

Structure and Freedom

Observations by Mark Christopher Brandt

We often believe that structure and discipline translate to abuse and oppression. Too often we decide that freedom comes from rebellion, anarchy, and chaos. In the arts, as in Christianity, nothing could be further from the truth.

While it is true to say that there can be no freedom without structure, the structures and disciplines which we choose to place upon ourselves for a greater good bear more fruit and bring more freedom than those imposed upon us by the world and what it would have us believe.

If we are in competition with ourselves, then we will not waste our short time on earth seeking empty validation from those around us - even those who actually look to us to succeed. The true artist, like the true Christian, has something beautiful to share.

Every true artist knows that there can be no freedom without structure. Every artist struggles within the daily structures and disciplines of his or her art form, hoping to attain even a modest glimpse of the freedom that awaits those who can outlast their fears, complaints, and excuses. In a moment of surrender there are wings and then there is flight. Soaring lasts as long as the artist does not analyze, judge, or even notice that he or she is doing the impossible.

If music has to be a certain genre, then you are not free. Neither true music nor true musicians are bound by genre or type. Labels come from non-artists. Music comes from musicians. If music must be chaotic and borderless to display freedom, then it is simply abstract and unapproachable. Art is meant to uplift souls. Art points to the Divine or it is just mere human expression available to all and expressed by all.

Validation of what one has accomplished - in all its fleeting forms - is not in itself proof of freedom. The proof is found in the movement of the artist outside of the boundaries in which non-artists live daily. The artist cannot be both artist and non-artist. That is the death of interior freedom. The artist must be otherworldly, and he or she must be so without apology.

If you are looking for validation, then you will never be a great improviser, composer, or music educator. An artist does not seek validation. If you ache for attention you will never be a great musician. If however, you are longing to share the unique and beautiful music flowing within you, then you are already at the top of your game. Keep on practicing to improve your delivery.

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