

You can't argue taste:

Sometimes, when I'm listening to the music that I love, I wonder why the great majority of folks don't share in the joy with me. I listen, on and off, to a couple of hundred years worth of carefully crafted, tightly written, masterfully played Classical Music. I listen and I am fully aware that the music that transports and moves me is nothing more than a colossal bore to most of my neighbors. This has always been so. I have a dear friend who calls it "War Music".

I know that this disparity in taste has nothing to do with intelligence. I know people, far brighter than I am, who could care less and feel nothing for the music that transports me heavenward. They will bounce their heads to Heavy Metal, roll back their eyes to Cool Jazz, hum and sway to Broadway, two-step and drive cross country to Country but go immediately to sleep when Puccini and his pals are played. Why?

I think it must be genetic. There has got to be a chromosome in the chain somewhere that controls music sensibility. There must be a tiny bit of DNA, which governs how one relates to a particular kind of music, a specialized sound gene. How else to explain why so many people prefer music that will disappear in a generation or two to music that has played and pleased for dozens of generations. How else to explain why Mozart will induce sleep in so many while Celine Dion inspires rapture?

"De gustibus non est disputandum." My dad actually used to say those words every once in a while during dinner table discussions. If you've never heard your dad speak Latin at the dinner table you don't know what you've missed. He was truly a nut, but his point was well taken. He was saying, "When it comes to taste, there's no argument." My dad was not a music lover. He was a painter. He had feelings about painting and painters akin to what I have about music and musicians. And, after knocking his head against the wall of personal taste for many years he began using that arcane Latin phrase. It's true. How can we argue taste? We like what we like. You may like music that lives on street life and repetition. I may like counterpoint and complex variations. I wish it meant that I'm right and you're not, but it doesn't. I used to think that apathy towards Bach was akin to thugery, that ignorance of "The Well Tempered Clavier" was the same as not being able to read. It isn't.

All it means is that when the music genes got passed out I got some of this flavor and you got some of that flavor. I hate that. I want to be able to prove to you that Classical Music is far superior to any other music. I want, one day, for the unbeliever to say, "You're right, I don't know what I was thinking. I never realized how marvelous this music is. It's straight from heaven. Thanks." It won't happen. Not to me. Not to anyone.

Sometimes I think the best that I can hope for is that a pop lover friend might acknowledge that Eric Carmen's "Never gonna' fall in love again" is a reprise of a Rachmaninoff symphony, that the musical "Rent" is a poor remake of the opera "La Boheme", that "Miss Saigon" is "Madame Butterfly", that "Stranger in paradise" was lifted entirely from music written in the 19th century by Borodin. And on and on and on. Oh well.

Stop yawning. This is important stuff. Maybe the point is this. Maybe I want people to like my music so much that I invent reasons why they should like it. Maybe I love it so much myself that I want company in my happiness. Maybe I'm worried that classical music will not be available to normal folks in the future. I don't know. I'm pretty sure that tying someone in a chair and forcing that person to listen is not the answer. I remember Music Appreciation in High School. I remember our teacher playing a Beethoven passage in class and when it was done he said, "Which one of you dopes doesn't think this is the most beautiful thing you ever heard?" Ah, education. He meant well. I guess he was struggling with the same thing I'm struggling with. He knew he was putting a room full of hormonal kids to sleep but he didn't know how else to handle it. He loved the music but he couldn't make anyone else love it.

So, do me this favor will you? The next time you're in your vehicle and you're not in a hurry to get somewhere tune the radio to WLSU 88.9 and listen for a minute or two to whatever they're playing. If you don't like what you hear, turn it off. I've wasted a couple of minutes of your day. No big deal.

If the music pleases you, then there's nothing more to say. Except, thanks for keeping me company.