

Christian Perspectives: Music and Unity

By Rev. Maxine McLellan, Co-Pastor

Grace Church of the Nazarene, Shelburne

With the upcoming Heritage Music festivities in Shelburne celebrating music, I am reminded that music draws people together like a magnet.

I have viewed video recordings of flash mobs featuring full orchestras or large choirs that appear seemingly out of nowhere.

One group sang the Hallelujah Chorus, echoing through a massive mall, sending shivers of wonder and awe through the spellbound audience.

Several videos gave glimpses into the innovation of some communities where an old upright piano was placed on a sidewalk, in a large open area, at an airport, and even on a beach. Anyone who wanted to tinkle the ivories was welcome to do so.

In one video an unassuming, older man stood in a very busy plaza area to give a powerful operatic performance. People in an airport were blessed with the beautiful sounds from the strings of a violin in the hands of a virtuoso.

Sometimes we are entertained by angels unawares!

With each performance view, it always amazed me to watch the reaction of the people who were walking or sitting nearby.

Yes, some continued to rush along, intent on getting to wherever, never daring to stop for a moment or two to be blessed. The majority though stopped, at first wondering what was happening, then perhaps questioning, "Where in the world did all these performers come from?"

It doesn't take long before you see smiles breaking out, some clapping or toe tapping when appropriate, and certainly looks of enjoyment, delight, and sometimes, even stark awe and amazement appear.

Music is often a magnet that draws people together, causing them to stop what they are doing to enjoy, to relax, to slow their pace, to be drawn away from their daily stress, even if only for a moment.

In many of the performances, people dropped a few coins into a hat or a tin can at the feet of the performer.

They were so blessed they felt compelled to give a token of their deep appreciation.

In Shelburne, we will soon enjoy the opportunity to come together around the common magnet of music.

The time honoured fiddle competitions and the accompanying special events, such as the Leahy Family and the Jim Cuddy Band concerts, the ever popular Sunday morning Community Church service at the arena featuring local musicians and the Torchmen quartet this year, the pork barbeque that follows the service, and other events I may not be aware of, are meant to build community unity.

It takes a lot of work by a lot of people to arrange a lot of details.

While sometimes planning goes smoothly from start to finish, sometimes in a huge event like this, not everything goes smoothly.

Sometimes tempers flare, feelings are hurt, some detail in planning is messed up, and some people will have their own agenda.

But, you know what, when all is said and done, the music soothes the spirit.

The Bible lays out some powerful advice in Ephesians 5:19-21.

While not everyone enjoys the same music styles or even embraces the Bible, the words of these verses contain wise counsel:

"Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."

A great recipe for unity: music, singing, gratefulness, giving thanks, and submitting to (working with) one another!

If you follow most media reports these days, you would think the world is in a terrible state. At any time, and particularly during the Heritage Music Festival, I encourage you to stop what you are doing, take time to fill up with music, give thanks to the performers and organizers of events, and allow your heart to open up to the happiness and good cheer that music fosters.

Remember, Proverbs 15 verses 13a and 30 say, "A happy heart makes the face cheerful," and, "A cheerful look brings joy to the heart, and good news gives health to the bones."

Allow music to bring health and unity.