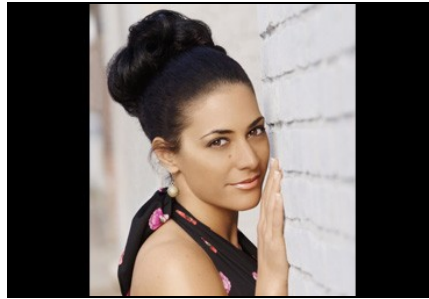


Sittin' In

By Joanna Pascale

I've always been fascinated by not only what people say, but also how they say it. Lately, I've been focusing on the hidden intent of what people say, often looking for a deeper meaning. The human voice is by far our oldest and most profound means of communication, used to express emotions of joy, pain, anger, love, sorrow, etc. Though sometimes difficult to interpret material to which I have an emotional disconnect, vocally, I want to draw from these emotions in order to deliver a clear and honest interpretation of a song. My greatest challenge is to remain present in the moment and connect with the lyrics to effectively express the story. When executed successfully, I believe this energy translates to what listeners not only hear, but also feel. If you are able to quiet the mind and tap into that artistic space, you can touch the lives of others.

I'd like to share a story that served as a moment of clarity for me. It was during this experience that I realized the importance of being able to "let go" so as to allow the music to move through me. A few years ago, I remember having an "off" day. This particular evening, I felt completely uninspired, and after a few songs, I noticed two women staring intently at me while I sang. They sat there expressionless, and then at one point, they began to point at me laughing. I began to feel self-conscious, and now very disconnected from the music I was singing. As soon as the set was over, I made a beeline towards the bathroom, to check that I didn't have lipstick on my teeth or a stain on my dress. I hurried past their



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table, when one of the women called me by name. I turned apprehensively. As we began to talk, she informed me she was there specifically to see me. I stood there almost in disbelief, flattered, and slightly embarrassed, considering just earlier, I felt this woman was pointing at me in jest. Somewhere in the middle of our conversation, she asked if she could share a personal story. She explained that she was born in Philadelphia, but moved to Florida and had been living there for some time. That prior year, she was diagnosed with breast cancer and doctors had given her a very short time to live. That summer, she visited Philadelphia to say her goodbyes to family and friends in Philly. She was staying at the hotel where I was performing in order to give her a break from the emotional stress and melancholy associated with the situation. She explained that every night she'd sit and listen to me sing. She was so moved that she purchased all of my CDs.

She spent the next year going through intensive chemo and radiation. She told me that during her therapy, she would use my music to soothe her. She went on and on explaining how much of a comfort my music was to her during this most difficult time. She told me that her friend, with whom she was now sitting, had been with her through all of her treatments and that during times of discouragement, she would speak of the day they would beat the cancer and again return to Philadelphia to hear me sing. Now they sat pointing and laughing happily, because she was in remission and was reflecting on a time when she truly believed this moment would not happen.

I learned something very important that day. Music is bigger than me; it's bigger than all of us. I realize that regardless of how I'm feeling, when performing and even practicing, it is my responsibility to give 100 percent. Because of this one experience, I now focus differently in hopes of performing with greater honesty and intention. If I am not having a great day and there is sadness in my voice, I sing the sadness. If I am having an exceptional day and there is joy in my voice, I sing the joy. Regardless, I express to the best of my ability, resourcing what my body has been given to offer at that moment. My body is a vessel and my voice is the instrument I use to express. By integrating honesty with technique, we bring integrity to music, thus raising its status to art, enabling us to touch and change the lives of others, and sometimes our own.

Notice anything different?

Many thanks to Somers Point Jazz Society member Nancy Palermo for her beautiful design of our brand spanking new logo. Another example of the great talent that is flourishing in our own backyard. Nancy is a wonderful painter, muralist, and art instructor. You can enjoy more of her inspiring work by visiting her website at www.nancypalermo.net.

