

Video Transcript: Holiday Horns

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There was a holiday concert several years ago when we had five horn players from the Pittsburgh Symphony. We also had some of the Pittsburgh Symphony staff in, including Manfred Honeck, the conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony. They all came and provided a beautiful holiday concert.

I think that most people, myself included, had never heard a concert that was simply done by five horns, and the resonance in our atrium is magnificent. And people always get a little sentimental I think during the holidays. You know, they wish they were home doing all their holiday things, but they can't—they're here in the hospital. And to hear this music and this resonance was absolutely stunning. People were relaxed. They were just—they were transformed by the beautiful music. I think something that transformed me was seeing how many members of the staff of the Pittsburgh Symphony came for this concert as well and feeling the support of the Pittsburgh Symphony and knowing they were there for us, providing this beautiful music. It was just a really stunning moment for all of us.

There is a patient that I'd like to tell you about that was really just inspired by the symphony. This is a patient—a male—who I knew, let's see, I knew about nine years ago when he was first in for a particular kind of cancer that was easily treated. (As far as cancers go, it was a highly curable cancer.) And I knew this kid—he was really interested in music and just really a fun kid who loved to do all kinds of silly songs and fun things. He was "cured" of his cancer, and I didn't see him for years.

He came back at the age of 15 (three years ago) with a different kind of cancer. And this one is still a treatable cancer but the fact that he had a different cancer was not a great thing necessarily, and in the meantime he had become quite a musician. I learned that he played the trumpet in his school band. So when he was here we did a lot of brass together. I am not a brass player, so I would accompany him on the keyboard and he would play for me. Now I, you know, have enough background to comment on his phrasing and breath control and things like that, but we had a really nice time together.

This is one guy who got to attend the concert of the five horns that I spoke about just minute ago, and he was totally in awe of this concert. He talked about it—he talked about it for days. And in addition to saying that the vibrations of the sound were so—they were so present and realizing what it did to his body and the stress reduction and the relaxation that he felt. (I mean, at 15 he was old enough to realize this.) But he also felt very inspired to become a better performer, and that was a really interesting and nice twist on what we were trying to accomplish with this program. He told me over his treatment that he had reached out to do a lot more performances within his church and within his high school—to do some solo work and to just do a better job of playing. And he continues to be inspired by that moment when he heard the five horns play a concert and continues to grow as a musician.