two-octave range
- Make a sound you never knew existed within you (and nobody runs away covering their ears ...)
- Feel better for it.

Jane took the plunge this year, found an inspiring teacher, and is on a(nother) journey of exploration to another land. Tina Turner, look out!

¹ Stokes, Martin, Webber, Jonathan and Ardener, Shirley, Eds. *Ethnicity, Identity and Music; The Musical Construction of Place (Ethnic Identities)*, Berg Publishing, 1994, page 3.

² Jeffers, Susan, *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway*, Ballantine Books, 1988.

Alliance for Learning — www.alllearn.org



Over the past couple of years, I have greatly enjoyed being involved in learning the “distance way.” In 2000, I had the wonderful experience of attending Oxford University as part of my SFU Master's degree program in Liberal Studies. Since then, I have been on the Alliance for Learning mailing list and enrolled last year in “Islam and the West,” which was more than illuminating, as you can imagine.

Soon I will be taking “Understanding Beethoven – the Mind of the Master” (not too much singing, but still in sync with the theme of this issue of *Follow-up*). I encourage you to explore the wonderful selection of programs offered to anyone with

access to the Internet. The following is taken from the Alliance for Learning's home page:

AllLearn, a not-for-profit distance learning venture among Oxford, Stanford, and Yale Universities, was formed in September 2000 to provide the highest quality, college-level online courses and educational offerings to alumni of these three great institutions, as well as to other adult learners.

We deliver a rich catalog of arts and sciences courses authored by faculty from our member universities. Each course is taught by an expert instructor skilled in providing insight into the subject matter as well as in guiding students through the online educational experience. AllLearn courses free you from the need to be in the same room as your classmates and your

instructor, and eliminate most restrictions of time as well. Students can read, think, and learn at their own pace—and according to their own schedule—while sharing a common course-taking experience with other like-minded individuals. Take the Course Tour to find out what it's like to take an online course, and visit our [Course Catalog](#) to see our exciting array of courses.

Our courses are complemented by our [Library](#), which includes our [Academic Directories](#) and [Learning Guides](#), the richest, most reliably excellent study resources anywhere on the Web. Created by academic specialists from our member universities, the Academic Directories bring together the best academic websites across a range of subjects, evaluated and reviewed for your convenience. Our Learning Guides offer a series of resources—books, online text, lectures, websites, and more—that allow you to study a specific topic on your own.

Courses are not for credit, but we can provide confirmation of enrollment or completion if you wish. Our students are located in about 30 countries, with ages equally distributed from 30 to 65, though we have younger and older students as well. Most of our students to date have been alumni of our schools, but we welcome non-alumni as well.

Check it out—it is always even more fun to be involved with a friend!

Follow-up is published occasionally for clients and friends of Jane Durant. We hope it helps you get better results for yourselves and others. If you would like the opportunity to be part of a future issue, or if you would like to receive a copy, please click on the web link, send an e-mail, phone, or write to me at:

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