

Music, You and the Adolescent

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Kailan mo huling hinayaan ang musika sumabay sa daloy ng buhay mo?

I can not imagine life without music. Whatever form, shape and size the music that we create, perform and/or listen to, I always believe that each and every human heart could be moved, enthralled or at the very least appreciate music. *At tayo pang mga Pilipino kahit nga ang isang sintunadong tao ay makikita mong naguumapaw sa sigla/damdamin habang kumakanta. Bakit kaya?* As a psychologist, I am thrilled to be part of writing a chapter in this corebook wherein I am able to share my passion and that is MUSIC and YOU.

As you go on reading this chapter, it will be very personal as I would like to speak to each of one of you, to you, our dear mentors, educators, teachers who have a chance to be with these ADOLESCENTS. It is such an honor to be able to be part of their “awkward stage” where they are trapped between being a child and becoming to be an adult. I say an honor because as mentors, you are given the chance to journey with them as they go on through their high school life seeking to answer, “Who am I?”

Erik Erikson (an American developmental psychologist and psychoanalyst) has coined the concept for ages 12-18, wherein majority of the high students are in this age range, the identity crisis stage. In this psychosocial human development stage, peer relationships are very important; we, as Filipino even have our own endearing term for our dearest friends, *barkada*. Loyalty to a *barkada* becomes more intense and approval of their closest friends is valued. It is also during this time, that the youth seek for role models who can inspire them in choosing a vocation or career. It is that crucial stage of finding their true selves and also searching for that possibility of identifying who they really are, amidst the significant people around them. In addition, Dr. Ma. Lourdes “Honey” Carandang, the most sought after psychologist in the Philippines, would

mention in her lectures that one of the issues of an adolescent is independence. She adds, “They seek to be considered as an individual but still needs parents’ affirmation”.

It is also important to mention that during their adolescent years, the physiological changes taking place in their bodies such as their physical appearance can sometimes bring about insecurity and confusion. Even the intellectual changes and moral development of a teenager can lead to asking more profound and difficult questions regarding values, religion, and justice. Emotionally, they seek for privacy and at the same time needing to belong. Establishing the I, the ME, the SELF as solid as it can be is one of the greatest challenges if I may say that teenagers have to go through.

So what can teachers do to make the high school life of an adolescent more meaningful and engaging? Really, what is our passion? I always believe that a good teacher is not the one who dictates to us what is right and wrong but the one who captivates our spirit in guiding us to discover our own beliefs of what is right and wrong. Moreso, I would like to believe that any significant mentor in a child or adolescent’s life is someone who have taught them values or lifeskills in the most fun, creative and significant way where the student is just allowed first to explore on his/her own and his/her mentor supports it. Later on, mentor, imparts to them, his/her valuable sharing of ones’ learning and idea. In this way we are allowing them to be free and independent. We honor and affirm their individuality at the same time we share with them our own knowledge about the subject matter. It is in RESPECTING THE INDIVIDUALITY of each student that makes a difference. We need to understand that each one is an individual that has one’s own “psychological make-up”. We have to nurture and guide them in their journey of Self.

Having mentioned the above state of a high school student going through puberty and us respecting who they are, is also allowing them to create their own kind of music. AND if I may say, listening to their music is one of the best ways to communicate and understand their inner core and true selves. For music accompanies them sincerely. Joining them in their music is also respecting them as they are and not judging them right

away if it is not our musical preference. How many of us have always said.... *Ano ba yan? Ang ingay naman yan? Anong klaseng tugtog ba yan? Eh' pag ganyan naman ang entrada natin sa mga kabataan eh asa pa tayong magbukas loob sila sa atin.* In their teenage life we have to be very careful when we criticize their friends in the same way when we criticize their music. Bottomline, you will always hear unceasingly from them that when we don't understand their music is an implication in itself that "you will never understand me".

What then are the benefits of music and/or musical experience for high school students? Allow me to include myself as I write in continually using a personal pronoun as an indication that I, too, am gaining something from such experiences. In all the intricacies of music it can always keep us company in whatever disposition we may be. The strong emotional impact of the music we listen to can reach our deepest recesses that we can ever imagine and most likely no one can ever have a possible explanation why. It is just embedded in our being to be able to flow with the music as it taps our inner self. *Nasa atin na yon eh yaman na ng bawat nilalang lalong lalo na ng bawat Pilipino na maantig sa musika.* Thus, it becomes very liberating for us to have music as a form of self-expression. Perhaps there must be something in music that enables us to express our true sentiments that otherwise we can not. It must be one of the reasons why adolescents get a natural "high" with their music. Because in that stage where they are preoccupied in a variety of mixed feelings the complexity of music can equally support them. In other words, whatever they are feeling internally, whether they are sad, mad, glad or scared, there will always be a suited music that can be appealing to them which they can choose to perform, create or listen too. Some sing to their heart's content. Others would form a band, wherein even in their jamming session becomes catharsis as they release their angst or whatever emotions. Any form of music-making, whether solo or in a group, whether considered noise or pleasing to those who can hear it, but not involve in producing it, can benefit from such an experience by the simple fact that it can already be a source of self-expression and it can even develop one's confidence and self-esteem as they hone their musical skills.

