



COMMUNITY SERVICE

“Music from the Heart”

Anonymous
Caltech

THE GREATEST JOY OF MUSIC IS to share it with others. Unfortunately, the pleasure of performing is often forgotten when players become more concerned with the technicalities and notes. I also once thought that I knew all the important keys to successful piano playing: practice, technique, dedication, and a love for what I do. Focused on the details, I lost sight of my audience.

During my sophomore year, my friend invited me to join “Music from the Heart,” a group that showcased its musical talents to senior citizens. Although I accepted the invitation to support her, I began to regret my choice as the first performance approached. Not knowing how the seniors would respond to my performance, especially when I made a mistake, performing before the seniors became a terrifying thought.

Although my first performance went smoothly, it was hard to know whether the seniors enjoyed the pieces or the performance. While the group performed, the seniors would talk to each other, pausing to clap



at the end of each piece. Trying to impress the audience, I eventually grew accustomed to preparing a showy piece as the monthly performance approached.

So used to this monthly routine, I doubted that this performance would be different from the previous ones when I was ready to perform my favorite piece one summer day. While waiting for my turn, I glanced around the room, noting with some uneasiness the growing number of seniors gathered around the piano. Amidst the crowd of chattering seniors, one woman's rapt attention to the performance caught my interest. She greeted each performer with a wide toothy smile and made a small comment about the composition. Uncertain of her expectations, I watched for her reaction when I rose to introduce my piece, "Clair de Lune" by Claude Debussy.

"Ooh, I love that song," was all she said in response.

A smile crossed my face when I discovered that she shared my enthusiasm for the composition. To demonstrate to her how much I enjoyed the song, I played my best to convey what made this moonlight song so special to me. My minor concerns on technicalities slowly dissipated as the song progressed. All that mattered then was playing the song I loved as well as I could. For the first time, I felt contented with my performance, undisturbed by mistakes.

The performance was far from perfect. However, none of the seniors commented that the rhythm was too slow or the notes were wrong like the audition judges would normally do. Although they still chattered softly during the performance, they all smiled and clapped. A few of them would say that the song was lovely. They appreciated my efforts to entertain them and eagerly asked the group to return soon. Just the delighted smile on the woman's face made the performance worthwhile.

It was the seniors' appreciation for what I did that brought them back to the piano each month, and my love for what I did that drew me to it. The monthly performance was not just a musical showcase; it was my chance to give back to the community and to help enrich the seniors' life. The true joy in my life is not just sharing music, but devoting myself to community services as a volunteer.