

The Piano

The piano is such a beautiful creation. Eighty-eight keys of pure perfection. As a pianist learns more and more of the diversity, beauty, and harmony that embraces the piano, the heavens of genuine artistic expression open. The awe and wonder of playing music enables people to understand themselves better and engage in an activity that allows for divine intimacy with the intricacies of sound. Even though there is much hard work and skill to be developed, the reward for this journey is endless opportunity in the realm of musical creativity. The dark and gloom of the minor chord. The hope and longing of arpeggiated major sequences. The triumph and glory of octave melodies. All this was once a kingdom unscathed--until the so-called "keyboard" was born.

Before you evaluate my dissatisfaction with that of the electronic musical world, let me provide you with a glimpse from my introduction to the piano. Imagine the feeling of when a pianist lays the tips of his or her fingers on the cool ivory and black notes for the very first time. The company of a piano leaves no one alone. The comfort of the soothing melodies that are birthed out of a piano leave the player wondering if he or she had an interaction with the supernatural. The sustain that brings depth and life out of a piano's body cannot be compared. The pedals carry a weight that goes unparalleled. All these beautiful aspects the piano had to offer drew me more and more to learn as much as I could about this God-given instrument.

From an early age, my parents decided that I take piano lessons at a classical music school designed to develop young children into proficient pianists. My mother was not fond of the idea of taking all three of her sons to three different classes so I was blessed with the opportunity to be placed in my older brother's class (not!). Because I had large expectations from my music teachers to perform well and know the songs they assigned, I did not initially fall in

love with the piano. The music was my job. The music was taxing. The music and I did not join together out of excitement for each other's company but rather of obligation. However, once I decided to leave the music school many years later, I began to know the piano in a completely different way. The piano felt much more vast. Without the instruction of a piece of sheet music I felt as though I knew nothing. Reflecting on the extremely impressive songs I had learned in the past, I found myself utterly frustrated with my inability to create anything worthy or comparable. As I discovered my own taste, preferences, and style in music, I developed an intimate relationship with my piano at home. I did not see the upright in my living room as just any object. It was my comfort. It was someone I could rely on. The sweet cheers and bitter cries of the keys embodied what I was feeling like nothing else could. Say what I wish could say. Express what I was scared to admit to myself. With much courage, I decided to take what I had learned to the stage and perform for my church; however, to my surprise, I was unaware of the sacrifices and compromises I would have to make.

For starters, most bands and entertainers will not have a grand or upright piano they can use or easily access. Practically everyone uses the piano's understudy: the keyboard. The "key" "board." Where do I start? Man's attempt at cheating creativity. Cheating genuine intimacy with art. Cheating anything the piano genuinely meant for good. A keyboard is any man made object with the objective of programming and modeling a variety of sounds to accomplish absolute vanity (this is me being nice). Although the keyboard may have a "grand piano setting," the sound is simply there to attempt to make pianists believe there is still some piano left in the instrument. When musicians use the terms piano and keyboard interchangeably, I believe they have forgotten what a piano embodies and truly is to music. My church, out of convenience, decided that I play keyboard for the band, learning very specific parts and melodies so that I

could accompany the band well and “effectively.” Unfortunately, in the process they presented themselves similarly with that of my teachers in music school growing up.

Every advocate pushing for the utilization of all the keyboard has to offer forgets that style cannot be programmed. Each and every pianist is able to make their own mark on how they perceive each individual note on the piano to be played. When keyboard players (also known as the dark side) program a specific note to play a multitude of notes or sounds at once, there is no feeling in that aspect of the performance. When difficulty, strain, and effort are absent in a musical performance, the emotion is not conveyed to the audience. The more and more bands, individual artists, and entertainers are fooled into this absent-minded, lazy approach to music, the less genuine expression of music will be left on earth.

Although my coming of age in music depicts a cycle of musical confinement, to freedom, and back to confinement, I have found ways in which I can creatively express myself in music and also abide by the parameters several bands I play for employ. My most cherished times with the piano are when my family leave the house and I am left to pick up where myself and the instrument left off. Each time the piano shows me a different side of its infinite wonders I leave refreshed and renewed. I have always seen the upright piano in my house as a testament to the countless times I have been burdened by life’s quakes and have found refuge in its presence. There will never be another piano like the one that I have had the privilege of playing; however, I am comforted to know that there was never a player like myself to grace its keys with such passion that I beheld for the art. Although the keyboard, and many electronic instruments like it, are meant to provide portability and accessibility to aspiring musicians, I do not believe that music will be able thrive the way it does with magnificent creations like that of the original

piano. The more and more humanity desires to improve and enhance what was made to be preserved and nourished, the less we will appreciate art.