

Me and The Night and the Music

by Marilyn Reeves

I've never been able to understand how people can sit and work at something that requires concentration and have music playing in the background. It drives me to distraction! Perhaps you might think that I don't like music. On the contrary, I *LOVE* music. Good music, that is – not the tuneless noise that passes for music nowadays. To me music should have a nice melody, or at least a good rhythm; and it helps if the lyrics actually say something, but that's optional.

My problem is that if I'm listening to good music – be it Rhythm and Blues, old time Country, or even that old time Rock & Roll – I listen with my whole being. I just can't shut it out or think about anything else.

I'll occasionally put on a CD of Il Divo, or perhaps something by Susan Boyle, while I'm painting or ironing, but those tasks don't require complete mental engagement.

I love the romantic classics of Beethoven, Chopin, and Franz Liszt, as well as some of the more modern semi-classical music of composers like Andrew Lloyd Weber – especially his “*Phantom of the Opera*” (I played the video over and over again until I finally ran out of tears).

But my all-time favorite has to be the 1986 PBS all-star production of *Les Miserables*, with Colm Wilkinson as Jean Valjean and Michael Ball as Marius. (By the way, the song “I Dreamed a Dream” that led Susan Boyle to fame and fortune was one of the songs from *Les Mis*.)

This year, PBS put out a new production of *Les Mis* with a different director and a different cast, so of course, I tuned in. And I watched about five minutes of it before I turned it off. Everything was wrong! The songs were changed, the tempo was wrong ... it just wasn't the same. So I remain loyal to my good old, time-worn tape of that marvelous production of 25 years ago.

If you've never heard Michael Ball's tremendous voice literally shaking the rafters singing ‘Oh my friends! My Friends!’ in “Empty Chairs and Empty Tables”, you've never been stricken to the core by great music! So enthralled was I by Michael's beautiful voice that I ordered a DVD of one of his solo concerts, which included his rendition of “Gethsemane” from *Jesus Christ Super Star*. That, my friends, has to be the most heart-wrenching, soul stirring performance of any song I've ever heard!

Music expresses the full spectrum of human emotion – from the foot-stomping cadence of a marching band to the toe-tapping rhythm of Dixieland jazz, to the anguished cry of our deepest passion – music holds me in its thrall.