My Listening Path

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Abstract

Jiyu Li explores music as a defining aspect of his life.

KEYWORDS: music, life experiences, memories, mother, mom, nostalgia, journaling, CD, Chinese, Chinese music, ESL, international student, English, English Education
When I was young, my mother liked to play some soft and romantic CDs when she was doing housework, and when I went back to home I was always reading my favorite books and waiting for my dinner. I like these songs, and they strongly influenced my taste of music. And my mother also loved to teach me her favorite songs and told their stories.

However, when I was going to middle school, I met many cool boys and became friends with them; one of them told me that my music taste was too old fashioned, and I needed to make some changes and try young people’s trends, such as Britney Spears, Hamasaki Ayumi and Jolin Tsai. There are plenty of singers whose famous songs I could name and sing during that period. I was checking top rankings every week and showing them off to friends to show I was staying in fashion. We want to be similar and are afraid to be strange in our group. That makes all of us feel tired. Especially when some high-ranking music is not my taste and I try to get interested in them, these boring high ranking songs.

Predictably, my middle school friends and I did not talk too much about music after we were going to high school. However, listening to music was still an inseparable part of my life. Based on my middle school experience, I had been tired of discussing music. I tried to find something that could show how unique I was. Bob Dylan, Led Zeppelin are the real rock. Guns & Roses and Nirvana are too popular, so they are not true and serious music. I said these statements in public, in front of my friends and enjoyed their admiration. I also rejected their
recommendations. Until one day, I really listened to Guns & Roses’ version of “Knockin’ on heaven’s door.” It’s so intense, and it has a great purpose. Then I changed my mind; I liked this version more than Dylan’s version. Then I replayed Nirvana’s songs and other songs of Guns & Roses. I felt I was too superficial. If I rejected to hear some kinds of music and judge them without listening, what I was listening for?

Now I try to listen to music based on my taste; that is hard and not easy to do. Until one day, when I was arranging my old desk, I found several CDs on the bottom layer of this desk. Their old fashion covers brought me back to my old time when I had been listening to them with my mom. I put one of them in my laptop’s CD player. Everything was back again, the shine of dusk, tiny sounds of cooking in the old kitchen, familiar voice from the daily room. I was following singing the song with the CD, and my mind was juggling between the reality and the imagination. Yesterday once more. I cycled all these songs in that CD plenty of times until my mother was calling me for dinner. I took the last CD out of my laptop carefully and rechecked that all of them were in good condition; then I went out of my bedroom because I knew what I should do after finishing my dinner.

I have to replay all my albums tonight.