

ROCKBRIDGE REPORTER

A Newsletter for Rockbridge Academy

January 2005

THE PLACE OF THE ARTS IN CLASSICAL EDUCATION

by Gregory D. Wilbur

Secular educators approach the study of the Arts with the desire of developing a well-rounded student. The study of the Arts does much more than to provide “enrichment” in education, and its relevance is not as simple to relate as recent television advertisements suggest. Johnny will not necessarily give better business presentations because he was a second grade vegetable in a Four Food Groups school play. Instruction in the arts has long been a part of education from the time of the *Quadrivium* to the present. What exactly is this component of education and why is it important?

Because of overuse and misuse of terms, the meaning of the word “art” must be clarified. The study of the Arts (capital “A”) includes visual art (painting, sculpture, photography, film), aural arts (music), kinetic arts (dance, drama) and written arts (poetry, literature). All of these areas can be studied academically or in a studio setting. Academic study includes the history of the Art and appreciation of the Art. Studio study includes the specific elements of the Arts and the basic and advanced skills needed in order to participate in the Arts.

Generally, Art can be divided into three categories: High Art; folk art; and pop art. High Art tends to be skillful,



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intellectual, requires much study to master, and sustains repeated viewing, hearing, or sight (the art of Rembrandt, Michelangelo, Monet; the music of Bach, Beethoven; the drama of Shakespeare; the movie *Citizen Kane*). Folk art consists of skills and/or aural art that is passed down from one generation to another (quilts, folk songs and ballads, legends, arts

and crafts). Pop art tends to be clever, concept oriented instead of crafted, comparatively shallow, and does not sustain repeated exposure (the art of Andy Warhol; the pop music of Michael Jackson, Garth Brooks, R.E.M.; disposable fiction that is issued only in paperback; the movie *Independence Day*). Popular art has a relatively short history of only 150 years or so. All of these areas have merit of one kind or another, and they also have differing criteria for study or appreciation. This discussion concerns itself with High Art because it has the most to teach students because of its depth, long lineage of history and ability to sustain repeated study.

The studio study of the Arts or the skills to actually participate in the Arts is closely akin to the principles of the Trivium. The Trivium consists of grammar, logic, and rhetoric, and forms the basis for classical education. With regard to playing the piano, for example, the grammar element is learning to read music and learning basic finger skills. The logic phase is learning to play pieces of music as they are written on the page. The rhetorical component of playing the piano is reached when the student can translate what is written on the page and apply a personal element of musicality and expression to his performance. The composition of music shares the

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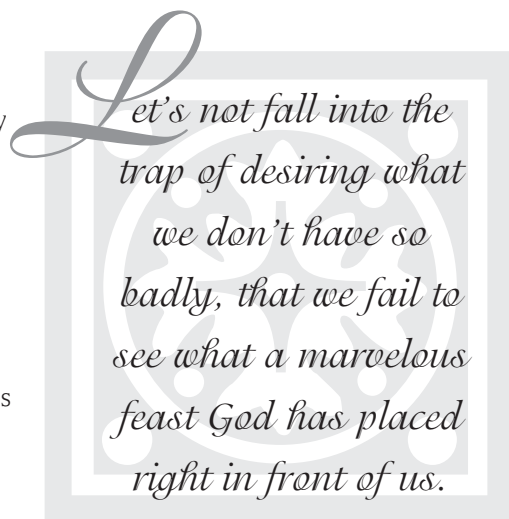
THE PLACE OF THE ARTS IN CLASSICAL EDUCATION...continued

grammar phase of reading music, but the logic stage is learning the works of others and the forms and techniques of writing, and the actual composition of a piece of music lies within the realm of rhetoric. The Trivium applies in the same manner to visual art. Grammar is learning brush strokes and how to work in the mediums of oils or watercolors. Logic is using those basic skills to construct exercises in shape and perspective. Rhetoric is the ability to create a two-dimensional scene through color that can convey action and/or emotion.

