

My Musical Canon

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Music has always been a driving force in my life, ever since I began to learn to play the piano at the age of six. I never really embraced classical music until I started to play it myself. Since then, it has inspired and changed me. Music, of all sorts, has been here for me throughout my whole life. I love books and reading, but they have never provided the emotional connection that music has.

1. Claude Debussy: *La Fille Aux Cheveux de Lin*

Debussy was a French composer who lived from 1862 to 1918. This piece is one of his preludes, written in 1910. Its style, and that of Debussy's other works, combines the romanticism of the period with the newly emerging modernism movement. When I learned to play this piece on the piano in high school, it was the first time that I really felt emotionally connected with the music I was playing. Instead of learning the piece so that I could please my piano teacher, I wanted to play all of the notes perfectly, so I could express my feelings through the music.

2. Rilo Kiley: *Science vs Romance*

I love this band's music for its quirky style and poetic lyrics. I especially like this song for its lyrics that question the relationship between the logical and emotional sides of human nature

I used to think if I could realize
I'd die
then I would be a lot nicer
used to believe in a lot more
now I just see straight ahead

that's not to say I don't have
good times
but as for my days
I spend them waiting

crash sites keep me up at night
impact division it splits in two
directly underneath you

as for those things (as for those

things)
that act as markers in your life
but in between (but in between)
you can't remember
and so it seems (and so it
seems)
that you've grown up and over
me (up and over me)
and these silly things (these sill
things)
I like to dwell on

test sites keep me up at night
chainlink and meters
I talk to you
it's cold out there

but I'm telling you
I'm lonely too

facts versus romance
you go and call yourself the
boss
but we're not robots inside a
grid

text versus romance
you go and add it all you want
still we're not robots inside a
grid

zeros and ones

3. Paul Creston: *Concertino for Marimba*

Although there are not many concertos written for marimba players, the Creston Marimba Concerto is well-known in the percussion world. Paul Creston, a Sicilian-American composer, who lived from 1906 to 1985, is a celebrated modern composer who wrote works for often overlooked instruments. As a percussionist myself, I always dreamed of being able to learn this piece. I finally got the chance as a sophomore in high school, and I was even asked to solo with a local ensemble. This experience was one of the more challenging ones of my musical career, but it gave me confidence that I had never had before.

4. Herbie Hancock: *Chameleon*

Hancock was born in 1940 and is one of the most influential jazz musicians of the 20th century. His music, which mixes funk and classic jazz, is so much fun to listen to and to play. My dad loves jazz music, so I grew up listening to music like this. It is one of the reasons why I went on to learn an instrument and to make music such a big part of my life.

5. Igor Stravinsky: *L'Oiseau de feu (Firebird)*

Stravinsky was a Russian composer who lived from 1882 to 1971. His works, including ballets and symphonies, among other things, were mainly written in a modern, neoclassical style. This piece is incredibly enjoyable to listen to. Its mix of cacophony and beautiful harmonies are timeless. The finale, which we will listen to, is my favorite part. This was the first piece that introduced me to how powerful the sound of a full orchestra can be.

6. Joni Mitchell: "The Circle Game"

Yesterday a child came out to wonder
Caught a dragonfly inside a jar
Fearful when the sky was full of thunder
And tearful at the falling of a star
[And the seasons they go round and round
And the painted ponies go up and down
We're captive on the carousel of time

We can't return we can only look behind
From where we came
And go round and round and round
In the circle game]

Then the child moved ten times round the seasons
Skated over ten clear frozen streams
Words like, when you're older, must appease him
And promises of someday make his dreams
[Refrain]

Sixteen springs and sixteen summers gone now
Cartwheels turn to car wheels thru the town
And they tell him,
Take your time, it won't be long now
Till you drag your feet just to slow the circles down
[Refrain]
So the years spin by and now the boy is twenty
Though his dreams have lost some grandeur coming true
There'll be new dreams, maybe better dreams and plenty
Before the last revolving year is through
[Refrain]

I have found this piece to be very calming in my times of stress. It reminds me that life is short, and I should appreciate my life as it is in its current state before it moves on. Although slightly melancholy, this song's message and story is written very poetically.

7. Gustav Holst: "Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity"

This piece is part of a suite, honoring seven of the planets (not including Earth), written in the 1910s. They each have a different mood, and I find Jupiter's to be the most uplifting. *The Planets* was one of the first pieces that I was able to play in a full symphonic orchestra, and it was amazing to be a part of the sound that created such beautiful music.

8. The Beatles: "Blackbird"

Blackbird singing in the dead of
night
Take these broken wings and
learn to fly
All your life
You were only waiting for this
moment to arise

Black bird singing in the dead of
night
Take these sunken eyes and

learn to see
all your life
you were only waiting for this
moment to be free

Blackbird fly, Blackbird fly
Into the light of the dark black
night.

Blackbird fly, Blackbird fly
Into the light of the dark black

night.

Blackbird singing in the dead of
night
Take these broken wings and
learn to fly
All your life

You were only waiting for this
moment to arise,
You were only waiting for this
moment to arise,
You were only waiting for this
moment to arise

Although somewhat repetitive, the lyrics to this song are meaningful and inspired. Meant to be directed towards a specific black woman, this song encourages the listener to branch out, looking past the hardships she has endured and free herself from the damage done to her past. As it was written during the peak of the American civil rights movement, one can see the poignancy this song has.

9. Frederic Chopin: *Nocturne #1 in C Sharp Minor, Op. 27*

Chopin was a Polish composer who lived from 1810 to 1849. He is known as one of the best Romantic composers. I have found that the beauty of this song speaks for itself. All of Chopin's works are incredible, so it was very difficult to choose one to share with you.

10. Modest Mussorgsky: *Pictures at an Exhibition*

This ten-movement piece was written by Mussorgsky in 1874 and then was later transcribed for orchestra by Ravel. It is meant to set music to a set of paintings that Mussorgsky observed at the "Academy of Fine Arts" in St Petersburg. The finale, "The Grand Gate at Kiev," which I am playing for you, is a brilliant example of the full sound a great orchestra can create. I have performed this piece on several occasions, and I love its mixture of fun, gloomy, uplifting, and inspirational passages.