

Living a Simple Life with a Back Porch View

Dear Listener:

Thank you for stopping by for a visit at Living a Simple Life with a Back Porch View podcast! To make it easy, you will find a transcript of each episode. I hope you enjoy the visit!

Episode 15- Music for the Soul

Welcome to Living a Simple Life with a Back Porch View. Thanks for stopping by! Grab a glass of Lemonade, pull up a rocker and join me for conversations about living the Simple Life. Go ahead. Get comfortable and settle in for a good visit. It's time to relax and enjoy!

Almeria, in Act 1, Scene 1 of *The Mourning Bride*, written by William Congreve, issued one of the most misquoted lines we have heard. The actual quote is “Musick has charms to soothe a savage breast.”

From 1697, when she first uttered these words, until today, it has been adapted to a more familiar saying, “Music calms the savage beast.” Either way, music seems to have an almost magical quality. It has the ability to lift our hearts, bring tears to our eyes and flood our minds with memories.

On the farm, my ear is tuned to the music of Nature. In the farm orchestra, the cows have a range from deep bass to high-pitched soprano. The roosters provide a solid, yet a bit off key, tenor. The leaves, the wind and the tree limbs rubbing together offer a background of instruments. This orchestra offers a peace that is hard to find anywhere else.

That is, unless you have a “Pickin’ & Grinnin’” session going on in your kitchen. My Mama was born with a pure soprano voice. As a young woman, she was approached by someone who wanted to train her for the Opera. However, considering it wasn’t one of her big dreams and the cost was too high, she let it slide. But she still loved singing and music.

In her later years, her love of music stirred her interest in learning to play Mountain instruments, such as the dulcimer and autoharp. She also became proficient with the Bodhran – which is a shallow Irish drum usually played with a two-headed stick, and even tried to learn the tin whistle.

My son, James, also is very musically talented. He started with the guitar, and has learned to play the mandolin, lute, dulcimer, and a few other stringed instruments. Not too long ago, he absconded with my accordion. There is no telling how many instruments that kid can play.

So, when he would come to town, there was nothing better than for him and Grandma to gather up and steep themselves in their mutual love of music. And me, with my tin ear, loved to listen. There would be dancing and swaying in time to the music all through the house.

One year for Christmas, I took the small gathering in the kitchen and enlarged it somewhat. I talked my Mama into bringing her dulcimer group down to entertain the Farm Women Exchange members, along with a few guests, for our Christmas celebration. Imagine the sheer pleasure to find out two of the group played the hammer dulcimer! What beautiful music.

In addition to James, my daughter Sarah married John. John is not only a great trumpet player and singer, but he also shares his talent as a leader of a Big Band Group called Johnny P and the Wiseguys. His groups play for a large number of venues and are a joy to listen to. If you're ever in San Antonio, look up where he's playing and tell him I sent you. I promise – it will be an evening of fun and beautiful music!

Music is one of the simple pleasures in life. Anyone who plays music knows that it is almost a mystical pull for musicians to gather together to celebrate the art and gift of musical ability. In living a simple lifestyle, one of the things we encourage is for musicians to bring along their talent to any group gathering we have on the farm. It may just be a few family members, but nothing can beat the entertainment portion of the evening.

Music isn't just for your listening pleasure, though. It also has brain-centered benefits. Music helps to improve your memory. Although it is debated, there is the Mozart Effect that states that by listening to classical music you can improve your spatial intelligence. Supposedly, by listening to Mozart, it helps you to retain information.

Music can change your brain function. It helps to release neurochemicals such as dopamine – which is associated with the pleasure-seeking portion of the brain, cortisol, which is a stress hormone, and serotonins, which are immunity hormones.

If you find yourself depressed, try listening to Jazz. Music has been shown to affect your mood. Upbeat music can help ease depression and anxiety. One study indicated that listening to upbeat music before encountering an anxiety causing situation can help you to not feel anxious at all. At other times, it can help you relieve your anxiety quicker.

