

DR Joseph W POLISI:

Dr Ho, Mr Thomson, honoured guests, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, it's my great pleasure to participate in this extraordinary forum. The ideas discussed during the past four days have been creative and provocative and should have a very positive impact on our understanding of the importance of cultural values in our world today.

Ladies and gentlemen, we live in a time that often avoids distinctions between human achievement and personal celebrity. Success in the arts today is most frequently measured in money earned, Hollywood proudly announces the weekly grosses of newly released movies and declares successes or failures based on the ledger sheet.

Broadway and even Lincoln Centre in New York, measure success in comparatively the same way. In the early 21st century, artistic success is often inextricably linked to financial success. However, such was not always the case. One of my favourite stories exemplifies well the power of art and not money as being the progenitor of most creativity.

When the noted American composer William Schuman, who later became president of the Juilliard School and of the Lincoln Centre, was still a young man, he was asked to assist the well-known Broadway producer Billy Rose in co-ordinating the musical portions of an elaborate review entitled The Seven Lively Arts. The presentation would include songs by Cole Porter, new choreography by George Balanchine, and a musical interlude by no less a composer than Igor Stravinski, who eventually entitled the work Scenes de Ballet.

When the Stravinski work arrived, Rose was concerned to see that the instrumentation for the composition required a much larger orchestra than the one Rose wished to use in the pit for the run of the show. So Rose asked Schuman to immediately contact Stravinski to see about reducing the size of the orchestra so as to reduce the weekly payroll of the musicians.

Schuman was of course tremendously reluctant to begin such a sensitive process with one of the giants of 20th century composition without some assurances that Stravinski would agree to readdress the orchestration.

So in an effort to start the process, Rose sent the following telegram to Stravinski:

"Your ballet, a colossal success. Would be even greater success if you agree to certain modifications in instrumentation."

Stravinski wired back:

"Quite content with colossal success."

I certainly wish that we could experience more frequently Stravinski's brand of integrity in all that we address every day. As was noted yesterday in the writings of Confucius, culture is perceived as virtue.

The tradition of educating future generations of performing artists is a process that has existed for thousands of years, whether through apprenticeship, private instruction or formal schooling, the basic goal of the experience has always been to foster an understanding of the traditions of the art form, to develop a technical expertise in order to realise the intentions of the composer and to instill in each new generation a sense of artistry and communication which would make the art compelling to audience members.

In the 20th century, this educational process was significantly regularised through the development of curricula that included private instruction in a specific discipline, courses in music theory, music history, ear training, et cetera, and ensemble experiences, from large symphony orchestras, to chamber groups.

As we move into the 21st century, any serious educator must ask: are the traditions of the past adequate to fulfill our aspirations for generations of the future? It must first be acknowledged that the world of the 20th century is not that of the 21st. Globalisation in all its manifest forms has brought us together in ways that were unthinkable only 20 years ago. With the power of the internet and the focus of the global economy, we are one world, whether we like it or not.

On Friday, Dr Patrick Ho made many perceptive observations which set the tone for this gathering. Specifically, he noted that in the present rising tide of globalisation, it is western values that have become dominant and any discussion of modernity is really a discussion of values. Those values, whether from the East or West, have often been challenged by the extraordinary power of western popular culture, which has made our young people share a wealth of common experiences from rap music to electronic games.

Although we may not agree with the content of these modern cultural vehicles, we must acknowledge that these experiences have had a profound impact on how we communicate. At the same time, I must sincerely question if the quality of the content of our discourse has in fact improved.

However, since I'm fundamentally an optimistic person, I remind us all of the exceptionally positive elements that come from the results of our closer world community. Let us remember the excellent programme we heard on Thursday presented by the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra. The programme consisted of a short work written by an American composer, John Adams, dealing with a US president's visit to China in the 1970s followed by a work by a Chinese composer educated in China and France, Chen Qigang, which mixed Chinese traditional instruments and vocal styles with a western symphonic orchestra and finally, a performance of Stravinski's Rite of Spring, the 20th century seminal work which reflects the complexity and sheer power of what we know as symphonic music today.

Such a programme would be unheard of 100 years ago. So we must also be grateful to the technologies that have brought our diverse cultures together in our modern age.

In fact, this forum alone stands as a great example of the positive impacts of technology and of globalisation, the opportunity to come together, to share ideas and to explore ways that we can work together in the future.

