

## **Playing with and for the Composer!**

Ignace Jan Paderewski was one of the greatest composer-pianists to have graced any stage. While visiting in America to perform in a major venue, a most unforgettable event took place. Elite members of the music-loving community filled the theatre for this black-tie affair. Among that prestigious crowd were a humble mother and her little son. She had hoped the boy might be inspired by the performance to practice his piano lessons. Motherly instincts momentarily lapsed as she engaged in polite conversation with those seated near her. Her little son, a living “squirm machine,” could stay seated no longer. Undetected, he slipped from his seat and wandered into the aisle. Magnetically he was drawn down toward the platform as others chatted and awaited the performance. Relentlessly, he made his way methodically toward the captivating ebony Steinway with its black-and-white keys. Gingerly he sat on the leather-tufted seat, placed his little fingers in just the right place on the keyboard, and began to play. For a moment the house was hushed by the sounds of “Chopsticks.” Once it was realized what was happening, the irritated, sophisticated audience lost its dignity and began shouting: “Get that boy away from there! Where are his parents? Somebody stop him!”

Backstage, Paderewski overheard the melee and instantly surmised what was happening. Hastily he put on his coat and rushed out onstage. Without a word of public announcement he walked up behind the boy, stooped over, reached around both sides of the boy, and began to improvise a countermelody to harmonize with and enhance “Chopsticks.” Together they played as Paderewski kept whispering in the child’s ear, “Keep going. Don’t quit, son. Keep on playing...Don’t quit... Don’t stop.”

When you are doing your best, and you feel like your insignificant “Chopsticks” are interpreted as a hokey attempt to serve God, stay at the keyboard; the Lord will come behind you, encompass you with His love and encourage you to play on. When does the Lord do this for us?

### **1. When we do our best and our best doesn’t seem good enough.**

Sometimes we are our worst enemies. In our mind our best doesn’t seem good enough, but in God’s eye, we are right on target. The accuser of the brethren, who is the Devil (Revelation 12:10), will malign you and tell you that you have failed, but God is not like that. It is said of Jesus, “*A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench...*” (Isaiah 42:3). Christ will not break the reed that grows in the shallow marshes; He allows it to grow beyond its break and then takes it and carefully carves it to make beautiful music with it. He uses the one who has no hope! He takes the one who was very serviceable at one time, but now like the lamp that is smoldering and smoking rather than shining and illuminating, and gives him a second chance. He lifts the wick, trims it and then lights it to shine and illumine one more time. This is the nature of our God! Don’t give up on yourself! It is always too soon to quit!

God only requires us to be accountable with what He gives us. “*For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not*” (II Corinthians 8:12). Let us therefore, do our best and hang the rest. Be faithful in the arena God has called you. “*Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful*” (I Corinthians 4:2).

### **2. When the world mocks us.**

Do you ever feel that this world in which we live “has it in for you”? If that is your perception, you have perceived correctly. Jesus said, “*If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you*” (John 15:19). This does not justify that we live with a persecution complex. It means we

understand that we will have this friction, but the good news is we are on the winning side. Again, our Lord said, *“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33). If you listen carefully, you will hear the encouraging voice of our Lord, like Pederewski saying, “Keep going. Don’t quit, son. Keep on playing...Don’t quit...Don’t stop.”

### **3. When our time needs to be synchronized to God’s time.**

I would like those who are reading these words to please remain faithful, stay true and don’t give up. If after these words, your best still does not give you satisfaction or if understanding this world is not your friend doesn’t compensate for your downheartedness, consider this next thought.

I want you to hear God’s statement concerning David, *“For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers...”* (Acts 13:36). Solomon said in the next generation after David: *“He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end”* (Ecclesiastes 3:11). So God makes things beautiful in His time, not our time. The word translated *world* is taken from the Hebrew word: *owlam* which means *beyond the vanishing point, eternity or world without end*. So God is giving us His will to perform in our generation which is designated to please Him for eternity, not merely time. So let us not judge anything before it’s time. *“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God”* (I Corinthians 4:5).

A few years ago Steve Swain was a music student majoring in piano when he was assigned to learn and play some pieces by the famous Aaron Copeland. This was the composer who wrote such famous music as *Appalachian Spring, Rodeo, and Grand Canyon Suite* to list a few. Shortly before his recital, Steve was informed there was going to be a very special guest at this performance, none other than the composer, Aaron Copeland himself. Petrified and feeling quite inadequate he played his best after much practice. After the performance, waiting backstage was Copeland. The composer asked Steve, “Did you mean to play this part this fast? Did you mean to play this part that loud?” The young aspiring pianist answered, “Yes.” Copeland said, “Oh.” Aaron Copeland then took the music he had written which the young man played and as a gift wrote these words before handing them to him: “To Steve Swain, who plays these variations beautifully.” Steve said, “I don’t remember what any of the 960 present that night said to me, but I will never forget those words written by the composer.”

Jesus is our Composer, the Author and Finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). We do not play for the spectators, we play, we pray, we live for Him. He is not against us; He is for us (Romans 8:31)! Listen carefully; you may hear Him say, “Keep going. Don’t quit, son. Keep on playing...Don’t quit...Don’t stop.”

- Pastor Pope -

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