

What makes me feel excited, refreshed, and sometimes encouraged—The Guitar.

In the beginning, it was the Ukulele, a Hawaiian instrument, which I started playing four years ago. As I played the Ukulele, I gradually became interested in the guitar. Then I got a guitar from my dad that he used to play. Then it happened—I got hooked. I couldn't help playing it every day. When I got tired from school and club activities, or when I felt down; all I did is play the guitar. Even just playing the same song over and over again, I no longer felt depressed. On the day before the term test, when I came home and played the guitar at night as usual, my mother said to me,

“Oh, I'm sure that tomorrow you'll have a math test, a physics test, and... a guitar test, too! ...right?”

No way. How happy I would be if my test subject was the guitar. But Mom, teachers, and all of the other adults, let me tell you some positive news.

According to a study conducted by the University of British Columbia, which surveyed about one hundred thirteen thousand students at local public high schools, music has a positive effect on studies. Those who continued to practice playing musical instruments throughout childhood tended to score higher on exams in mathematics, chemistry and English. The reasons for this include the development of eye-hand-brain coordination, the habit of concentration and high listening skills. It is also said that playing instruments increases self-efficacy, which is the confidence you feel that the more you practice, the better you can be.

In fact, musical instruments have influenced many historical figures, too. Platon and Pythagoras of ancient Greece studied the “relationship between music and mathematics”. And Einstein was obsessed with playing the violin.

So, did they play instruments for the purpose of “training their brains”? I doubt it. They must have enjoyed playing instruments not because they wanted to train their brains, but simply because they loved music. Music heals, entertains, de-stresses and sometimes moves the hearts of those who play it. Playing a musical instrument is not only for learning, but also for bringing people together, beyond their genders, ages, and backgrounds. I want to share with you about an experience when I truly felt so .

It happened when I joined a barbecue party. People of different nationalities and ages gathered there. I am usually not so good at talking to people who I meet for the first time. So, I couldn't find the courage to talk to many foreigners at the barbecue party as usual. Then, I eventually played the ukulele and sang “Over the Rainbow”.

“Somewhere over the rainbow. Way up high.”

As I was singing, an incredible thing happened. The Australians, Americans, Nepalese, Russians, and other foreign friends there—people much older than me—sang along with me in unison. And I'm sure that our hearts were connected.

Music has power. Through music, we can understand each other's pain and suffering. Or we can even think together about path to peace through songs; Bob Dylan, John Lennon, Michael Jackson are just a few prime examples.

Music makes us possible to unite our hearts, no matter how different our nationalities, cultures and identities may be. It's like magic! Don't you think so, too?

See? If you sing or play instruments together, you can make friends from all over the world. Even if you are not good at talking, you can communicate with them. Plus, there's even a survey that shows music is a great way to train your brain. So mom, let me play the guitar every day. Oh, and I will study too!

Thank you.

7 番 藤原 薫子

広島大学附属中学校

The Magic of Music