

And the Music Plays On

By Sheila Johnson

Over the course of my sixty-five years, I have come to believe that my life is one big symphony. I have hit a few flats, some minor keys, but mostly sharp majors! Why this is, I don't know. I believe I was born with a gift of harboring the worst pains, the highest anxieties, and a plethora of disappointments at bay until strength and wisdom grant them freedom to enter my consciousness. Meanwhile, I continue to harmonize with the best of them. Granted, there have been many times when the strings, and the horns, and the ivory were not in harmony; the tuba was too loud and the drums marched to an entirely different beat. There were many times when the soloists didn't follow the conductor, but went on their own musical adventure to satisfy their egos. But the music played on and on and on until it was time for intermission. And in my life, intermissions have been anything but dull.

There were times when I had to pause for the purpose of trying to understand many things: Why was my third grade teacher allowed to scream at the kids in our classroom and occasionally hit one of us with a ruler or eraser leaving bruises on our skin with no reprimand or chastisement from the principal? Why was the predator who lived across the street from my family at the end of the block allowed to expose himself to children walking home from school every day without being arrested—even after several phone calls to the police from parents? Why were President John Fitzgerald Kennedy and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. killed and their “real” murderers never brought to justice? Why were the Happily Ever Afters only true in fairy tales? And in the twenty-first century, why does it appear that the ‘isms’ are on the rise? These intermissions in my life were and are much too long, and have made it difficult to return to the symphony. Yet, I return and the music plays on and on and on until it's time for the next intermission.

There were and are pauses in the concerto, however, that enrich my grand symphony and are far too short: like the nervous delight of watching an Australian Koala bear eating Eucalyptus leaves a few inches away from my face; watching goats and multi-colored iguanas and sun-kissed Jamaican children play harmlessly together on the sidewalks and streets in their villages; dancing the Calypso in Nassau, Bahamas; attending and enjoying Japanese Habuki; purchasing spices and touching pyramids in Cairo; touring Asia with my three adult children; hearing Blue Thunder; giving birth to three of life's miracles; being Grandma; teaching and preaching; forgiving and healing; writing.

My symphony will go on and on and on until it reaches the sonata, and there will be no more interludes. And on that day, I hope I will be granted the privilege of reaching higher chords.