



Music, passion, sweat and tears.
The scent of kindness.

Text by **Manrico Padovani**

Photos by **Alberto Ghizzi Panizza**

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GentleBooklets It is a series of long-form articles written by different authors. The booklets, designed for a quick read, feature texts and images. We have kindly asked to the authors to comment on the term “kindness.” Authors and photographers have donated their work.

The motivations behind the project are the same as those of Gentletude, the desire to spread awareness about the need for “kindness” in our society, a society too focused on personal success to remember the basics of everyday living and respect for the environment that hosts us.

Our decision to present these ideas in a series of publications is due to the awareness that, in order to stimulate people to think about these issues, it is necessary to present some concrete examples. In this case, the examples are provided in the texts written by the authors.

To fall in love with music

My approach to music and violin has been spontaneous; nobody forced me, and I was not a precocious player of any instrument; partly because in my family there were no musicians who could lead me on their path; one of my uncles painted, sang and loved opera very much, another played the clarinet, but they were just amateurs. Anyway, even before discovering the violin, I felt keen on music: I sang in tune, and joined early the parish Church in Chiasso, the city where I grew up.

I fell in love with the violin a few years later, thanks to a film on Niccolò's Paganini life, which I watched almost by chance on TV. That film on the great violinist and composer struck me out of the blue, and changed my life: since then, the real protagonist of my dreams, passions, efforts, failures as much as successes, has been my violin, and of course my own "realization" through it.

I remember pretty well my first contact with a violin. I was in primary school, and the music teacher chose me, and other talented children,





to perform in the concert of end term playing a recorder, a kind of flute. We used to rehearse in the morning, before lessons began; at the end of a particular session, another pupil and I remained a little longer with the teacher; the man pulled out his violin from the case and began playing. I was fascinated: “Can you believe it? It seemed a whole orchestra!”, I said to my friend. “Oh, yes, but let’s go, we are late...”, he answered. I was struck, he just wasn’t.

When I told my father that I would have loved playing the violin, he just thought it was a passing fancy. In truth, usually one thinks that the violin is an instrument for sensible kids, quiet and diligent. I was none! I was wild and rather lively, I broke windowpanes, I climbed on the roof (and on trees, too), I could hardly follow the rules; at school, as you can easily imagine, my behavior was often wanting. Today they would say I was a hyperactive boy. This trait of my character convinced my parents that they would better deny my desire of playing the violin, as they were certain that in a few days I would change my mind. They were mistaken.

At last, I finally put my hands on a violin. A boy

in my class gave it to me as a gift: he had tried to play for a couple of months, but had soon realized that it was more than he could handle, and locked it back in the drawer. This has been my first instrument, a violin I still keep lovingly. Since the first time I put it on my shoulder, I could play without effort a few melodies and songs I had just heard.

The following step, then, was to find someone who would teach me how to play. There was an old musician: he was ill and could not play any longer, but he had a profound knowledge of music. He soon recognized my passion and natural talent for this instrument, so he took my education to heart and, for three months, he met me every day for our lesson, charging my parents no more than the classical “one hour-a-week”, so that I could learn quickly. It was a strange situation for a teen-ager, and I had the feeling of living in absolute identity with the instrument. All my efforts aimed to learn its secrets; I even went to bed with my violin. It was the beginning of a true love.

My first challenges were Paganini and Bach’s scores. My teacher appreciated my progress





that, he said, was very rare; yet, my father was not convinced. A year later, I felt it was time to change; I started a new course, led by a woman violinist who played in the orchestra of Italian Switzerland. My father was confused: the daredevil and listless kid had left place to a more resolute and sensible boy. He decided to put my attitude to test, and allowed me to take part in the Youth National Contest in Switzerland, where I won a prize. He finally realized that my passion was a vocational call.

Thanks to the success obtained in this contest, I was admitted to the Swiss Youth Orchestra without having to pass an entry exam. I sat among the first violins, though I was the youngest member. They called me “little evil”.

My father, still not convinced, decided then to send me for a rehearsal at the presence of the vice-director of the Zurich Conservatory. He declared that I would be one of the brightest pupils, and strongly advised me to apply.

After I passed the admission test, my father finally decided to back me, both financially and psychologically, during the whole course of my studying.

