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September 18, 2023

Music has been an unwavering companion throughout my life, a constant presence that has shaped my understanding of the world and ignited my passion for the art form. I was exposed to various genres and artists growing up in a musical household; hearing pop music in the mornings and the keys on the piano in the afternoon. I often found myself wanting to learn more about music, why music sounds the way it does, why some songs are more energetic than others. My journey toward musical literacy truly began when I started to learn how to play the saxophone. At first, I was intimidated, but with each lesson, my director challenged me to delve deeper into the realm of music, teaching me the fundamentals of reading sheet music and developing my technique. Learning to read music was a struggle, but the more I practiced, the more a new world of understanding unfolded before me. As my knowledge of music theory deepened, I discovered the power of rhythm, harmony, and melody. I became proficient in recognizing different time signatures and notes. Most importantly, I began to understand how these elements came together to create a cohesive piece of music. It was like unlocking a secret code, a language that connected me to other musicians and composers throughout history.

I joined the marching band in high school, which was an exciting new experience. It allowed me to expand my musical literacy and experience the dedication and discipline the marching band requires. Along with the countless hours of practice, I acquired a new skill set in memorizing music and having to sight read everything that came up. The most significant

aspects of my journey in musical literacy with the marching band was the sense of belonging and camaraderie I experienced. The band became my second family, united by our shared love for music and pursuit of excellence. We spent countless hours together on the field, practicing through sweltering heat and biting cold, leading us through the highs of triumphant shows and the lows of arduous rehearsals. We supported and encouraged each other, not just as musicians but as friends. The camaraderie forged during the early day practices and road trips to competitions was the glue that bound us. These connections transcended the confines of marching band, evolving into lifelong friendships that continue to enrich my life to this day.

I was also in the chorus during high school. Our choral director would passionately teach us the fundamentals and techniques of singing, emphasizing the importance of proper breath control. Chorus was more than a series of lessons; it was a transformative journey of self-discovery. As I navigated the labyrinth of vocal scales and harmonies, I began to connect with my emotions on a profound level. The resonance of each note and the flow of every melody allowed me to convey the nuances of joy, sorrow, and every emotion in between. In those transcendent moments when our voices blended in perfect harmony, it felt as though we were crafting an emotional tapestry that transcended the ordinary. Furthermore, the choir became another place of unity and friendship. Our shared passion for music was the catalyst for forging bonds that stand the test of time. In the choir, we were more than individuals; we were harmonious threads woven into the fabric of a collective masterpiece. Each practice and performance was a testament to our commitment not only to the music but to each other. The choir room became a refuge where laughter, shared dreams, and mutual support flowed freely. It was a place where the symphony of our voices mirrored the unity of our spirits.

Throughout this musical experience, I realized that tempo, rhythm, and beats impacted music and vocal performances. When songs are fast, loud, and noisy, they feel energetic, but when a song is slow, it's often associated with a more contemplative and relaxed state of mind. The delivery of a vocalist significantly impacts the energy of a piece. The singer's vocal range, pitch, and dynamics play a crucial role in evoking or augmenting the energy of a song. A passionate and energetic vocal performance can make a piece more vibrant and engaging, drawing listeners into the emotional core of the music's rhythmic elements within a song. Syncopated rhythmic elements within a song can also considerably impact its energy. Level syncopated rhythms and complex beats infuse songs with an infectious vitality, making them feel more interactive and exciting. More robust rhythm sections, such as driving bass lines or lively percussion, can elevate the energy of a song, encouraging listeners to engage physically through movement and dance. Additionally, constant variations in rhythmic patterns contribute to a song's dynamism and captivate listeners.

In conclusion, my journey towards musical literacy has been a transformative one. It has opened my eyes to the power of music as a form of communication and emotional expression, and it has broadened my horizons. Most importantly, it has allowed me to connect with others through an art form that transcends language and borders as I continue to explore and learn. I am grateful for the gifts of musical literacy and its profound impact on my life.