There are two essential reasons that the academic study of the Arts is important. The first is that the study of the Arts forms one of the foundations in the study of history. The Arts do not occur in a vacuum. They are a product of wars, times of leisure, philosophy, various royal courts, nationalities, and artists interacting with the people and political climate of their times. Cultural history contains the visual, aural, written, and sensory legacy left from those who have gone before and the embodiment of their thoughts and ideas. The manifestation of ideas in Art forms the other reason academic study is important.

This second reason for the academic study of the Arts needs to be prefaced with the understanding that all of the Arts are linked and are comprised of corresponding movements and periods and are philosophy driven; therefore, the Arts are the embodiment or incarnation of philosophical thought. This means that Art not only conveys the ideas of a philosophy, but also the ideals of a philosophy. Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* and Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* are examples of art overtly expressing the idea of a philosophy. The music of Arnold Schoenberg and George Crumb convey the philosophies of modernism and minimalism

respectively by utilizing the principles expressed in the philosophies as a governing force in the creation of their music. Jackson Pollock's paintings are the visual conclusion of the idea of a random universe. Art can be a useful tool as a readily accessible embodiment of a philosophy. Listening to a musical work of Steve Reich that repeats a limited number of notes for fifteen minutes will reinforce the philosophy of minimalism by making the abstract philosophy quite concrete.



With all this in mind, what does Scripture have to say about the Arts? Quite a lot. Scripture contains examples of poetry, vocal and instrumental music, allegory, sculpture, wood-working, embroidery, architecture and abstract and representational art. The fact that God is a creator and that man is made in His image suggests that man is innately creative and that creativity is part of subduing the earth (i.e., mastery over colors, sounds, movement, etc.). Scripture records a specific example of God-given creativity in the person of Bezalel in Exodus 31:1-5. "Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 'See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And I have

filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of workmanship'" (italics added). Psalms 33:1-3 enjoins God's people to play and sing before God with original compositions and with skill. "Rejoice in the LORD, you righteous! For praise from the upright is beautiful. Praise the LORD with the harp; Make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings. Sing to Him a new song; Play skillfully with a shout of joy." Clearly creativity and the Arts are sanctioned and encouraged and are a definite divine calling (i.e., vocation) for some.

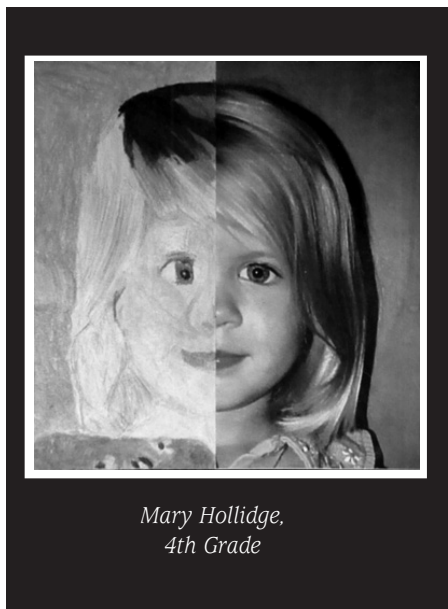
An education which includes the Arts does help to form a well-rounded individual; however, there are much more compelling reasons to teach art, music, drama, creative writing, etc. Understanding Art, philosophy, and how Art reflects philosophy will enable a greater comprehension of present-day life and culture as well as the past. Understanding the criteria for evaluating the elements which comprise good Art will access realms of God-given creativity for study and appreciation. Teaching a child the needed skills to create in a specific medium will afford the opportunity to reflect God's creativity. These higher aims have a greater value than merely offering a vague enrichment.

Gregory D. Wilbur is a classically trained composer and a teacher at Franklin Classical School in Franklin, Tennessee, where he teaches Music and Drama, and Art History and Appreciation.

