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Reflective Paper on Music Series: A with Honors Capstone Project

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Music is one of the oldest and special ways to express feelings. People have been making music when they feel happy, sad, angry, etc. With the development of technology, music turned into something bigger than it was years ago. Music now is a global thing which can be accessed by whole people- regardless where they live. I can listen to any song from any country anytime that I want. I can even listen to songs from past decades! These ways of music always amaze me, thus I always have a special interest for music, and open to learn new things. Music series in Parkland College gave me the chance to learn new things about music every Thursday.

The first event that I joined was “Body Mapping and Music Education: Using Our Natural Resources to Teach Music” by Miranda Rowland. The first thing that I learned was a body mapping technique which is called “o passo”- the step. We made music without using any instruments- only clapping and stepping. We learned some rhythms, and between rhythms people made some solos. I learned it is called improvisation, and it is one of the most important elements in jazz music. I learned how 4-measures sounds like first, then I learned 3- measures, and 2- measures. I also learned what is a base clap and treble clap, and how they sound. This seminar was my favorite one throughout the whole semester.

One of the other seminars that I participated was “The Physics of Music” presented by Curtis Shoaf. He talked about the relationship between physics and music. The first thing he showed was the wave equation $V = F\lambda$. (Speed= frequency x wavelength). Frequency is the

actual sound that we hear. A higher note has a higher frequency than a low note. The average human can hear frequencies from a range of 20 Hz to 20,000 Hz. A hertz is how often the wave is switching back and forth. When we compare the vision range with our hearing range, we see our vision is very narrow. Then we tested our hearing with different frequencies. The frequency range that can be heard was varied depending on the age. I also learned about velocity. Velocity comes from the type of object that is producing the sound wave. In a guitar, thick string which produce low note is at the top, and thin string which produce high note is at the bottom. Also, a longer string produce a lower note, while shorter string produce higher note. Then we moved on to wavelength. Pure note is playing only one note/ harmonic which is not happening in real life. Instruments play all the harmonics at the same time. Some synthesizers, however, can play some harmonics instead of all the harmonics like instruments do. This created a whole genre- 80s music which is actually a nice music to listen to.

The other seminar was “The Evolution of Musical Scales” and the speaker was David Wilson. The question that he had for us was if the melodies or scales came first. In piano keyboard, the two notes next to each (white-black notes, white-white notes) other produce half steps. Then, we learned what a dissonant is. It means sounds that doesn't sound plausible. The opposite of dissonant is consonant. Consonants are those intervals which sound pleasant to our ear. The pentatonic scale is the scale can be derived from the first four harmonics.

Another topic was “Auditory Illusions” by David Wilson. He talked about some illusions in music. One of them was Shepherd Tone. This illusion creates a feeling that a tone is constantly descending or ascending. Another similar illusion is falling bells. It sounds like a bell is constantly falling. Although all of the illusions that Mr. Wilson introduced was very interesting, my favorite was phantom words. It basically a voice of a human that doesn't mean

anything. However, when we listen it longer and longer, our brains try to find meaningful words. The interesting part was when I listened it for the first time, I only heard English words although my native language is not English. When I listened the same sound again, I found words from my native language –Turkish. I don't know what the reason that I can find words from both language, but I found it very interesting.

I liked the music series very much. I learned many things about music in those series. All the things that I learned was very interesting. Those series made me wish to learn more. Besides the conferences, I enjoyed the live shows very much. I had the opportunity to listen to genres that I don't usually listen in those shows and it opened my mind, and my eyes to all other kinds of music. I am so glad that I had a chance to learn about a topic that I am interested in, and joined live performances while completing an A with Honor project.

Sources

Curtis Shoaf- The Physics of Music

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0By0r-E8VYBvuRGtuSUZncWZDVEk/view?usp=sharing>

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Miranda Rowland- Body Mapping and Music Education: Using Our Natural Resources to Teach Music

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