

To paraphrase H. A. Overstreet, “The characteristic of the mature people is that they affirm life.” Healthy and mature adults live with purpose. To do this they are continually involved heart and soul in the process of living and learning. They live in the *now*, guided by their past and aiming purposely for the future. It is mature people that know how to operate in a human environment, so that they continually add new people to those whom they care about, and continually discover new bases of fellowship with those already know. Growing up means growing into a highly complex set of social relationships, i.e. linkages of affection, sympathy, shared work, shared beliefs, shared memories, good will toward other humans. Music education provides exactly this kind of environment. And this is the environment I provide for my band students.

Imagination is chiefly involved in this process, and it is the central tenant of my lesson plans. Making new wholes out of a synthesis of familiar parts, turning individual separate experiences into a complete human experience, blessing those around us. This is the process of music and musicianship. This is the nature of a band; wherein educating young people we celebrate the gift of the imagination. Children are our hope for the future, and since they will most likely see a future that we will not, it is my job to help them make something of their coming destiny.

Great music does not change itself to suit the needs of our minds; it is our minds that must change to understand great music. To quote T-Bone Burnett, “Art is not to be conquered. It is a holy pursuit.” Unfortunately technology trends only toward efficiency, and being binary, it is has no aesthetics. And in reality, everything that makes life worth living is analog, not binary nor digital. I teach students how to find their deeper understanding, and to find the sweet spot in their practicing.

All of the great artists made art that forced the world to change. They did not adapt to the world, the world adapted to them. It’s what makes them worthy of the title. What artists do is figure out what they like, not satisfy popular demands. Yet in special cases, sometimes both of these can be achieved. Art and Commerce can unite. Artists should use technology to live their lives more fully, to connect with life more deeply, yet at the moment we are in danger of being imprisoned by our internet-technology, as artists are being required to submit to the demands of ‘iTopians,’ and the top and the bottom are separating. Art is not a business, it is an avocation, and it has defined our American experience from the beginning. It is bound up in our past and present identity, and it will most surely be responsible for guiding us into our future understanding. There is no deeper well than that of American music. It has changed the world time and again. Again to quote Burnett, “Our history, our language, and our soul are recorded in our music. There is no deeper expression of the soul of this country than the profound archive of music we have recorded over the last century.” And I would assert that there is no greater hope for our future than the music our own children will create. They will be the ones that affirm our future and liberate us from the dangerously inhuman, binary confines, of the technology we have created. - TW