If you need to study for a test, try some Classical music. It isn't guaranteed to help, but studies show that listening to a Mozart Piano Sonata helped some to do significantly better on an exam.

Music also helps us to connect to others. Scientists believe that the rhythm of music acts as synchronization from one brain to another. This works through swaying, dancing, and other body movements. It is supposedly a great way to bring groups of people together.

But just be careful. Listening to music doesn't always help and can also affect your mood in negative ways. If you are depressed, you don't want to listen to sad songs, as they can amplify the depression. If you are cramming for a test, don't choose a song with lyrics, as they can be distracting and lessen your ability to concentrate and retain the information.

Overall, though, music is a great way to enjoy life. Whether you prefer classical, acid rock, era-oriented music such as Big Band or 50s dance music, it can be fun, enjoyable, and a great way to relax after a tough day. It can even help you feel more energized when you are working on a project. How do I know that? I am a big fan of the Tractors, an American Country Rock Band. I love listening to Baby Likes to Rock It and Badly Bent while I am cleaning house. And yes – this is one time I will have the music blaring.

Music is also a source of self-expression. Whether listening or composing, who you are is somewhat reflected in the music you listen to. But that makes me wonder who I am exactly, as I have an eclectic taste in music. I also love listening to most any genre, from Classical to Big Band. However, I will take hard or acid rock, and even heavy metal off my list. It's just too grating to my ears.

One of my favorite genres is the Appalachian music, which is also very similar to Bluegrass. It's the perfect music for just sitting on the porch, relaxing, and rocking the afternoon away. And that's the main reason you are hearing the TC Smith version of Kentucky Bluegrass Mornin' as the intro music to this Podcast. It just makes you want to tap your feet.

It doesn't matter what music genre you enjoy. Just listen and enjoy the magic of the music and the moment. It can bring a smile to your face, ease your worries, and help you connect to those you love.

Are you feeling brave, but don't have an instrument to play? There are all kinds of instruments you can make yourself. Some are as simple as an old washboard and a wooden spoon. Use an empty, small plastic water bottle; fill it with dried beans and tape the top on securely. Instant Maracas! Or you can take it a step further like James did – he built a Bass out of an old, galvanized tub, a piece of wood and a few strings.

If your desire is to live a Simple Life, one of the ways to do it is enjoying life in a simple fashion, and sharing it with your friends, family, and neighbors. Consider having a pot luck gathering at your home. Encourage those who play an instrument to bring it along for an impromptu jam session. The cost of such an event is minimal, and the entertainment is free. To know that your guests will go home with both body and soul nourished will help you to appreciate your simple life all the more.

And if the Country Boy and I are invited, don't panic. James has my accordion, so you won't have to suffer through my severely off-key rendition of Row, Row, Row Your Boat.

If you want to learn more about the topic at hand, get a transcript for this episode, or visit the sources I found for some of the information in this Episode, just visit my website at www.thefarmwife.com/podcast. That is the Resource page for this podcast and I have it set up by episodes to make things easier to find. To help you out, this is Episode 15.

And while you're there, you can now leave your comments at the end of the page. Be sure to tell me what you think and share your own thoughts and ideas. I would love to hear from you!

If you have questions about this podcast or need some help finding Johnny P and the Wiseguys, I have an inside track to his schedule. Just stop by for an email visit at thevirtualporch@gmail.com. And be sure to subscribe – you don't want to miss a single conversation. I'll be sitting on the porch every Monday morning waiting for your visit!

Thanks again for stopping in. I will see you next week on Living a Simple Life with a Back Porch View. And while you are waiting on the next episode, grab that glass of refreshment, pull up a rocker, and sit back for a while. It's time to

Relax & Enjoy!

julie

Sources:

[Music Use for Mood Regulation: Self-Awareness and Conscious Listening Choices in Young People with Tendencies to Depression](#)

[The Benefits of Listening to Music](#)

[Dopamine](#)

[The Mozart Effect](#)

[Johnny P. and The Wiseguys \(facebook.com\)](#)