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| Read the passage and answer the questions:   1. Do you like the story? What do you like about it?   I like it really much. As a great people in many aspects, Einstein showed us how to overcome the fear of learning something as a beginner.   1. What lesson did Einstein offer to the author?   He offered the author an elementary classic music class. More importantly, he taught the author, “never compare your beginning to someone else’ s middle”. |

**The Night I Met Einstein**

*By* [*Jerome Weidman*](https://www.rd.com/author/jerome-weidman/)*\**

(This Reader's Digest Classic of "My Most Unforgettable Character" offers a lesson in life—and music—from the most brilliant mind in the world.)

\**Jerome Weidman was a novelist, screenwriter n.编剧, and Pulitzer Prize–winning playwright who died in 1998. He wrote the book for the musical n.音乐舞台剧* I Can Get It for You Wholesale*, which marked Barbra Streisand’s first Broadway n.百老汇 appearance. “The Night I Met Einstein” first appeared in Reader’s Digest in November 1955 and is one of the most requested pieces from our archives.*

When I was a very young man, just beginning to make my way, I was invited to dine *v.吃饭* at the home of a distinguished *adj.杰出的* New York philanthropist *n.慈善家*. After dinner, our hostess led us to an enormous drawing room. Other guests were pouring in, and my eyes beheld two unnerving sights: Servants were arranging small gilt *n.镀金* chairs in long, neat rows; and up front, leaning against the wall, were musical instruments.

Apparently I was in for an evening of chamber music *n.室内乐*.

I use the phrase “in for” because music meant nothing to me. I am almost tone deaf—only with great effort can I carry the simplest tune, and serious music was to me no more than an arrangement of noises. So I did what I always did when trapped: I sat down, and when the music started, I fixed my face in what I hoped was an expression of intelligent appreciation, closed my ears from the inside, and submerged myself in my own completely irrelevant thoughts.

After a while, becoming aware that the people around me were applauding, I concluded it was safe to unplug my ears. At once I heard a gentle but surprisingly penetrating voice on my right: “You are fond of Bach?”

I knew as much about Bach as I know about nuclear fission *n.裂变*. But I did know one of the most famous faces in the world, with the renowned *adj.著名的，显赫的* shock of untidy white hair and the ever-present pipe between the teeth. I was sitting next to Albert Einstein.

“Well,” I said uncomfortably and hesitated. I had been asked a casual question. All I had to do was be equally casual in my reply. But I could see from the look in my neighbor’s extraordinary eyes that their owner was not merely going through the perfunctory duties of elementary politeness. Regardless of what value I placed on my part in the verbal *adj.口头* exchange, to this man his part in it mattered very much. Above all, I could feel that this was a man to whom you did not tell a lie, however small.

“I don’t know anything about Bach,” I said awkwardly. “I’ve never heard any of his music.”

A look of perplexed *adj,困惑，迷茫* astonishment washed across Einstein’s mobile *adj.易变的* face.

“You have never heard Bach?”

He made it sound as though I had said I’d never taken a bath.

“It isn’t that I don’t want to like Bach,” I replied hastily *adj.草草的，匆忙的*. “It’s just that I’m tone deaf, or almost tone deaf, and I’ve never really heard anybody’s music.”

A look of concern came into the old man’s face. “Please,” he said abruptly *adj.突然的*. “You will come with me?”

He stood up and took my arm. I stood up. As he led me across that crowded room, I kept my embarrassed glance fixed on the carpet. A rising murmur *n.咕哝* of puzzled speculation *n.推测* followed us out into the hall. Einstein paid no attention to it.

Resolutely *adv.坚决地*, he led me upstairs. He obviously knew the house well. On the floor above, he opened the door into a book-lined study, drew me in, and shut the door.

“Now,” he said with a small, troubled smile. “You will tell me, please, how long you have felt this way about music?”

“All my life,” I said, feeling awful. “I wish you would go back downstairs and listen, Dr. Einstein. The fact that I don’t enjoy it doesn’t matter.”

Einstein shook his head and scowled *v.皱着眉头*, as though I had introduced an irrelevance *n.不相关*.

“Tell me, please,” he said. “Is there any kind of music that you do like?”

“Well,” I answered, “I like songs that have words, and the kind of music where I can follow the tune.”

He smiled and nodded, obviously pleased. “You can give me an example, perhaps?”

“Well,” I ventured, “almost anything by Bing Crosby.”

He nodded again, briskly. “Good!”

He went to a corner of the room, opened a phonograph *n.留声机*, and started pulling out records. I watched him uneasily. At last, he beamed. “Ah!” he said.

