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## That's Music to My Ears

I do not come from a “musical family.” I was told my dad played a saxophone in college but I never heard him play or saw an instrument hidden in a closet. My parents did have a few records, including a coated cardboard record, *The Hit of the Week*, with Rudy Vallee singing “Little White Lies.” My mother would sometimes sing popular songs from the '30s or '40s while doing housework and I sang in church choirs, and in the Albuquerque High School Glee Club, and in our high school production of Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Gondoliers*. The best I can say about my singing ability is I could carry a tune (most of the time) and could usually sing my assigned part.

Here in alphabetic order are instruments for which I found I have no talent: bongos, castanets, clarinet, flute (silver plated), flute (wooden, Native American), gourd rattle, guitar, harmonica, kazoo, piano, tambourine, and ukulele. I do own a small Remo drum and a beautiful larger Remo Djembe which I play at home (alone) for remedial purposes. Alas, I am not a musician but I hope in a parallel universe somewhere there is a version of me that *is* a musician.

Back to my story. At age eleven or twelve I became interested in the seldom used family record player, especially in the changer mechanism. One day I found an album of large classical records, stacked them on the spindle and started the player to watch it change them, dropping each record one by one. The recording was Oscar Levant playing Edvard Grieg's Piano Concerto in A minor. I was astonished at what I heard!

While I struggled mightily just to play the scales on our old upright piano, here was someone—presumably from planet Earth—

who seemed to do magic with a piano keyboard! I played those records many times but no longer just to watch the record changer mechanism. In years following that experience, I learned to appreciate and love all kinds of music, classical, jazz, popular, folk, country, Bluegrass, Native American. I enjoyed live music, including classical, jazz, folk, and opera. When I was a radio disc jockey, I played country and popular music, as well as rhythm and blues.

Music is prehistoric and every known culture has or had its music. Drums and flutes may have been the earliest of instruments and are still with us today. I enjoy KUNM's *Singing Wire* featuring Native American music, particularly the selections with drums emulating the beating of the human heart. My website offers free downloadable music by Ron Hoskie, a Native American flute player and storyteller.

Anthropologists and others have suggested a variety of possible “functions” for music (all, I suspect, unprovable). The one I like best is music as a form of *play*. Musicians *play* a gig. I *play* music on my stereo. Someone *plays* a clarinet (not me, alas).

One of the musical Gatlin brothers opined the late George Jones could bring people to tears just by singing the alphabet, such was the exceptional quality of his voice. I'm easily moved by music. I even choke up while trying to sing “The Star Spangled Banner.” Music can evoke the entire spectrum of human emotions, I think, and can induce both dance and trance. Violinist Itzhak Perlman says he cried when as a boy he first heard the violin solo in Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*. I understand.

From rock-and-roll to Rachmaninoff, from Bach to Brubeck, with today's media I can have it all. I do not have choose between Kate Wolf's “Give Yourself to Love,” Aretha Franklin's “Holy Moses,” Flatt and Scruggs' “Foggy Mountain Breakdown,” Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's devotional songs, or Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young performing “Suite: Judy Blue Eyes.” They are *all* music to my ears.

