

Florida Association of Museums Keynote 2004
Music and Musings: Leadership through the Lens of Arts

A keynote conveyed through music, poetry, and 'playing' together

Music of John Dowland played by the artist. (*Music sets the mind and heart in motion for new or renewed thinking.*)

My heart rouses

thinking to bring you news

of something

that concerns you

and concerns many men. Look at

what passes for the new,

You will not find it there but in

despised poems.

It is difficult

to get the news from poems

yet many men die miserably everyday

for lack

of what is found there.

William Carlos Williams from Asphodel, *That Greeny Flower*.*

What is it that rouses us? At the heart of who we are, artists and safekeepers of the treasures of both human hearts and human knowledge, is **passion**. We *know* that what separates the good from the great and magical is passion. Are we not passionate to **bring** the news? *Our* news? Not of the black and white of the newspaper page or even the musical score, but **beyond** the obvious of the black and white. The '*what is it really?*' The *poetry*.

Science is not only about facts, that is the black and white news. Science is about the **joy of finding things out**....that's the *poetry*. And history is **people**, alive like you and me, who **composed** their lives and who have **something to teach** us about writing our own stories. And art....if it means...putting together*, then yes, putting together who we are, what we dream and for what we hope, **with** the world around us. *About* this we are passionate. We must be equally passionate about **bringing** the news. It is not an option to feel they, our communities should and will just choose to come to us. It is not we and they. It is **us**.

Once again, music of John Dowland. (The arts deepen our relationship to what it is we hear, to our learning; they do this by engaging **more of our senses**, thus **more** of who we are.)

From *Notes of An Alchemist*, words of the great scientist Loren Eiseley:

Crystals grow
under fantastic pressures in the deep
crevices and confines of
the earth.
They grow by fires,
by water trickling slowly
in strange solutions
from the walls of caverns.
They form
in cubes, rectangles,
tetrahedrons,
they may have
their own peculiar axes and
molecular arrangements
but they,
like life,
like men,
are twisted by
the places into which
they come.

It is to us we would have them, our communities, come. **Into the places** in which we create meaning and provide insight. **And** entertain. Oh, I do not believe we are entertainment. Entertainment simply affirms who we are. The art, the putting together, the poetry of our museums.....of my music....**must** stretch who we are, how we see the world, and what we believe is possible.

I do not pretend to know exactly the world of museum director, however, I believe we share much, our vision, our passion, that we have committed our lives to 'the beyond the obvious'.....the *poetry*, and that we can learn from one another other.

Simple gifts: Many of you are familiar with this music that comes to us from the shakers. You may recall that the Shakers were originally Quakers who, when the spirit so moved them, would shake themselves up. They were known as shaking Quakers. Eventually, they shook themselves across the Atlantic Ocean and settled in America and were called simply, Shakers. **Tis a gift to be simple, Tis a gift to be free. Tis a gift to come down where you ought to be....and when you find yourself in the place just right....**Part of our mission is education, **is not a primary goal** of education to provide a means by which all people can find that place 'where they ought to be,' the place just right? The growth of a child, of people, is not about facts. It is poetry. Sister Ann Lee, founders of the Shakers in America, is reputed to have said, '**Every force evolves a form**'. If we believe we are essential in the world, not elite, but co-creators of a central place in which people can come together, a place in which people can turn to one another, that

force evolves the form of the perception we have of ourselves, and the perception our community has of who we are and what we have to offer. In the end this, I believe will determine our future success.

There is no power greater than a community discovering about what it really cares.

Feather Activity: The balancing of a peacock feather on your index finger cannot happen if you look at the point at which it touches your finger. It **is simple** to balance when you look at the top, when you have a large perspective. It is about *expanding* our world. We cannot be absorbed in the small world of limited vision about who we are and what place we have in the world. About **what** do we *really* care? What is it we *really* would like to do in the world through our work? We are not islands, sacred vessels of treasures that seem remote from the community in which we live. How much more can **we** see? What are the longings of the people in our community? **Is it community** for which they long? Are they seeking ways to nourish their souls beyond or in addition to their religious affiliations?

