

Personal Growth College Essay Example

I first became aware of the transformative power of music in the winter of 1992 when I attended my first live concert. This was my first weeknight excursion with my father, the culmination of many episodes of desperate begging and pleading. Dolly Parton. The sound of her name alone was enough to get my pulse racing, my feet tapping. I knew every chord, every lyric, of every song. However, if Dolly had walked past me on the street I would not have recognized her. Up until this concert I had only experienced music through my 1960s era Realistic? radio. It was neither an attractive nor a reliable piece of equipment: paint-splattered, with a broken antenna and a faulty speaker which gave way to a gritty, faltering sound. I had never been disappointed by it. This night would leave my expectations forever changed.

In person, Dolly's singing was crisp, processed, easier to digest, and presented with an intensity that my radio had somehow filtered out. I was captivated, absorbing every word and every visual cue from this highly engaging and amusing speaker. I grinned, and danced. I stood on my seat in my effort to hear better, to get a better view of the stage. I marveled at how lucky I was to be in the presence of such a beautiful and talented woman, whose sequins and smiles lit up the theatre in rapid succession.

I left the concert feeling utterly elated. I had discovered a new context in which to set my musical appreciation. This revelation would set me on a search for more moments where I could be similarly elevated, a search that continues to this day. With these memories in mind I once again sought out a Dolly Parton show this past October. My hope was to rekindle the emotions this experience had stirred in me as a child. What I saw in this revisit, however, was a complete reversal. From this vantage point I could see that the idol of my childhood was lip-syncing every word. She merely pretended to play the instruments set before her, and the onstage banter that had once titillated me now seemed crude and unsophisticated. I did not dance, and I rarely smiled. As I began to second-guess my memory of my first concert, my attention drifted away from the stage. Then I spotted her—a younger girl standing in the front row. Eyes widened, she stood motionless, mesmerized by the scene before her. We experienced the same concert, but while she longed to be pulled in, I could not help but pull away.

My first concert instilled in me a wonderful sense of what the visual components of a live show can yield—a magical and enlightening experience that entertains without detracting from the music. I found myself unable to recreate the feelings it stirred in me. However, I do not regret my attempt to discover them anew, as I realized something important about the moments I inhabit. Even if I were given the opportunity to return to the exact place and time of the first Dolly Parton performance, I would still not feel completely the same as I once did. Experiences are shaped not only by the circumstances that surround them, but also by the perspectives that we bring. Perceptions change and evolve inevitably as the mind matures. This is a process that should not be lamented, but rather, embraced. It is what fueled my search for Dolly's music in the first place, and it motivates me to search for the next music, the next transformative experience that will resonate with my present state of mind. My first concert showed me that the search is worthwhile. My revisit demonstrated to me that the search will never end, nor should it.