



THE CRAFT

Tools of Whimsy

History reminds us that making music is good for our well-being

Over the last 10 years, my wife and I have talked a great deal about a concept we've come to describe with the word "whimsy." I've watched artists, writers, painters, musicians, and other makers and doers around us who build their lifestyles around what this word signifies. Some might describe the idea in terms of delightful inefficiency, playful irrever-

ence, or inclusion of the unnecessary. Yes, it's all of those. It's the desire to include creativity and fun in our endeavors. But I think there's more to the idea than just this.

Some of the oldest artifacts archeologists have found are primitive utensils — mortar and pestles for grinding up grains or tree nuts — arrow and spear points, and the remains of

encampments. These things don't come as a surprise; they're bits of evidence that tell of the core necessities of staying alive. What might seem odd, however, is that primitive musical instruments have also been found among these ancient essentials. If I imagine myself living thousands of years ago, it seems hard to believe that my list of priorities would be to first find

some food to eat, a cave to protect myself from being eaten by a big creature, and then make a flute to play some songs by the fire.

But perhaps it shouldn't be. Music has always been a form of communication and expression, as well as the decoration of passing time. Perhaps those distant ancestors played songs and told stories huddled around a campfire in order to keep each other from being afraid of the wild creatures roaming in the dark. Perhaps they also discovered that music can offset the mundane aspects of life. Art and music make life beautiful in addition

lies what may be its most profound beauty. The guitar has the ability to make a person's life better. More specifically, I think a person's well-being is enhanced when they have the ability to express themselves in a musical language. It's as though engaging in the music-making experience gives us entry into a world of whimsy, where we can safely say what we want to say, and wrestle with what ails us with creativity and playful irreverence. We can make sense of what we see. Playing music can be the way joy is expressed when words don't fully explain or contain it. Equally important, playing music allows

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to being a form of communication.

Deep within the human spirit we find creativity — the appreciation and desire for beauty — and somehow we know there is an inherent good when we find true beauty. This beautiful good is the antidote for the drab and mundane. When it is welcomed, its warmth casts new light and causes a shift in perspective. I like to think of the shift as one from staying alive to being alive.

For me and presumably for others, the guitar and its music provide a much-needed dose of this beauty every day. We get to revel in the physical beauty of the instrument as an object: the richness and color contrasts of its woods, the multi-dimensional shimmer of a spruce top. There is the visual delicacy of inlays placed just so, and the allure of the instrument's figure. There is the aroma that wafts from the raw interior surface of the timbers, a remnant of the exotic locations where the woods formerly lived as trees. We feel the sensation of strings simultaneously taut and lithe against our fingertips and hear the harmonious sound of tones complementing each other, affirming each other's beauty. The guitar is without question a multi-sensory piece of artwork.

Then there is the music it creates. It's difficult for me to fully take in the vastness of the guitar's repertoire over centuries, as it reaches from the time-honed works penned by titans of music's history to the simple yet meaningful tunes strummed by a student. The guitar's voice is capable of expressing thoughts and feelings in ways that words fail. It inspires, weeps and empathizes; it calms, excites and explains; it moves us. I believe therein

to us share our stories as a way to keep from being afraid of the wild creature roaming in the dark.

For me, playing guitar has been the entry ticket into this world of wonder. After all, a guitar is a perfect balance of beauty and practicality. It's simple and portable. It's a curvy hollow box with strings stretched over it. Yet it is so elegant that the great composer Frederic Chopin once declared, "Nothing is more beautiful than a guitar, save perhaps two."

These are the reasons I'm so deeply thrilled for us to introduce our new Academy Series guitars, as well as our little bass. These instruments are full of whimsy and beauty in their simplicity. They're approachable, maybe even humble to some. Yet they offer an entry ticket into the musical world where one might not have existed before. My hope as both a guitar maker and player is they'll take on a life of their own in the hands of musicians all over the world who use them to tell their stories and make their music. I hope they provide inspiration and a needed outlet for all that we feel and see in life. Finally, I hope they do their part in honoring the trees they are made from, and the musicians they'll serve.

— Andy Powers
Master Guitar Designer