

Concept for Musical/Play - Non-Chord Tones

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This is an off-the-top-of-my-head concept I had for a drama production. It is heavily inspired by my flash fiction piece “Passing Tones in Parallel”. Was included in a script-writing portfolio.

At a well-known arts high school, Michelle does not know anyone when she first transfers in because she entered the school from overseas. She does not have any roommates in the two-person complex, much to her relief.

She does not get the chance to meet anyone else in the school because of her shyness and because of her newest writing project, a play that she wants produced within her high school by their esteemed drama troupe. Because some girls from the drama troupe take a liking to Michelle, they pledge their support for her goal to become the playwright of the school production and potentially make it big.

Because of the popularity of the art school, every dorm room is fully occupied except for that of Michelle. But an up-and-coming pianist very famous in his own country comes to the art school to expand his horizons, and he is assigned to Michelle's dorm. Michelle is distressed as she does not feel comfortable living with a male she does not know, but the school administration assures her that the boy is not of danger.

It becomes apparent, through Michelle's interactions with the new transfer student, that the boy, registered in the school as “Amadeus” (Michelle eventually calls him “Ami”), is a genius. From the moment Ami enters the dorm, there was always some sort of otherworldly sound playing while Michelle is at home, whether it be one of Ami's enigmatic CD tracks or his own strangely raw and shimmering playing. He always refers to music in “colors”, a concept that always amused Michelle. He was trained by very famous teachers, and his playing of French Impressionist compositions (such as those of Debussy) quickly capture the attention of the school administration and the school's drama troupe. The drama troupe decides unanimously that Ami will compose and play the music for the school play, regardless of who ends up being the scriptwriter.

This development, combined with Michelle's frustration that Ami seemingly doesn't care about anything despite his talent, causes Michelle to blow up at Ami over a trivial incident

and decry him for being directionless. Ami calmly asks Michelle what color she wants to be, and Michelle is very taken back at the question. She apologizes to Ami for her outburst, and said that she was basically projecting herself onto other people to feel better after her inadequacy. She says that she herself does not have any direction in life, and so decides that she is “opalescent”, a shimmer of all the colors. Ami says that that is where he and Michelle are different; while Michelle is still trying to grow up and discover herself, Ami already has decided on his color: white, the focused universal shade that paradoxically both is a combination of every color and lacks any color at all. He says this is why he will never be happy, because there are so many things that he has in his life but which impede him in becoming what he wants to be. He says he will not accept Michelle’s response, but will wait until she has one.

Michelle is touched by what Ami says and has a new-found respect for him. It inspires her to write the plan for a new play she had in mind, very loosely based on her encounters with Ami. She shows it to the drama troupe and they adore it. They manage to secure her position as the scriptwriter for the school play.

In the middle of her work on the play, Michelle finds out that Ami will be leaving the school the day after the final show. Michelle reads her synopsis for the ending of her play out loud while she thinks she is alone. It turns out that the ending of her play (remember: based off of her and Ami) ends with the male lead leaving and never coming back. Ami is actually listening to Michelle reading it, and when Michelle finishes Ami knocks on the door, surprising and upsetting Michelle. Ami simply says that he has the music for the play ready and leaves. Later, Michelle listens to Ami’s practice and hears a new tune that puts her to tears. She realizes that she has started to depend on Ami as her source of inspiration, and she becomes scared of what the future will hold when Ami leaves.

Michelle eventually finds out Ami is leaving because he got a commission for his own performance at a very famous concert hall. Michelle realizes that the concert hall got a hold of Ami because she herself had sent a fully-written script to an associated theater company with a soundtrack by Ami, and that the people at the theater completely disregarded her work and instead passed the soundtrack off to the event organizers at the concert hall. Michelle, enraged at the irreparable and irreconcilable rift between the genius and the ordinary, violently attacks Ami, who sustains a hand injury. Horrified at what she had done, Michelle goes back to her room and screams in her pillow until she passes out from fatigue. She and Ami do not talk for weeks, and Michelle continues work on her play while Ami slowly regains the strength in his injured hand.

Rehearsals for the play are going smoothly, and of course Ami’s moving compositions along with his insightful playing quickly becomes the glue that makes the whole work stick together to form a masterpiece. Michelle starts to worry more and more about the ending of the play which she is forced to watch every day. She begins to dread the day of the premiere, as it

essentially will become the farewell conversation between Michelle and Ami as both are still uncomfortable with talking to each other.

The day before the first show, Michelle and Ami are both silent at the dinner table, as always. However, when Michelle is in her room, she realizes that Ami has been pushing his injured hand to unbearable limits. Ami, who was calm during all of Michelle's angry outbursts and brushed it off when Michelle hurt his hand, was crying at the piano because he wasn't able to play a single note. Michelle is deeply moved by what Ami is doing for her. In a sudden emotional and impulsive moment, she hastily sends an email.

On the day of the premiere, the entire audience is captivated by the play and the amazing pianist who is playing the music for it. However, when it comes to the ending, the male protagonist stops right before he leaves, and turns around to say that he will always yearn to be with what he loves. The characters, who in the original version walk off both sides of the stage, instead share an embrace and make a pinky promise. Ami, watching from his place in the music pit, appears clearly surprised, but keeps on playing.

The next day, Michelle wakes up early to talk to Ami before he leaves and finally make amends for her lash-out. She wakes up only to see that Ami's room is completely empty. She calls Ami, who is on the train to the airport. Ami simply says that Michelle has already put into his mouth everything that he has wanted to say, and that the promise that Michelle's characters made will hold. Michelle tells Ami that she finally has a response to his question about which color she wants to be: she decides that for the rest of her life, she will strive to be as blue as the ocean that separates them and the same heavens they see above them. Ami accepts Michelle's response and tells her to look in the piano that is still in the dorm; inside, Michelle finds a CD and listens to it. It is a transposition of the final piece from the play into a major key. Michelle is elated, but Ami hangs up before she can say thank you. After this point, Ami's number goes out of service.

Many years later, Michelle, who managed to make a living writing scripts for small productions in the local theater, reads in the paper that a very accomplished pianist has killed himself after he was told by doctors that his carpal tunnel syndrome will prevent him from ever playing piano like before. It is a name she does not recognize, but as soon as she sees the picture she knows that it was Ami. Some of the actors from the high school drama troupe, now professional theater actors, give Michelle their condolences because they think that Ami ended up breaking the promise to Michelle. Michelle laughs and shakes her head, saying that in the end Ami did keep his promise of always yearning to be what he loves; he is in death as he was in life, never having to live a day without the piano and the music that plays in his soul.