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Editorial: Finding Shalom

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EDITORIAL

FINDING SHALOM

Hayoung Lim

*T*he present editorial is based on the therapeutic moderations of “Finding Shalom, an interactive music-centered psychotherapy” that was presented April 1, 2022, at Oral Roberts University’s 5th annual Healing Concert Series. By reading this editorial, each of you is not just a reader of *The Journal of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning for Christians in Higher Education*, but a client engaging with the human experience of self-compassion through music and text. So please set up a music listening device that can access and play the music recommended in this editorial as we journey through four main stages titled “Encounter,” “Acceptance,” “Self-Compassion,” and finally “Shalom.” Shalom, the Hebrew word for peace, is not simply the absence of war or chaos; it carries with it the connotation of completeness, perfection, contentment, and wholeness.

Encounter

Our first musical piece in the Encounter stage is “Arioso” (<https://youtu.be/fuolPPlv9lk>) by J. S. Bach (2019). I invite you to actively listen to this piece of music (various arrangements are available on YouTube) as you look inwardly and meditate on the word “encounter.” Let the music guide you and speak to you as you think about what encounter means to you. An encounter is defined as an unexpected or casual meeting with someone or something (Oxford English Dictionary, 2022). How interesting that sometimes the very person we’ve spent

the most time with can be the very person that we ignore the most ... ourselves. In the busyness of life, it's so easy to lose sight of the very aspects of who we are. As you listen to this graceful piece by Bach, look inward and encounter the multifaceted layers of who you are—as if walking into a cathedral for the first time, looking all around and admiring the furnishings, glass windows, and every detail designed by the architect. We are God's creation, and he is the architect. Let us take this time to observe how he has created us—not in judgement or self-criticism, but in stillness, admiration, and gratitude.

Acceptance

Contentment does not come from everything going our way. Contentment comes from accepting who we are and being satisfied with what we have. Likewise, contentment and acceptance are the compass points to finding our peace, our Shalom. While listening to another piece composed by J. S. Bach, “Air on the G String” (2009) (<https://youtu.be/U7RYSQvrUrc>), allow the music to serve as a self-reflective mirror where we whisper to ourselves this mindful poem by David Whyte (2021).

Enough

Enough. These few words are enough.
If not these words, this breath.
If not this breath, this sitting here.

This opening to life
we have refused
again and again
until now.

Until now.

Another musical excerpt representing acceptance is titled “Après un Rêve” (<https://youtu.be/E6IPF3JzJsw>) by Gabriel Faure (2020).

Après un Rêve

Dans un sommeil que charmaient ton
image
Je rêvais le bonheur, ardent mirage,
Tes yeux étaient plus doux, ta voix
pure et sonore,
Tu rayonnais comme un ciel éclairé
par l'aurore;
Tu m'appelais et je quittais la terre
Pour m'enfuir avec toi vers la
lumière,
Les cieux pour nous entr'ouvraient
leurs nues,
Splendeurs inconnues, lueurs divines
entrevues.
Hélas! hélas, triste réveil des songes,
Je t'appelle, ô nuit, rends-moi tes
mensonges;
Reviens, reviens, radieuse,
Reviens, ô nuit mystérieuse!

After a Dream

In sleep made sweet by a vision of
you
I dreamed of happiness, fervent
illusion,
Your eyes were softer, your voice pure
and ringing,
You shone like a sky that was lit by
the dawn;
You called me and I departed the
earth
To flee with you toward the light,
The heavens parted their clouds for
us,
We glimpsed unknown splendours,
celestial fires.
Alas, alas, sad awakening from
dreams!
I summon you, O night, give me
back your delusions;
Return, return in radiance,
Return, O mysterious night!

(Johnson & Stokes, 2000)

Self-Compassion

Thus far, music has guided us into a journey of encountering ourselves, accepting, and now let's practice self-compassion. Dr. Kristen Neff (2022, n.p.) wrote the following:

Self-compassion involves acting the same way [feeling moved by others' suffering] towards yourself when you are having a difficult time, fail, or notice something you don't like about yourself. Instead of just ignoring your pain with a "stiff upper lip" mentality, you stop to tell yourself "This is really difficult right now; how can I comfort and care for myself in this moment?"

Self-compassion is not self-pity. It is not self-indulgence. It is not even self-esteem. Self-compassion is a practice that is exercised when we choose self-kindness over self-criticism, engaging with common humanity rather than turning to isolation, and being mindful rather than over-identifying in our shortcomings.

At this time, we invite you into a moment of vulnerability, recognizing areas where we have chosen self-criticism or judgment rather than self-compassion. As we choose to make ourselves vulnerable, we are removing the walls we put within ourselves, stripping ourselves of disguises and engaging with the purity of vulnerability. It is only until we are fully vulnerable that we are ready to accept help, compassion, and kindness. For our next piece, listen to a vocal performance of the song “Ave Maria” (<https://youtu.be/8NyIcCrPnuk>) by 16th century Italian composer Giulio Caccini to embrace your own vulnerability and receive a musical representation of self-compassion.

Shalom

The last piece in finding Shalom is titled “Through the Years” (<https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=EI7wViL2t4s&list=RDAMVMEI7wViL2t4s>). It captures the essence of unconditional and steadfast love through the ups and downs of life. Listen to the music as you read the lyrics, which are a part of the music video link above. Two of the five verses of the song are as follows:

Through the years, you’ve never let me down
You turned my life around
The sweetest days I’ve found, I’ve found with you
Through the years, I’ve never been afraid
I’ve loved the life we’ve made
And I’m so glad I stayed right here with you
Through the years

Through the years, when everything went wrong
Together we were strong
I know that I belong right here with you

Through the years, I've never had a doubt
We'd always work things out
I've learned what life's about by loving you
Through the years

Lamentations 3:22–23 (ESV) conveys a similar message: “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.” It is in God where we find unconditional love; he is our hymn of love, our life song. As we listen to this last song, allow this song to wash over you as we meditate on God’s everlasting love, the Prince of Peace, our Shalom.

I would sincerely hope every reader of *The Journal of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning for Christians in Higher Education* will find “Shalom” in Christ all together.

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