

Classical Guitar Shed

p l a y b e a u t i f u l l y

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*“Don’t think that beautiful apples taste better...”Latin Saying**

As consumers, we fool ourselves into thinking that beautiful produce tastes better. It doesn’t. It’s just nicer to look at.

Standing at the produce stand, we allow our visual sense to bias our reason. This is hard not to do. At the point of choosing, we use different senses than we will at the point of eating. We make decisions based on limited or irrelevant information.

But with experience, we discover how to choose the apples that will best serve our needs. We then know the difference, we select apples depending on how we’ll prepare them. Baked vs. raw, sauced vs. candied.

And we may fall into this same trap when choosing what music to play.

Choosing a piece of music, we may become seduced by the glittering showpiece. We may aim higher than prudent. We may jump at the first pretty tune that comes to mind.

Of course, we would love to play the grand concert classics we know and love. It’s fun to think of ourselves as someone who plays these flashy show-stoppers.

But music can be like the apples. Our experience of learning and practicing does not always correlate with the popularity or bravado of the piece.

In the moments of daily practice, what thrills and satisfies?

The most rewarding practices are those in which we rise to difficult challenges. These challenges are best when they are “hard but not too hard.” We need to work at the limits of our abilities. So long as we stay focused and aware, we have the real possibility of success.

Many of the “shiny apples” may lack this possibility of success. We may not yet play at an appropriate level to do the piece justice. Or the piece may not offer fitting challenges for us, despite the glorious first impression.

If we consult reality in choosing new music, we may be best served by an “easier” piece. This can present us with something new that will pull us forward.

And we can create new challenges beyond the simple playing of the notes. We can sculpt our dynamics. We can craft the balance of every chord. We can spend more time on the fine details that will make the larger pieces possible one day.

Over time we can notice what fulfills us in our practice. We can reflect on what makes us feel proud, or clever, or grateful. And with this reflection, we build the compounding experience and knowledge that will inform future pieces.