**Music classes in school – a misunderstood and mismanaged subject.**

It’s that time of the year again. The sun is starting to show its colours through the usual heavy cloud-cover of winter, the flora and fauna are beginning to sprout through the soil, and everybody is staying inside, six feet apart from everybody else in the world. Alright – so maybe it isn’t a *normal* way to experience this time of the year. But, if you trickle it down to the barest essentials of what you can consider a time of the year, it is still this time of the year. And one of the most common things that happen around this time of the year is all the secondary schools begin banging on to the students about ‘subject choices’ and ‘life decisions’ and ‘Hey! Stop licking that window!’ and other such nonsense. When the time finally comes, however, the students anxiously look at the piece of paper or website they’ve been given and proceed to make a choice that will dictate their life for at minimum the next two years of their life, and perhaps even seep into the rest of their time on this earth as well.

One subject, however, that is rarely picked or often left as a last choice, is music. Students often either do not care for the subject or have done the subject and decided not to carry on with the subject in the last few years of their secondary education.

I believe this is a shame. While music is not a subject for everybody, I believe that it should be more popular than it currently is. Music is, in a sense, one of the main essences in life and understanding the world. It is, in some cases, a proto audio book that tells you the short story of an individual. And in other cases, long-winded, powerful, full novels that have a glorious ending. While that is perhaps an exaggerated way of describing contemporary and classical music respectively, it is true to an extent that music is a way of communication. Earliest forms of music were in rituals and telling a story to your friend Gnorshk about how that day you managed to kill *two* birds with one stone (would you believe it?). Nowadays music can be a part of many genres. The average person could turn on the radio and listen to a selection of currently popular songs and zone out for a few hours. Those with an interest in a more specific genre such as alternative (for its melodic and mellow sounds) or something such as hard rock or heavy metal (for their aggressive and catchy riffs), or any other genre, can nowadays do so with incredibly useful streaming applications such as Spotify or Apple Music.

To get back to music as a subject, however. Having done music in school for my first year before having to leave to move to a different part of the country, I feel like I can say a few things about it.

First, and probably the only real thing that can be said about it: it’s boring.

Now, the entertainment factor of anything is obviously subjective. However, I feel like a majority of those who don’t keep music up are those who found the subject boring. But I also feel that you can’t chalk it down to the people themselves just not enjoying music. I know a few people myself, other than myself, who enjoy music very much and did music in school, and then when the subject choices rolled themselves around before them, simply closed their eyes and hoped that the choice of music would just *go away*. Even people such as my guitar teacher who *taught music in schools for years before becoming a guitar teacher* thought that music was boring to the average student. Which brings us to the why.

Music in schools is taught in a strange and archaic way. While, the theory you’re taught is the same theory that technically forms the base of highly technical and popular songs such as ‘baa-baa black sheep, and ‘baby shark’, they tend to use weird names for notes such as ‘semibreve’, ‘minim’, ‘crotchet’, ‘quaver’, ‘semiquaver’ etc. etc. And while these are, for all intents and purposes, the correct way to call these notes, they are also just sort of a strange extra work one must go through to refer to a ‘whole note’, ‘half note’ ‘quarter note’, ‘eighth note’ ‘sixteenth note’ etc. etc.

That’s just one example I can think of. Another one is teaching students about classical composers and the like – *within the first three years of school. ­* That’s not to say that knowing the history of music isn’t important. It is very important, but it is also extremely boring. At least a subject such as art won’t throw that kind of thing at you until the leaving cert where, let’s face it, you’re in it for the long haul now buddy and there’s no way to go back to the beginning of 20XX and to re-pick your subjects.

During a time of great confusion, anxiety and your crazy doomsday-prepper neighbour laughing at you for not listening to him ten years ago when he was telling you to spend multiple hundreds of thousands to invest in digging a hole into the ground and to cover yourself in multiple layers of steel on the off-chance that the whole world was going to end (Padraig, I’m just saying that if suddenly a meteor hits us and by chance is aimed straight at Ireland, your few layers of steel won’t protect you. It will only turn your bunker into a cool, expensive grave to die in), is it perhaps time to look at our country’s problems, what got us here, and to maybe try and fix them?

Healthcare is a massive bureaucratic mess. The infrastructure at best is mildly confusing and inconvenient, at worst causes mass traffic jams that delay delivering important goods such as medical supplies or spice bags for all the good little boys and girls of Dublin. And, most importantly of all, music classes need to be reformed. It is the only way to increase demand for a subject that, while at the end of the day isn’t fundamental to our lives, is still incredibly important. And along with burning anything we find in the ground to use it in some manner, or not staying inside and instead going on a nice holiday when you suddenly get a bad case of ‘the flu’, is undoubtedly one of the things that makes us human.