

Robin Bearss

Prof. Vaughn

Intermediate Composition (Honors)

9/11/16

**DEPTH** not *length*. Make the specific speak for the general “Knowledge is power” Assonance

OUTLINE:

Intro- What is a literacy/multiple literacies? What all do I do with music?

P1- Intense Time #1 Talent Show

-Describe, how this built confidence

P2- Intense Time #2 Marching Band

-helped me to branch out and make new friends, people I can relate to, more confidence ( how do I feel?)

P4- How did this LEAD to other literacies that I have?

P3- Why does this matter? How does this influence the other literacies that I have?

Conclusion- Say the main point again

“Artists- musicians, painters, writers, poets- always seemed to have had the most accurate perception of what is really going on around them, not the official version or the popular perception of contemporary life.” -Billy Joel

What is a literacy? It is something that you are proficient at, and that takes some sort of developed skill to master/accomplish. A good example of literacy would be the written word; reading and writing. It takes a certain amount of schooling to be able to form words and sentences, add the punctuation, etc. However, a literacy does not have to be centered around the alpha-numeric languages. It could be anything: reading body language, analyzing movies and books, creating art, surfing, caring for animals, or even baking. Literacy does not have to involve the written word at all. Along this same tract of thought, one can have more than one literacy at the same time. For instance, I play the clarinet, and also can type this sentence. I cannot, of course, preform both of these tasks at the same time. But because I learn how to do one does not mean I suddenly forget how to do the other. My musical literacy is what I will be analyzing and delving into in this paper. I will analyze how this literacy led to other acquired literacies, and how these literacies affected my life and future. I will also discuss why literacies matter. My literacy of music is simple in the fact that I am still “reading” something. I read the notes and dynamic markings on a staff. My literacy in music is diverse- I sing, and play both the piano and clarinet.

I was feeling very nervous- sweaty palms and neck, shortness of breath, the feeling of always having just a little too much saliva in the back of your throat. I was staring at the door that led backstage when my dear friend (who also happened to be one of the hosts for the evening) came up to me and said one of the most inspirational things I’ve ever heard. He said “Remember: performance is 95% confidence, and 5% talent. And you’ve got the talent.” I will

never forget those sentences. In that moment they were just incredibly kind words from a friend, but over the years they have become a sort of personal mantra.

I remember staring at the curtains. I knew I had to walk through them very soon, I could almost feel them gliding across my hands, the velvet so soft and yet fuzzy at the same time. The scarlet color both intimidating and comforting. I had touched these curtains a thousand times before, helping backstage with the plays and setting up for band and choir concerts, but this time was different. I felt worlds away from all that. I felt suddenly vulnerable, exposed. The skirt I was wearing felt too thin, too flowy. It was much different than the long jeans I was used to wearing. The makeup on my face felt too heavy. No one wants to hear me sing, why am I even up here? This incoherent thought- interpreted as a feeling of nervous embarrassment- cycled through my mind, adding to my discomfort. I hadn't paid much attention to the words my friend had said earlier, but they came back to me and taunted me as I lost control of my self-confidence. Failure at a time like this felt silly to me. I was used to passing every test that was put before me. Surpassing every challenge. Something about being along on a stage with everyone looking at me took all my determination away for some reason. Just then the hosts announced my name and the title of the piece I was singing. I could not think of a single word that I needed to sing.

I pushed my way through the thick hanging curtains and toward the microphone. Grasping it with both hands, I waited for the sound guy to do his thing. The opening chords for "Someone Like You" by Adele filled the auditorium. I peered into the crowd, trying to distinguish faces behind the piercing stage lights. In retrospect it was probably good that I didn't end up spotting anyone and psyching myself out. I heard the series of chords that signaled my entrance. Everything else fell away. I opened my mouth, and sang. I was aware- somewhere in my mind- that there were other people present, but I was not singing for them. I was singing for

me. To show myself that I could do whatever I wanted, and that I wouldn't let my anxiety get in my way. To me, music is a way to express your emotions. When I sang at that talent show, I could feel everything that Adele felt as she wrote and sang that song. It's similar to the feelings you get when reading a touching novel or watching a horror film. You empathize with the characters and feel certain emotions according to the events taking place, even though you aren't really participating in any of them. I ended up forgetting to sing the last bout of the chorus, and so instead randomly improvised on "ooh". Although I didn't do exactly as planned, I didn't let it get to me and finished strong. The music stopped a few seconds after my voice. I could breathe correctly again. It was very quiet for a couple moments and then the second host (whom also happened to be the boy I had a crush on at the time) took the microphone and said very softly "...and wasn't that beautiful." It made me feel like a different person.