As the president of the Juilliard School, there's not a day that passes without myself asking if the curriculum we offer to our students will prepare them for the demands of the future. Let me share with you a few thoughts.

What clearly has remained constant over the centuries in music instruction is the need to acquire technique in order to realise a musical idea. No matter how creative the imagination of a young musician may be, without having the technique to realise those ideas, the process will be ultimately thwarted. Therefore, young musicians from Hong Kong to New York practice to develop the intellectual and muscle memory that will be needed to be a complete musician.

But we also know that the acquisition of technique is simply a means to an end. Technique must be used in the service of artistry, so that the next generation of artists can effectively communicate the profound content of great music to a population that desperately needs such enrichment for solace, for joy and for human fulfilment.

The bridge between the acquisition of technique and the language of artistry is an elusive one, sometimes never found by many, many musicians.

Expert technique can become a goal in and of itself, but such a goal is shallow and ultimately empty. It is therefore the responsibility of every serious school of music around the world to constantly urge their students to communicate with an audience, not simply to get the notes right.

This goal can be achieved through the guidance of a distinguished faculty, an involvement in chamber music for all musicians so that they can learn to listen to each other and through a high degree of intellectual stimulations that students must experience in the classroom.

In America today, there is also an ongoing emphasis on non-artistic studies in the liberal arts which provide an intellectual depth and discipline which have a positive impact on artistic and non-artistic endeavours alike.

At Juilliard I have also made a longstanding effort to prepare our students to be artist citizens, the title of my book, capable of understanding how America's politics, economics and society work so that these young artists can be effective advocates for the arts in our school systems and in our communities around the nation.

In addition, the artists of the future must be technologically conversant with the many new applications of the arts that are being developed almost on a daily basis. There is little question that in the future, technology will be a driving force in the development of new art forms and it is the professionally educated artist who should be at the forefront of such endeavours.

Let's also remember, however, that the music profession has been dealing with new technology for centuries. Think of the virginal, the harpsichord, the forte piano and the modern piano and one realises that improvements have always been the goal of each generation.

Whether a string is plucked with a quill or hit with a hammer, it must be noted it is the human being at the keyboard who makes the difference, not the technology that produces the sound.

Today at Juilliard almost three-quarters of the students we have are also involved in so-called outreach programmes which take them out of our building and into hospitals, hospices, AIDS centres, et cetera, to share their art with a wide variety of audiences who are deeply moved by these performances. These outreach endeavours have been one of the most effective ways of showing our students how powerful art can be.

Far from being an institution that curates the experiences of the past, the modern conservatory must be a beacon for progressive artistic change driven to develop a level of excellence for its students and to project a compelling belief that artists have a fundamental role to play in world societies.

Yesterday morning, I had the privilege of attending a rehearsal of the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre's production of *Deling de Empress Dowager Chi Si* starring Lisa Lu. One unique element of the show as many of you know is that it will be presented in both Cantonese and Mandarin at separate performances. Since I regrettably speak neither language, I was not sure what I would understand at the rehearsal.

Although I do not claim that I understood most of the words spoken, I did see the anger, the fear, the gentleness and the compassion that were

included in the text of the play. Human emotions that are common to all cultures and are manifested through the power of art and the expertise of the actors.

In this way, I was able to understand better the human condition and really after all, isn't that fundamentally what the artistic experience should be? Returning to Dr Ho's words at the beginning of the forum, I am still struck by his comment that, "Culture is not a by-product. It stands at the very foundation of our civilisation. It binds us together and cements our identity."

Oh, do I wish that a government official from my country would speak such perceptive words.

America is a much misunderstood country today. Please remember that the actions of a government often do not represent the values of a people. There are large segments of the American population who embrace the same values of community, compassion and fair play that we know exist in other parts of the world. As Mr Zhong A-Cheng eloquently explained yesterday, there's a continuing dichotomy between so-called martial culture and civility.

I have personally seen the arts transform individuals through their profound power to explicate elements of the human condition which are often needed to be understood. This forum exists as a true effort to share the ideas relating to the common aspects of our diverse cultures. At our foundation all human beings share basic values which are often manifested through artistic experience.

With an understanding of our cultural tradition and a desire to embrace the future with respect for what has come before, we will be able to develop a model that will ensure that future generations can flourish in an environment of tolerance and respect for our differences, as well as an understanding of our common human values.

Thank you very much.