At first, in Zurich I was shocked: the other students were all 5-10 years older than I was. Further, as it had been my own choice, I had to behave differently from ground school. I had 8-9 lessons a week, starting at 8.00 AM on Monday – a course I could hardly attend to – until 11.00 AM on Saturday. I had much free time, which I was supposed to spend exercising on my instrument, while until then I had never played longer than an hour a day. Last but not least... I could not speak German!

All of sudden, I was a teen-ager in a cold, new city, with no friends, and (too) much free time. Surely, it has been the worst time in my life, but these years forged my character, and mostly matured me. My commitment could only become deeper. I endured many sacrifices, but today I may affirm that the many satisfactions my violin procured have fully repaid me: being able to amaze and give emotions in those who listen is an extraordinary joy.





The social value of music

Everybody knows that music has a highest social value: it reunites people, groups, the whole human kind. It may be a simple melody - as during the concerts, when in a stadium everybody sings holding the lighter to emphasize the emotional commitment - or the national hymn, that revives the fierceness for the fatherland. Music eases the inner dialogue, in a truer contact with oneself, and stirs deep feelings and strong emotions.

Music also share dreams. Daniel Barenboim's Israeli-Palestinian orchestra "West-Eastern Divan" gathers Israeli and Palestinians musicians, reuniting - thanks to music - two peoples at war. Another very significant example is the Venezuelan youth orchestra "Simon Bolivar", the ripest fruit of the public musical education: widespread, access-free for children and kids of every social level, it was started in the '70s in Venezuela.

The project saved hundreds of thousands street children, giving them a music education and stimulating the practice of group music that gave birth to many symphonic orchestras and

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chorus as a mean of organization and enhancement of communities.

The multiple and rich emotions that music evoke may offer a chance off dire conditions. This happened to me, too: when I was young, many of my dearest friends, excessively eager, like me, lived borderline experiences, sometimes with dramatic consequences.

That is why I may say without fear that music protected me from going astray; I finally could conceive a project, and was touched by a deep sense of beauty.

Music: a concept with no limits nor boundary lines

Of course, music may have a central role in the life of everyone willing to try this experience. That is why the musical education must not be underrated: music is at the same time a mathematical science, a foreign language, some physical education and history. Music is rhythm; it enhances insightfulness and concentration. I believe that its future is the “Crossover”, i.e. music building bridges between different styles; historic connections, but mainly geographic.





Music is everywhere; even a refrigerator makes “noises” that can be called music; the only sound that is not music is the digital silence, the absolute void.

A piece of music can emphasize whatever situation, every important event corresponds to a song, and every historical time has its own taste, therefore its musical language.

What about the extraordinary evocative power of music? It can express sensations, even more than smells and perfumes: is there anybody who cannot remember the sound tracks accompanying his/her love affair, or the nursery rhymes learnt as a child? How many times to listen to a song brings to memory images and past experiences, and thus a heart wrenching melancholy? Music is an art that doesn't speak any language, and everyone perceive it because it doesn't need to be re-read; everyone takes possession in a subjective way, and uses it according only to his or her own perception. It has no limits nor boundary lines, there are no walls or forbidding rules: it is the land of freedom.

Music as a communication mean

The greatest desire of a music player is to communicate in his/her own way, with his/her awareness and perception, what the composer wrote. For example, in his “Four Seasons” Vivaldi dedicates a part of Autumn to the drunkards who celebrate after vintage, another to the hunting men, a third to the dance...

The player will empathize with each piece, trying to recreate the emotions that Vivaldi put in black and white; that means playing “unsteadily” where the drunkards are evoked, even stressing a rhythmic hesitation, or emulating hiccups, that are characteristics of drunk people.

At the contrary, he who plays a sweet, singing melody will have to render minimal accents to perform what in music is called a “long phrase”. A single note, played in different ways, may express many emotions.

When I have to play any piece - dramatic, merry, intimate or very vivacious - my preparation goes through three different moments.

First, I have to assimilate the piece; then, I have to make it my own, absorbing it at an emotional level, and – last - I have to disclose the result. In this third step, I often record my execution





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to understand how I perceive the piece. In conclusion, I take extreme care of the rendering, sometimes almost maniacally.

This quest evolves, as everything.

In other words, when you care deeply for details, the perception and appreciation level rises.

**The melody of Gentleness:
passion, patience, care in building
what you most desire**

I think that gentleness is not a goal, but an important attitude for conveying a message. Anyway, a kind approach in a given situation creates harmony, especially if it appears as a natural and authentic trait, not a forced one.

