



Appreciation—Who Needs It?

A while ago, I had the privilege of attending a performance by the Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra. You know the scene: distinguished, accomplished musicians enter the stage dressed in black gowns or tuxedos, handling their chosen musical instruments with reverence and care. Then the conductor enters and acknowledges himself as the one who will be driving this conglomerate. The audience applauds.

As a member of the audience, I had, indeed, a very small part of this whole performance. My contribution was to sit quietly, be alert, and listen attentively to each individual as it all blended together. As I listened, I was expected to form some kind of opinion: Did they do a good job? Did I think like what I heard? If my conclusion was positive, I could make some noise, maybe even raise myself to my feet.

Many times since that occasion and recently — while I was watching, listening, and enjoying an orchestral performance broadcast from [Lincoln Center](#) — an observation revisited me. In the course of ongoing growth, a person should observe themselves as a very small part of a lot of performances, musical or otherwise, many of which rarely receive affirmation and for which praise is not the goal.

Is appreciation nice but not necessary? Should we be taught to

look, with deep attention, for the less evident contributor and be sure to compliment, even if it is not expected?

At the same Philharmonic performance, one composition, in particular, had no parts written for the percussion section with its potential to make very large sounds — the kettle, snare and base drums, chimes, marimba, xylophone, and various clappers, and gourds — until the very end of the piece. The final note, the final tone, of this lovely orchestral creation, came from none other than the triangle, a small piece of metal that is suspended from a string. It is played by striking it with a metal rod in the hand of the accomplished percussionist.

He stood up ceremoniously, about 15 measures from the end of the page of music. He raised his left arm holding the triangle so as to be seen by the conductor. In his poised right hand we could see the 6-inch rod. From the conductor, at the precise moment, came the direction as if to say, “The moment is yours to capture.” The triangle was tapped just once, a single tone, much to the delight of everyone’s ears.

How could we thank these musicians for all their years of practice and cooperation, tireless dedication, to give to us this experience of sound, harmony and feeling? Indeed, this was a singular experi-

ence never to be forgotten. Oh yes, we did our part too. Within seconds, the audience “made noise” in return, granted, a feeble expression by comparison, and rose up to our feet, an irrepressible affirmation for the total group. (*I could mention that Van Cliborne was the pianist performing in this production. One was not sure that the triangle wasn’t meant to “steal the show.”*)

- What if we were trained to look into the complexities of the gifts we receive each day and be sure to “make some noise” on behalf of the creator?
- Would each of us become more aware of our own impact and significance?
- Would each of us be inspired to affirm the parts that contribute to the whole?
- Would a tendency toward cooperation and tolerance become more dominant than self-centeredness, greed, criticism cynicism, and all those other “isms” that impede natural harmony?

The sun goes down. The sun comes up, and each day is an orchestrated performance for all to observe. When the curtain closes again, the conductor affirms, “It is good. Thank you for your contribution. Be back tomorrow each of you. We will do it again, and it will be a fine performance.”



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