Music-making can be a source of camaraderie, cooperation, teamwork and bonding. In finding a common interest in music, adolescents establish a sense of belonging and a sense of community which is crucial to their being. It is in a way, valuing one's own individuality as an important "instrument or cast"; knowing that whatever the role of a teenager in the group is essential and yet one is also learning to build relationships. It is beneficial because it can be a source of joy and fulfillment in being you and at the same time contributing and being part of a group; for example, being part of a choir, a band, an ensemble, etc.

Music is also beneficial in learning values, being patriotic, embracing a religion. With this again, we form a community that builds relationship where we can belong and be loved. Again, it starts within the self. Just like a child who at a young age learned the alphabet by singing ABC, an adolescent can be more attracted in learning values through songs and music-making. As a nation, we are rich in Filipino music. Joey Ayala and Noel Cabangon songs are good examples to learn values that can entice the minds of our youth. Even our love for our country and our sense of patriotism is triggered when we hear such song as *Bayan Ko*, *Karaniwang Tao*, *Pinoy Ako*, *Tayong Mga Pinoy* are examples of a song that talks about nationalism – being a Filipino. And countless spiritual and/or religious music has been composed in showing reverence to an Almighty. Listening or singing songs of praise and gratitude uplifts our spirit and gives us a sense of comfort. It also captures our sense of believing and trusting in a Supernatural being whatever we may call Him. In all of these mentioned, the adolescent self, can establish relating to others, growing in a community, wherein music can be a source of togetherness and bonding.

The universal theme of LOVE can always be heard in the radio. Teenagers at their age then associate and can easily relate to music as their way of expressing such theme. When all else failed in truly communicating with the adolescent, why not listen to their music. Try to reach out by joining them and perhaps we could all hear what they really want to share. It can be a source for them to open up once we have captured already their "musical channel" and genuinely listen to what they have to say. And not to forget,

simply music has its own way of offering an organized or unorganized sound to help us reduce our stress and put us in a relaxing mood. The sound may be soothing enough to calm our nerves or loud enough to release our rage. Therefore, music whatever way we define it, has always been giving us a sense of comfort and security whenever we have engage ourselves in a music experience.

BUT it is of utmost important to keep in mind to always respect the musical preference of each individual. I appeal to you teachers to protect and guard the youth. And join in their music to give them that sense of worth. Sometimes allowing them to be free to express themselves creatively, is a gift in itself that we could offer the adolescent youth. If we check out their family condition and/or profile, some may have single parents, or OFW parents, or abusive parents or even they themselves are working students who help their families financially. Maybe not all will have a chance to engage in music and further hone their talents in music because they don't have the resources for it, the least we can do is for them to experience music in the classrooms. If you are already offering this music experience to the Filipino adolescent, my deepest gratitude to you, (if you have not tried it yet, may I request that you consider it?) because you'll never know, one of your precious students might be already experiencing the therapeutic benefits of music. Believe me, music heals.

SUGGESTION of A MUSICAL EXPERIENCE:

The following activities are just suggestions that you could do in the classroom before, middle, end of a session or for an entire session. Please do add more on this list. In doing so, you will also develop and enhance your own creativity in dealing with your students.

1. During the 1st quarter of the year you may ask the students the list of songs or music they listen to and ask why. This would already give you a head start on what kind of music they are interested.
2. In any given time of your session with them. Whenever necessary maybe to break the ice, you could invite one to sing or perform but PLEASE no

pressure, ask for volunteers. If no one volunteers, then just be prepared to just listen to a song or music you already prepared (Of course there is always that option of YOU singing). Play some music that you would like them to hear with intention of learning something from it.

3. Have a class discussion on a particular emotion and ask what kind of music they listen to when they feel that way. Enable them to be in groups and invite them to share it to the entire class in whatever way they want to do it. You can even make a class project of making a list of songs for the different emotions after all the presentations. And also, remember to suggest your own songs. In doing this music experience, you are giving them an opportunity to be creative and also foster teamwork.
4. Songwriting day. You can suggest to them to express their feelings through a song. Or even a value you want them to learn. Again, don't forget to add your own music. This can be done individually, by pairs, by group depending on your particular purpose for that experience. This will give them an opportunity to express their feelings and thoughts on whatever emotion or topic. Aside from developing creativity, this can be therapeutic too.
5. Encourage to start a band, orchestra choir and/or ensemble opportunity to further develop camaraderie and talents as well. Who knows the next Lea Salonga , Joey Ayala, Ryan Cayabyab, Rico Blanco, a member of Madrigal Singers, etc. might just be in your classroom.
6. Introduce musical genres. Filipino music. You can make it fun by making it like a game, Name that tune or a musical trivia Aside, from the sheer enjoyment of it. You are also increasing their general knowledge in music.
7. Sometimes to set the mood. Just start with music. It can be music listening, singing and dancing. It might just set a mood for YOURSELF too.

A FINAL NOTE FOR YOU DEAR TEACHERS:

As you go on mentoring our youth, I do hope you also take time to pause and take care of yourselves. And perhaps realize after reading what I've mentioned above, the benefits of music speaks well also for all of us. SING, DANCE, CREATE, LISTEN, CRY, RELAX, ENJOY MUSIC. We can also gain so much if we allow music to be part of our personal agenda. If you haven't embrace music yet; let me invite you to do so. If you have already allowed music to keep you company, I hope from now on you are more consciously aware of the therapeutic benefits it can also offer you. After all, it is really about MUSIC and YOU.