

## Liberating Humanity Through the Sounds of Music

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Whether it is the harmonious unity of a choir, the vitality of a symphony, or the sweet rhythms of a singer and a band, music has the power to move a single individual or an entire nation to create enormous value. This is perhaps because music is one of the most accepted art forms, being a key component of culture and a universal form of beauty.

In his discussions on the topic of “Art vs. Arrogance,” President Ikeda noted, “Culture and art should be shared and enjoyed by all. They do not discriminate. When we encounter beauty, we return to the essence of our humanity, where all people are equal...Art is the liberation of the humanity inside yourself.” This understanding of music forms the basis of Abel Hassing’s passion and inspiration for music.

Abel is an accomplished musician living in Montreal, who studied at the American School of Modern Music in Paris, France, and in March 2001, released his first album titled *Implicite*. Abel sees music as having a positive impact both personally and socially, and as such, is a vehicle for his own enlightenment and that of others. For him, creating music is a liberating experience, fulfilling his need to express himself beyond words and gestures. From a social perspective, music is an art form that “has no borders. No matter what creed, colour, language or culture a person has, when he or she plays with other musicians on stage, or when he or she listens to others play, all barriers cease to exist,” he said. “This ‘universal language’ is like daimoku and goes beyond rational explanation. The best way to understand this language is with the concept of *itai-doshin*, many in body, one in mind.”

For Abel, Buddhism has been instrumental in his musical pursuits. Not only does his practice provide inspiration, but it also helps him overcome the daily struggles musicians and many artists must face. “It is a daily struggle because one’s ‘work’ is evaluated in terms of financial gain,” he said. “Music has become an ‘industry’ in today’s world and to survive, an artist must make many compromises.”

“A good philosophy helps us to keep focused and to go in the right direction,” Abel said. “But our egos are the worst danger in this business. We are sometimes pulled between external forces (social norms) and inner forces (our lesser ego), and so the artist must become stronger, wiser, and more capable of using his or her infinite resources in very practical ways. In addition, artists must also direct others toward this universal consciousness--which in Buddhism is the ninth consciousness—because this ‘Buddha nature’ is inside everyone.”

Abel sees the great potential music has in creating value in society. “An artist should bring people together with his or her art. It should cause people to exchange their ideas about peace, the meaning of life, the positive and the negative, friendship, co-existence in the most positive sense, and so on. The themes are infinite,” he said.

Overall, Abel said, “My wish is to have people discover the various cultures of the world and to open their minds in this way. My Buddhist practice is, in every respect, indispensable and my art is a *process* and not the final goal. The final goal for me is to raise my own awareness and thereby also permit others to do the same.”