**Cover Picture: Contour hand drawing by Kate Cavallaro in 8th grade.*

Sunflowers (After Vincent Van Gogh)

“FINISH THE FACE”



*Mary Hollidge,
4th Grade*



*Jed Fowler,
2nd Grade*



*Alex Miller
2nd Grade*



*Mason Hendrick
2nd Grade*

Consider giving to Rockbridge Academy. Here's How.

GENERAL GIFTS

General gifts are used to meet the widest possible array of needs at Rockbridge Academy. General gifts are useful because of their flexibility.

Rockbridge Academy
911 Generals Highway, Millersville, MD 21108
410-923-1171, www.rockbridge.org

ALL-STATE

Each November, music students from all over the state of Maryland audition for the opportunity to participate in the All-State Bands and Choruses. Students who demonstrate talent and mastery of music skills are nominated from each school, public and private. These students must be currently enrolled in the instrumental or choral program for the current school year.

This year's chorus was drawn from nearly 1,400 students who registered to audition. Only 320 students were selected. Four students represented Rockbridge Academy this year: Emily Cusimano, Jennifer Dwyer, Palmer Horst, and Janet Schonthaler. All four of them passed their audition and will be spending a weekend at the Hunt Valley Resort in February singing with the best high school choristers in the state of Maryland. At the conclusion of the weekend, they perform a concert for the annual Maryland Music Educators Association convention. This concert is open to the public and tickets may be purchased through the association. Details of the concert schedule will be published at a later date. Last year, students representing our school said that it was a wonderful experience and one that they will never forget.

DESIGNATED GIFTS

A designated gift can be used to support a specific aspect of Rockbridge Academy's program, such as the athletic program, the science program, or the music program..

MATCHING GIFTS

Many employers have a matching gift program to help their employee's gifts go further. Ask your employer if they have such a program. Rockbridge Academy will be happy to work with your employer to help establish a matching gifts program.

SECURITIES

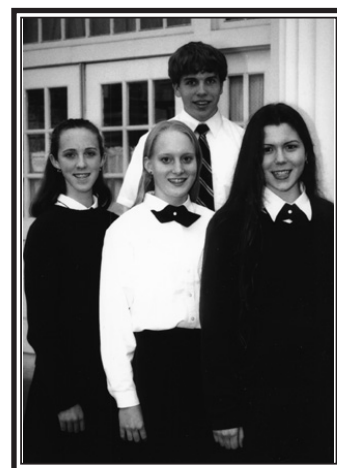
Gifts such as stocks, bonds, mutual funds, even insurance policies, may be made directly to Rockbridge Academy. Typically, such gifts provide the giver with beneficial tax advantages.

You are encouraged to support Rockbridge Academy through these or other means. To make a gift, please call the headmaster, Michael McKenna, at:

COLLEGE ACCEPTANCE

Emily Cusimano has been accepted to Eastern University in Pennsylvania, as well as Liberty University in Virginia. Congratulations, Emily!

ALL-STATE CHORUS



*Front: Jennifer Dwyer, Janet Schonthaler,
and Emily Cusimano. Back: Palmer Horst*



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- JAN 7.....Evening Open House @ 7:00 p.m.
- JAN 12-14Upper School Mid-Term Exams
- JAN 14Evening Open House @ 7:00 p.m.
- JAN 17SCHOOL CLOSED—*Teacher Workday*
- JAN 21New Student Application Deadline
- JAN 21Class Pictures *beginning at 8:30 a.m.*
- JAN 26Photo Sale 8:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.
- FEB 15.....Tuition Deposits Due (*remember—No tuition payment in Feb.*)

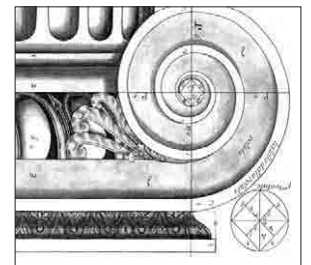
QUOTE OF THE MONTH

*Substitute Teachers
 Needed: Rockbridge Academy
 is in need of substitute
 teachers. If you are interested
 in applying to substitute,
 please call the school office at
 410-923-1171.*

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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