

Intermission

Brianna Richardson

the plunge

left arm tenses—
or is it mind?

to pick up this instrument—
my violin untouched
for fear

of re-injury.

can it be done?
or not done, to leave
a passion such as this untapped
in failure?

to leave such a vivid wound
behind to smolder
on its own frame
of bitterness, in form
of scalding fire?

I cannot, in conscience,
let it fall to that—except

to plunge amid the twisting cliffs
of gravel, and pick up those shattered
bits of wood, for what remains.

Poison

She trudges up the walkway to my
door,
defeat apparent: another
musician injured by their joy
of playing, intense expression
overloading an already tired body's
outer limbs and core.

I do my best to help, offering
what little knowledge I can
from my own past injuries,
but there is only so much
I can do. Our bodies
are not the same, our tissues ripped
in different parts of weakness.

Each tidbit of knowledge
could be infiltrated
by my uneducated, unproved
knowledge of experience.
There is so much to know, to build
upon this necessary education—

but all the while I wait
to grasp it, my fellows are falling
by the wayside unable,
in their injured state, to do anything
at all
to express their pain—

their life.

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As she steps across the threshold,
an inner calm radiates
from her balanced footsteps,
enveloping the room: a spark
of inspiration refracting exponentially
with each new life she touches.

One, a musician, shares
her new awareness with her students,
her fellows in the orchestra;
another, a dancer, takes it to his
workplace, the studio, to save the
bodies
of his peers.

No longer will we move
with jarring haste, forgetting
where the heart of movement dwells.
No longer will we live rigidly
on our unaltered avenues—

Within Her presence
we cannot help but move
with more fluidity and balance,
accepting ourselves and our bodies
as we step out from within ourselves
into the world.

This set of poems, "Assorted Poetry on Musician Health," was written from both my own experience as an injured violist and my exposure to other injured musicians through the injury prevention program that I am involved in at the University of Puget Sound. I hope they will help physicians and other health professionals understand some of the psychological difficulties that may impede the recovery process of their patients from the performing arts field.

Additional poems from this series appeared in the September 2008 issue of MPPA.

Ms. Richardson is a music student at the University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, WA. She has been studying viola for 10 years and plans to pursue her interest in musicians' health through graduate studies in occupational or physical therapy.

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