

AiDahoudi **Personal Reflection**

Before starting with my musicology class, I had these negative feelings of being afraid that I will not understand the course or get anything useful out of it. The fact that I had never taken any courses related to music in any way created assumptions in my head that I wouldn't be interested in any of the topics discussed during the course. Nevertheless, surprisingly and quickly, these feelings started to evaporate from my body after the first assignment. I was assigned to present on what many think is the greatest jazz artist, Louis Armstrong. I honestly didn't know who he was or what he did. I was not aware of his fame or his musical style. When I started this course, my only background knowledge about jazz was being able to identify how it sounds and what instrument are being used, but that was about it.

When I started doing my research about jazz and about Louis Armstrong, I realized what I was missing. I realized that behind everything, no matter whether big or small, there is a story, and that this story could be a life changing moment for many people. I had the chance to go in depth and learn about the history of jazz music: how it evolved; where it evolved; and why it was actually created. Finding the answers to these questions was enough reason for me to change my perception on jazz specifically and on music in general. I didn't just learn about the music itself, its styles, rhythms and structure, but I also learned about its origins and its beginnings. I realized that jazz was not only music to listen to and enjoy but story telling as well. It was actually a weapon Afro-Americans discovered to fight against racism and segregation. They created this music to express their feelings in a time when no one cared about them. It was their sound and it succeeded to not only spread all over the United States but around the world.

I was ignorant to think that jazz music was boring and had no meaning, just because I didn't like the sound of it. But it's amazing how my interest in listening to the music changed after learning about its history. I became increasingly curious about jazz. I was able to go back in history, to the early 1920s and 30s and realize how revolutionary jazz was at that time. Although it is not quite as influential currently, its history proves that it is a great form of music with many origins, a multigenerational life span, many musical legends, and the creative interpretations it has to offer.

Learning about several jazz artists was a great experience as well, but my most interesting experience was learning about Louis Armstrong, the artist I did my presentation on. He was one of the greatest jazz artists ever; not only in the past but to this day he is still the legacy of jazz. He didn't start his life that way. He didn't become famous out of nowhere. Armstrong lived a very hard life as child, yet many of us would not think he was kid from a very poor and unknown family in New Orleans. I learned that he actually worked on some odd jobs, selling coal and delivering news papers during his childhood. He was trying to live and support his family at the age of 11.

But after these struggles and hard moments that Armstrong faced in his early life, his perseverance paid off and he got what he deserved the most. He became what he had always dreamed of becoming: the greatest trumpet player of all times. He became wealthy and famous, but do you think this wealth and fame made him forget about his origins? No, he didn't forget where he came from. One story which I read while I was doing research tells me what he was like as a person. I read that one night Armstrong was giving a concert in Baltimore, Maryland, when he realized that many people in Baltimore weren't even able to heat their homes. So he ordered a ton of coal for each of them. He felt empathy for them and that's what a true man could do to show his appreciation for what he has.

Overall, I am very glad and thankful for this learning experience. I think I could see it as a start for me to rethink about how I pursue things which are not in my interest. I always tell myself that there is nothing wrong with not knowing about something, but that it becomes wrong when you have the chance to know about this thing and you prefer not to. This is exactly what happened to me with my musicology course. I didn't know anything about it, but I got the chance to learn and acquire knowledge; I didn't waste me chance and decided to learn, even though the topic didn't interest me at first. I couldn't agree more with the phrase 'Life is a learning experience, either you take it or you lose it,' At the end of the day, I went home with a new piece of information, and that is what counts.