Often times when I feel strong emotions I will engage in musical activities. I play or sing songs that align with my mood (eg: sad, angry, elated). When I am finished with a song I am usually a bit calmer/more content than when I started. Feeling things in a song that I identify with makes me feel justified. Oppositely, feeling things that oppose my current mood help me to move on from an even that has shaken me and motivate myself to focus on something else.

Looking around and feeling such intense feelings of love for those around me I could cry. Those are the kind of moments I live for. There's something about making something beautiful with other people that allows one to feel nothing but pure joy, if for only a moment. The chills that accompany the perfect descant, or the minor key change.

Becoming a better person and accepting myself through band and choir both in HS and college is why I think that everyone should find something they are passionate about and never let go.

Literacies are important, and help us excel both in that specific field and others. Such as social settings.

When I stood at the top of those stairs and watched five people fly into the stadium, I was terrified. I was thinking about how I was going to remember my music and march to the right spot at the same time, while also being in front of twenty thousand people (it felt like that many). As soon as the whistle blew, just like with the talent show, everything else is put on the backburner. When I march with the band, it feels like we are all connected. All playing the same song. All marching the same field. All hearing the same beat. Everyone's notes all aligning together to create one huge sound that fills the audience's ears and makes them feel things.

Music and other literacies are a great way to expand your knowledge of yourself and become more comfortable in your own skin. Whether it be writing by yourself in your room, using your own ideas and imagination, or playing a sport with a team and working together to score points. Developing literacies is an important part of anyone's... well, development. It is a way to convey feelings to one another. For example, playing a succession of notes that create a certain tone of a tune that makes the members of an audience apt to feel a specific feeling according to those sounds. And this was all planned by the composer. Writing music is yet another literacy, different even from reading it.

My literacy of music is multi-faceted. In that I have some sub-literacies within it. I know how to read the music and sing the notes, but I also know how to breathe and make my fingers move so that the same note resonates from an instrument. I know how to move my body and anticipate when the beat will happen so that I am in time (both when marching and dancing). I know how to listen to music, and pick out the different parts in a song, or the different beats or

counter rhythms. All these skills are literacies in of themselves, but come together to create a much more profound literacy of music. (CONCLUSION?)

“Textual production, then, is informed by practice and processes associated offered up by the immediate setting as well as practices and processes repurposed from memorials texts, texts involved with previous encounters, and projected texts, texts involved in anticipated events.”

(PAGE 160 of WaW)

“I imagine that one of the biggest troubles with colleges is there are too many distractions, too much panty-raiding, fraternities, and boola-boola and all of that.” (PAGE 126 of WaW)

Music is what I use to de-stress. It is very important for me to be able to do this so I can continue working and not wear myself down. If someone has nothing in their day to make them look forward to it or feel like they are accomplishing something, they will get discouraged and give up. Band and singing with my sorority help me to stay on track with school, and other things. I will take breaks from things I have to do to listen to a few songs. After this I will continue working on whatever project it is I am toiling over with a rejuvenated mind.

Music has influenced my life by inspiring me with confidence; it gave me a positive filter to look at the world through. Just like glasses, I don't wear them all the time, but when I do everything seems a lot clearer and more focused. In the band I have chances to play for sports events, parades, and concerts. I sing songs with my friends. Music impacts a lot of things, including some of my other literacies. When I listen to music, I listen to a song the whole way through to get the main concept of the lyrics and hear all the parts at once. Then, I listen again and take all the apart from each other and listen to them separately. I analyze the lyrics for

hidden meanings and rhymes. This, coincidentally, is the same way that I analyze poetry. Sight-reading music (playing a song I have never seen before all the way through) has helped me be able to take directions and roll with them. I can do things in an orderly fashion if they are given to me in an ordered and organized manner (like notes).

## Works Cited

<<http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/musicians.html>>