He put the record on, and in a moment, the study was filled with the relaxed, lilting *v.轻声奏响speak, sing, or sound with a lilt* strains of Bing Crosby’s “When the Blue of the Night Meets the Gold of the Day.” Einstein beamed *v.喜出望外*at me and kept time with the stem *n.干（其实是烟斗的杆）* of his pipe. After three or four phrases, he stopped the phonograph.

“Now,” he said. “Will you tell me, please, what you have just heard?”

The simplest answer seemed to be to sing the lines. I did just that, trying desperately to stay in tune and keep my voice from cracking. The expression on Einstein’s face was like the sunrise.

“You see!” he cried with delight when I finished. “You do have an ear!”

I mumbled *v.喃喃自语* something about this being one of my favorite songs, something I had heard hundreds of times so that it didn’t really prove anything.

“Nonsense!” said Einstein. “It proves everything! Do you remember your first arithmetic *n./adj.算术* lesson in school? Suppose, at your very first contact *最初的接触* with numbers, your teacher had ordered you to work out a problem in, say, long division or fractions *n.分数*. Could you have done so?”

“No, of course not.”

“Precisely *adv.恰恰，就是*!” Einstein made a triumphant *adj.常胜的，胜利的* wave *大概就是很兴奋地挥动？* with his pipe stem. “It would have been impossible, and you would have reacted in panic. You would have closed your mind to long division and fractions. As a result, because of that one small mistake by your teacher, it is possible your whole life you would be denied the beauty of long division and fractions.”

The pipe stem went up and out in another wave.

“But on your first day, no teacher would be so foolish. He would start you with elementary things—then, when you had acquired skill with the simplest problems, he would lead you up to long division and to fractions.

“So it is with music.” Einstein picked up the Bing Crosby record. “This simple, charming *adj.优雅的，迷人的* little song is like simple addition or subtraction *n.减法*. You have mastered it. Now we go on to something more complicated.”

He found another record and set it going. The golden voice of John McCormack singing “The Trumpeter” filled the room. After a few lines, Einstein stopped the record.

“So!” he said. “You will sing that back to me, please?”

I did—with a good deal of self-consciousness *n.自我意识（自知之明？）*but with, for me, a surprising degree of accuracy.

Einstein stared at me with a look on his face that I had seen only once before in my life: on the face of my father as he listened to me deliver the valedictory address at my high school graduation ceremony.

“Excellent!” Einstein remarked when I finished. “Wonderful! Now this!”

“This” turned out to be Caruso in what was to me a completely unrecognizable fragment from Cavalleria Rusticana, a one-act opera. Nevertheless, I managed to reproduce an approximation of the sounds the famous tenor had made. Einstein beamed his approval.

Caruso was followed by at least a dozen others. I could not shake my feeling of awe *n.威严* over the way this great man, into whose company I had been thrown by chance, was completely preoccupied *v.全神贯注* by what we were doing, as though I were his sole *adj.唯一的* concern.

We came at last to recordings of music without words, which I was instructed to reproduce by humming *v.哼唱*. When I reached for a high note, Einstein’s mouth opened, and his head went back as if to help me attain what seemed unattainable *adj.高不可攀*. Evidently I came close enough, for he suddenly turned off the phonograph.

“Now, young man,” he said, putting his arm through mine. “We are ready for Bach!”

As we returned to our seats in the drawing room, the players were tuning up for a new selection. Einstein smiled and gave me a reassuring *adj.使人放心的reassure: say or do something to remove the doubts and fears of someone* pat on the knee.

“Just allow yourself to listen,” he whispered. “That is all.”

It wasn’t really all, of course. Without the effort he had just poured out for a total stranger I would never have heard, as I did that night for the first time in my life, Bach’s “Sheep May Safely Graze.” I have heard it many times since. I don’t think I shall ever tire of it. Because I never listen to it alone. I am sitting beside a small, round man with a shock of untidy white hair, a dead pipe clamped *v.钳* between his teeth, and eyes that contain in their extraordinary warmth all the wonder of the world.

When the concert was finished, I added my genuine applause to that of the others.

Suddenly our hostess confronted *v.面对* us. “I’m so sorry, Dr. Einstein,” she said with an icy glare at me, “that you missed so much of the performance.”

Einstein and I came hastily *adv.匆忙地* to our feet. “I am sorry too,” he said. “My young friend here and I, however, were engaged in the greatest activity of which man is capable.”

She looked puzzled. “Really?” she said. “And what is that?”

Einstein smiled and put his arm across my shoulders. And he uttered *v.说出* ten words that—for at least one person who is in his endless debt—are his epitaph:

“Opening up yet another fragment of the frontier of beauty.”

开辟了美丽前沿的又一片段。

（大概就是让人克服了对新事物的恐惧，并使其对它产生了兴趣）

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