I have, in speaking with executives of major corporations, discovered that they are at a loss as to why, when they provide so much training for their employees, that upon surveys, the employees feel the company does very little or nothing for them. How can this be? The company has spent millions on technical training. Apparently, people long for and value something different. They 'feel' something different. Can museums help to fill the gap? Is there some bit of information that expands our worlds so that we provide that for which people long?

Hologprint Activity: The magic that occurs is not the pressing together two plexiglas plates with a dab of toothpaste between them and seeing a magnificent hologprint appear when the plates are then parted. The magic is in the turning to one another*. **Discovering together. It is in the moments of human connections that the moments of our lives are made.** The black and white of the exhibit is not a thing. *The thing* is people turning to one another to see through another's eyes, and most importantly to them, to share what **they** have seen. Perhaps it is also in the joy of listening deeply to another. What if museums opened their cafes on Friday and Saturday nights, provided some music or a film, and became the place chosen for a night out? What if we were a place of community and moments of sharing along with the benefit of art or science or history surrounding our guests?

As an emerging artist, I knew I must expand my world. By studying with pianists, and singers and cellists, I learned to listen and to *sing*. I had the opportunity to study with the great Mozartean soprano, Eleanor Steber. At every lesson she would say, "There is always a better way to take a breath. There is always a better way to take a breath".

Do we continue to explore, expand, and to know that there is always a better way

to bring our news?

I also studied with the great soprano, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf. Madame Schwarzkopf was, shall I say, bluntly candid about her thoughts. Most singers who dared to sing for her left the class in tears. I had played only a few notes before she began to scream "Nein, NMein, du spielst piano! You play *soft*. It doesn't mean anything! *How* is it soft? Soft like morning dew? Soft like a baby's bottom? A lover's embrace? **You must know....you must know...**"

This **moment** changed my life and music. In all areas of my life: music, personal truth, what others are saying to me becomes: What is it *really*?

You must know...you must know.

Storytelling performance of Syrinx: In Claude Debussy's *Syrinx*, Pan after chasing Syrinx into the water, witnesses her transformation into reeds. At this point, instead of walking away, he pauses, listens, and *hears* the wind blowing across the top of the reeds. Pan acts upon the inspiration of his imagination to create something new to the world, Pan Pipes. To pause, to wait, and to listen. We must take the time to *listen* and to **hear anew**.

Gassire's Lute: A West African fable of **leadership in which the audience is co-creator** of the story by playing drums, deer claw rattles, maracas, rainsticks, and tambourines. Great leaders hear and know the heartbeat of the world around them. The heartbeat of our community must become our heartbeats....the wind that blows against our cheeks blows against the cheeks of our community. STOP! Listen to the voice of your enemies and critics, what is it they are '*really*' trying to say? Is there some *value* in their message? Something you never *really* heard before? Some truth? And what is it that my community **celebrates**? What is the **sound** of my own heartbeat....? You must know..... you must know. The heartbeat of our community must become a part of our heartbeats if we want ours to become parts of theirs. It is then that **we will sing**.....and will thrive.

Music of John Dowland.....

I do not regret who I am.

I wander and

wonder.

Savoring life,

that expression of chaos and order

an order made perfect by love.

Who knows this love?

A love that loves,

accepts,

encourages itself

not for deeds or deeds undone,

nor for successes or failures.
Not for anything but itself,
and because of that.....
it grows.

We must love our message, and love **bringing** the news of it.

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* I first learned of this poem from David Whyte's book *The Heart Aroused*. This book provides great inspiration. Currency
Doubleday 1994.

* I became familiar with this definition of art meaning 'to put things together' in Eric Booths celebrated book *the everyday work of art*. I recommend it to all. Sourcebooks, Inc. 1997

* I first encountered the phrase *To turn to One another* in Med Wheatley's book *turning to one another*. It is another book I highly
recommend. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc. 2002