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Stephen Melillo

Stephen Melillo is a leading contemporary composer. His music has touched the lives of many and his character has been a role model to people of all ages. Stephen Melillo was born in Port Chester, New York, and he later moved to Greenwich, Connecticut, where he grew up. Even at a young age Steve (per Mr. Melillo's request) was an active musician. His parents were supportive of his musical interest and talent. They bought him a trumpet and allowed him to participate in band, thus beginning his musical career. After high school, Steve majored in physics at the University of Connecticut. After many varied experiences, including listening to a Mahler Adagio 100 times, he decided instead to major in music. Steve went to the Boston Music Conservatory to become a teacher. Later, on a bridge in Boston, he decided to become a composer because he felt that was the best way he could prepare himself for the task of teaching. Stephen Melillo wasted no time in becoming a great composer. Today Melillo's works equal 844. (Now 880) These works include orchestra symphonies, feature film scores, interactive video scores, operatic music, television programs, and many commissioned pieces. These compositions have made Steve well known around the world and earned him a nomination for both an Academy Award and an Emmy. Steve's music, unlike some works, comes from within.

When asked why he loved music so much, Steve shared his view of music. "It is REAL... when of course the music is real... ala Beethoven, Mahler, Tchaikovsky. It is darkness, when it is insincere..." (Melillo, E-mail) This belief of music is shown in his compositions, all of which are sincere. Some of Steve's works include "Stormworks", "A Walk in Jurassic Park," "Erich!", "Escape from Plato's Cave," and "David." Each emotional piece has its own sound and message. These works vary from a tribute to composer Erich Wolfgang Korngold to the depiction of the Bible story, "David and the giant Goliath." Steve's works gained immediate respect and acclaim from bands around the world. This new, unique style was refreshing to musical groups and the demand for his work quickly rose.

People all around the world have had radical responses to these works. "Without a doubt, Stephen Melillo must go out into our 'band world' and ignite a new fire of musical expression for our young musicians!! Your creativity, energy, and imagination enters into areas of human expression where others hesitate to explore," said Edward S. Lisk, an author, composer, and the former president of the NBA. (Melillo, Stormworks Web Page)

Not only is the impact of Stephen Melillo's music evident from the testimony of others, but the writer of this paper has been fortunate to experience it personally. His music is unique; the message of love that is

expressed in all of his works brings a tremendous amount of emotion both to the performers and to their audiences. Exactly what it is that makes this music so unique is unclear, but it is obvious that it works. Steve's music, although very challenging, has a way of being addictive. Band members who normally don't take the time to put their all into the music they play give his music 110% of their effort. His music has a way of reaching deep inside you and bringing out your true emotion. This adds a "real" dimension to the music that cannot be obtained any other way. Stephen Melillo's music also helps to unite the people playing his work. For instance, the experience John Skelton and the Dallas High School Wind Ensemble experienced with Steve's music, "Upon hearing 'David'... just once... my students got together, and presented me with a check the very next day. 'Please get us that piece,' they said. Your music, because of its great depth, has allowed us to have very meaningful experiences together. Thank you so much." (Melillo, Stormworks Web Page)

Stephen Melillo's music has not only impacted people, but sparked a twentieth century musical revolution. His use of quickly changing meters, unique harmonies, and deep emotion is a new dimension in music today. This musical change has sparked a fresh new energy both in the performers of Steve's works and in their audiences. Stephen Melillo has not only impacted the world with his music, but impacted his music with his character. The writer of this paper was recently able to briefly interview him by e-mail and learn more about his character. Here are some of the things the writer learned about this very popular contemporary composer.

Q: "What has been the largest hurdle you've had to overcome?"

A: "There are no hurdles."

Q: "What advice about life/music would you have for today's youth?"

A: "Do NOT wait for someone else to validate your work. If you believe in yourself, the 10,000 rejections and slaps in the face will mean nothing. Stay true to yourself."

Q: "What do you want your students to take with them after they play your music?"

A: "The bravery to face the next day and the day after that with unsundering Hope, Love, Faith, and Strength."

Q: "What is it that drives you to put so much time, effort, stress, etc. to make the world a better place?"

A: "This is some question! But the answer is simple. Hope. Love. Faith. Strength." (Melillo, E-mail)

In addition to the interview, many things can be learned about Stephen Melillo by reading his web page. Here you see that he is much more than just a composer. The following is a list of some other accomplishments that he has achieved over the years. Steve earned a Black Belt in Tae Kwon Do, Judo and others. In 1975 he earned first place at the East Coast Film Festival and at the Fairfield County Television Production competition. From 1976 through 1980, Stephen Melillo was on the Dean's list with honors at the Boston Conservatory of Music. He received the New York Academy of Science Grant to

create programs for computer-music composition and programming in 1982. In 1989 Steve won the Award of Literacy Excellence from the Iliad Literary Awards program. In 1990 he received the title of Black Belt again, this time in Goju-Ryu and in Wing Chun Gung Fu making his current number of black belts seven. He has also written a young adult novel entitled *Only for Now* and a children's book entitled *Nogard and Dragon*. In 1994 Stephen Melillo received the award of Honorary Citizen of Louisville, Kentucky. As this long list shows, Stephen Melillo's accomplishments far overreach musical bounds. He is an all-around positive influence on society today and will continue to impact future generations. Some people don't understand or appreciate "real" music. However, after hearing Steve's music, learning about his character, and reading his description of great music, you can't help but begin to see what music really is.

Great Music is Timeless. Stripped of its geographical origins, stripped of its creation date in the Timeline of Human History, and... stripped of its vocabulary, Great music is that rare, fleeting glimpse of the Eternal which resides in all of us. Great Music is self-restrained in its quest for the One in the infinitely possible. It is therefore much more a sculpture than a thing which has been built up and pasted into a preexisting model. Yet, Great Music does something more. And so, my definition of Great Music must include something else. Great Music seems to speak consistently about the otherwise indefinable to the greatest number of individuals anywhere in place or Time. (Melillo, Stormworks Web Page)

Stephen Melillo's Strong determination to become a Teacher has impacted the world in several unexpected ways. His music is Energetic, Passionate, and Honest. It is Evident that this New music comes only from the heart. His Musical Enthusiasm and Loving character make him a very Intriguing person. His compositions and other accomplishments show his devotion to Life and Learning. Above all, his Optimistic attitude and willingness to reach out to others has affected many people's musical experiences. His character and music has made an impact that will last forever.

Works Cited

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