



I remember trying to learn the trumpet in high school—sitting in that classroom with everyone warming up and testing out their instrument for the first time. The noise was anything but music. And often something similar happens in our relationships with others.

Each person is a musician and has a melody to play for those who want to hear. Only when we actually stop and listen to another's music can a relationship develop. Each type of relationship, each combination of tunes, sounds unique and evokes different emotions and memories. No two are the same, and many will be a mix of the forms of music I describe below.

Our natural tendency as artists—very proud of what we produce and who we are—is to take over any relationship, to have pride of place in the song. If both those involved insist on their melodies, the relationship itself doesn't really exist. Having to listen to two different songs at the same time can only frustrate those involved.

But what a wonderful thing when someone decides to play a harmony for the other, to complement and underscore what is best in the other's melody. Some relationships emphasize this type of interchange: parent-child, coach-player, spiritual director-directed, etc. The end of such relationships is to help the person on the receiving (melodic) end discover who he is and to become it fully. The melody of the "giver" role silently fades in order to emphasize the other. John the Baptist had to decrease so Christ could increase. Any note that makes the child harmonize with the parent's music quickly turns sour. How could the young musician harmonize, listening attentively to the other's song, if he hasn't learned to make out what he himself is playing?

Some of the most beautiful music happens when there is no individual melody—that is, no principal part. This is a relationship of true friendship. Each part of the music is pure harmony and contributes to a melody that is only played out in the unity of the different parts. Each part complements the others and depends on the others. Here we find music comparable to the Domine, non sum dignus by Tomás de Victoria, Mozart's Requiem, Beethoven's 7th symphony, Handel's Messiah...

Yet there is more. We are musicians with certain skills, better at playing certain types of music. What if there were a way to combine every note ever sounded in one great and rolling symphony?

There is a possible way to succeed: go to the Composer. But the Composer doesn't play any music for the musician to imitate (except for that moment thousands of years ago, resounding in an ever-present note)—the music itself must be read: contemplated in wave folding over wave, in mountains that reach out to touch heaven or in a cloud-spattered sunset; understood in the hard truths we must sometimes accept, truths that demand a change in our lives, a tuning of our instruments.

And this music is often intuited from the music others play. Listening to and complementing the music of those close to the Composer helps us develop our own ear for correct harmony. It teaches us the right music to play for each person and in each circumstance. And once it is played according to the Score,—once there sounds an echo of that longed-for master-symphony—such power and splendor will cause all who hear it to fall silent, to weep for sheer joy.

No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.