It gets best results when accompanied by its own opposite, e.g. heat/cold, bright/dark, day/night, tall/short, joy/sadness etc., so that it is best perceived and understood.

The recently departed actor Robin Williams won many hearts thanks to an authentic, inner kindness.

All the roles he played were pervaded by his courtesy. At the contrary, many people cannot do that, they just don't hit; we listen to them, but

their words don't leave a trace in our souls. I think that learning to listen is paramount, if you want a kind life.

In my life, in my job, I strongly recommend that my public listens to me, but at the same time it's necessary that I, too, am ready to listen and perceive what my public is trying to communicate. Both these actions are essential.

In the everyday life, I may say that if I communicate in a direction, the reaction will go in the same sense. This generates happy relations, so all the deriving, important relationships will have positive basis.

For a music player, to be professionally "kind" means to have passion, patience and care. Reviewing details until your creation assumes the desired shape is the core, and possibly the hardest part, of my job. In music, kindness and attention are similar to those spent while tending to a plant.

You can see it grow, while you take care of it, watering and protecting from excessive heat or cold. My relationship with a music composition, just like a creature, grows and changes, and, for that, requests a continuous attention. In the same way, patience is necessary during the





practicing of a new piece, because one has to wait it reaches full maturity before presenting it to his own public.

On human level, to be kind means, for example, to be patient with other colleagues having problems with a particular passage. In order to achieve a good synergy, everyone has to respect reciprocal rhythms and personal characteristics, trying to be supportive when necessary, and avoiding arrogance or excessive stiffness.

Towards your public, to be kind means to put at ease, to draw attention, to evoke emotions, to amaze and to create a kind of magic. The most appreciated compliment after a concert is, for me, when somebody tells me that I gave gooseflesh. When during an exhibition I can give gooseflesh even to myself – something quite rare – then the joy for the spell is complete.

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AUTHOR

Manrico Padovani

Born in Zurich from Italian parents. As a golden boy, he was awarded many times either in national and international contexts. He has been the first Swiss violin player to perform in concert all Paganini's 24 Capricci in just one night (Zurich, 2006).

He has made a brilliant career in Europe, Asia and the United States, accompanied by great orchestra leaders, such as Rudolf Barshai, and great soloists, as Anne-Sophie Mutter. His technical agility and musical intensity earned him many nicknames, including "Fiddler of the Devil".

He is one of the few to use Leopold Auer's cadence in his recording of Beethoven's Violin Concerto, instead of Kreisler's, normally preferred by other violinists. In the Paganini's Concerto he follows the full cadence of Emile Sauret, the most difficult ever written.

His countless recordings include the major concerts for violin and orchestra. As testimonial of the foundation "Sorella Natura" (Sister Nature) of Assisi, he performed for Pope Benedict XVI in Vatican in the Nervi hall with the Russian-Greek violinist Natasha Korsakova. In 2015 he made his third tour in Japan. He plays a 1870 Stradivarius-Vuillaume.

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PHOTOGRAPHER

Alberto Ghizzi Panizza

Born in Parma in 1975. Enthusiast about technology and computers, he is a pioneer of digital photography, that he regularly performs since 1998 with his 0.06 megapixel camera. He is member of the Parma photography club "il Grandangolo". In 2011 he became vice president of the Travel Photo Experience Association. Acknowledged as one of the best Italian photographers for macro and landscape photography, he won many prizes, including the Oasis International Photo Contest (2012), the FIAF context of the City of Follonica (2014), the Natural Worlds International Photo Contest (2015). In 2013 he joined the Nikon Professional Services and since then he has been working with various British and American photo agencies. Between 2013 and 2015 his pictures travelled all around the world, and were published in newspapers of several countries, including Daily Record, Daily Telegraph, Daily Mail, Metro, Huffington Post, Le Matin, The Guardian online and Times. Since 2015 he is one of the teachers of the Nikon School and collaborates with Nital. In 2015 he made a report for Nikon and ESO on the Chilean observatories, testing the new Nikon D810A camera. The same images were displayed in the Chile's pavillion at EXPO.
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GENTLETUDE

Gentletude is a neologism composed of the words “gentilezza” (gentleness/kindness) and “attitudine” (attitude). It pursues the aims for a better world without violence, arrogance and rudeness.

A world where caring and paying attention to others, common sense and balanced competitiveness are the most important things.

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that doesn't speak any language,
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