



Spring 2019 Convocation Address by Mr. Pat Metheny

Chancellor Meighen; Principal and Vice-Chancellor Fortier; Mr. Panda, Chair of the Board of Governors; members of the platform party, proud parents and guests; and most of all, the graduating class of 2019;

Thank you so much for this amazing honor and for inviting me to be with you today. Congratulations to all of you for your success in completing this stage in your work with a degree from one of the best music schools on the planet here at McGill.

So, the next obvious question is, Ok..now what?

But, the good news is, as musicians, you are uniquely and especially well prepared to deal with that question - because as musicians, the nature of music itself mandates that we all live in a perpetual state of “Now what?”

In fact, the best musicians are “Now-what?” virtuosos. Their embrace of the “Now-what-ness” of life is often among their most defining characteristics. And out of necessity too; being able to effectively respond to what is going on around us as musicians is probably the most essential part of our gig.

Among the many benefits of living a disciplined life in music comes a particular kind of awareness that, as the years go by, I find almost universal applications for.

Regardless of what aspect of music we as individuals are focused on, the ability to listen deeply and respond persuasively to each and every detail of what is going on inside the music we love and are involved with has the interesting side benefit of preparing us for things and conditions that may lie ahead. As we consider the intermediate future maybe we are looking ahead what piece to address next or what new techniques we hope to master, and in the short term we are simply looking ahead far enough to be appropriately in or out of tune with the person sitting next to us over the next 4 bars or so.

But in any case, being able to adjust on the fly to the infinite variables of any specific performance requires a level of sensitivity and resourcefulness that as musicians we almost take for granted; but in fact these qualities offer an endless reserve of benefits in a broader life sense - if only we can tap into them.

But eventually, whether it is in the harsh daylight of having to come up with the next months rent or the proverbial sleepless nights pondering the kinds existential issues that we as musicians tend to specialize in, we find ourselves searching for meaning.

To me, there is a fork in the road at those moments of consideration, where each of us has to address the particulars of the culture that we happened to be born into - and how we might or might not fit into that realm - versus what I would offer is the much more valuable and true currency of meaning that is embedded in what has brought us all here together today. That currency is one that retains its value no matter what oddities the culture might bring, it's a kind of oasis of truth and beauty in the midst of it all

that with sincere dedication is impervious to interruption by the relatively trivial forces of politics or current events;

That is the currency of music itself. I always trust it.

Music retains its shape and spirit always, no matter what. It is a currency where any single hour you devote to it will pay back a hundred hours of insight and wisdom without fail. Inside music one can find everything.

In my case, my conventional academic life was pretty much over by around 8th grade, replaced by an unusual and fortunate set of professional opportunities afforded me at what I see now was an exceptionally young age. But through a deep immersion in music, eventually I learned about science, math, history and politics - and maybe even a few basic social skills too.

I have been incredibly lucky over the years to have lots of opportunities to be around great musicians and the level of recognition that I have received - including today - has been unexpected and incredibly humbling.

But the process of being a musician - that need and desire to want to go home and practice and write or even just listen - that's the part that never changes.

And that remains by far the best part of it all for me.

There is nothing like the feeling where you start with nothing, have a musical idea or concept, and through sweat and hard work, and hopefully a bit of inspiration, you finally end up with a satisfying musical result. And what comes along with that is the realization that you have the capacity to do something that you didn't know you could do.

This is an outcome that throughout our lives as musicians we have endless opportunities to refine and explore. It never goes away; in fact it only gets more intense as you get older and become more fluent in the ways of music.

Knowing and understanding that process can apply to everything in life. Living ones life in a musical way - no matter how it shows up - can be an excellent template and guide for how to solve all kinds of problems - and how to have a great life.

Music is such an unusual thing. You can't see it, you can't taste it or smell it or touch it - but when you walk into a room where music is present at a high level - everything changes. Think about everything it took for you all to get this far in music. You did it! You got this far! And you did it with the singularly odd and unusual fabric of music beneath all of your efforts.

My lovely wife Latifa and my daughter Maya are here with me today and the other day we all went to see the new live action version of "Aladdin". You all know the famous magic carpet sequence where they go flying around the world on a magic carpet ride. I couldn't help but think that the fabric of that carpet had to be made of music itself to be able to do all that.

So go out there in the world and take a ride with the fabric of music as your vessel...have a great life in music and outside of music too.

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Thanks once again for having me today and bestowing this great honor on me!

Thank You!

Pat Metheny

May 29, 2019

Convocation Ceremony for the Schulich School Of Music

May 29, 2019 at 3:00 p.m.

Mr. Pat Metheny

Doctor of Music, *honoris causa*

Text provided by Mr. Pat Metheny