

Miss Kendrick's Teaching

An Interpretive Collage of "Chamber Music"

by Zara Wilder

They: Would you like to stay with us for a while, Rolley, play the piano for us?

He: That guy, Chopin, he's dead?

They: Has been for over a hundred years.

He: So it's okay if I play his music?

They: Yes, it is very okay for you to recreate on our piano the special radio songs you love. Chopin would be happy to have you play his music.

She: Sad. No understanding. No heart or soul. No feeling.

They: He plays by ear, plays anything. Beethoven, Mozart, Chopin, Rachmaninoff. He chose a basement to sleep in that contained a piano he could play. He loves to perform all the great music he hears. Miss Kendrick, you cannot deny there is a gift.

She: It's a gift, but right now it's an empty gift.

They: Then can you help Rolley to fulfill it?

She: He's got to learn how to read. To read music. He's got to go back to the beginning, to forget what he knows, and learn it all over again. If he can do that, there's no limit to where this boy can go. No limit to where I can send him.

They: Rolley, meet our music teacher.

She: How would you like me to teach you to play?

He: Don't I already play good?

She: Would you like to play even better?

He: I would.

They: Little boy. Extraordinary genius. Rolley.

She: Little robot. Music box. Rolley-Parrot.

They: Magnificent. Thank you. Beautiful Rolley, your gift brings great joy.

She: Magnificent?! Indulging old habits! Don't you have any lessons to practice? Did you read that piece you just played?

He: No.

She: Well, until you can read it, you can't play it. That's the rule. You know that.

He: I'm sorry, Miss Kendrick.

They: Miss Kendrick, you must blame us for breaking Teacher's rules this time.

She: I certainly do blame you! "Teacher's rules" alone can produce a real musician! Rolley-Parrot's gift is empty. He doesn't understand the music. Doesn't feel it. He'll never know it or feel it until he can read it. Never encourage him to play anything he can't read.

He: How many mountains do I gotta climb?

She: Don't even ask. Are you going to practice your lessons every day?

He: Yeah, I will. I'll practice.

She: Good. 'Cause they've got a big, bottomless pit down here. You don't want to know what they do to kids who don't practice.

They: Rolley? Don't you want your supper?

He: No.

They: You don't have to practice all the time.

He: I do. I want to get good. I want to stay. So I gotta practice.

They: You are good. We want you to stay with us. We love you.

She: Would you play something for me? Something you like to play when mean old women like me aren't bothering you?

He: This.

She: Do you know what you're playing? That's the Moonlight Sonata. Sit up straight at the piano.

They: Rolley, the music that you bring to us is very beautiful, but you are the one that we love.

She: I'm trying to turn him into a musician. Right now, he's just a music box.

They: We don't think any "music box" ever played Schumann so beautifully.

She: The music box already knows how to play. I'm teaching him about the music. How to feel it the way I feel it, how to understand it the way I do, how to learn it the way I had to learn it, how to become what I've always wanted to be. How to make the music his own, better than I could ever make it my own. Maybe you could even compose your own music, Rolley-Parrot, after I turn you into a real musician like me.

He: Am I gonna play now?

She: Do you know the difference between boys and birds, Rolley-Parrot? The bird doesn't know anything. Doesn't feel anything.

He: I want to show you!

She: Show me what?

He: I can do it! I can read it!

She: Oh, Rolley. Now you are a treasure!

Starved for nourishment, rest, love, family, music, fun, respect, humanity, self: when Rolley's brother killed her, only an empty, homeless, silenced Nobody blamed itself for her death.