

INTERVIEW WITH CHARLTON SINGLETON
Trumpeter/Vocalist/Composer/Arranger
2 x Grammy Award Winner - Ranky Tanky

1-What is art?

I believe that Art is something created by an individual that expresses their feelings.

2- Is it important that all children have an artistic education, including the children who don't have a calling for art?

I believe that all children should have the option to try their hand at some sort of Art. Definitely. We have seen studies that have shown data supporting that Arts Education and students taking part in the Arts enhances their education in other areas. Of course, the Arts might not be for every child, but I believe in having students experience it.

3-At what age did you start making art? When did you discover that you wanted to be an artist? Was there a discovery process? Did you know from a young age or was it by chance that you later decided to dedicate yourself to art?

I started playing the piano at the age of three. I was basically trying to copy what I saw my big sister and big brother do. As I got older, I started learning about other musical instruments like the violin, trumpet, and cello. I knew pretty quickly that I wanted to become a teacher and band (or any music subject for that matter) was my favorite subject, so I went to college to study Music Education with my goal of becoming a middle or high school band director.

4-How do you think that art impacts children's education, including on emotional and academic levels as well as in their abilities and human values?

There are students that live through their Art. We have seen studies and data that tell us that students with Arts in their lives are mostly in a good place in their life. There are exceptions, of course, but it is not a big secret that Artistic students do better in their academic classes.

5-During your experience as an art teacher, what have been the biggest challenges, what has been most satisfying and what have been the successes? Could you tell us an anecdote that you remember where art has impacted the life of a student?

Some of my challenges were convincing my students to practice and commit to what they were doing. Young artists/students may not have the same drive that older ones have. I believe that comes with experience and natural maturation. Watching a student succeed and/or understand things better to produce what their goals are has always been fun and exciting to witness.

6-What do you know about the place that art has within the South Carolina school curriculum? How do you think that that artistic education can gain more attention and be accepted as a subject within the curriculum and not as a subject of low importance compared to the learning of math and language, for example?

That's a tough one. Unfortunately, I do not think that we will see Arts Subjects on equal footing with Academic subjects. Our school system and the way that we think about the Arts will never permit that...even though data suggests that our students be MORE with the Arts to produce better Academic grades.

7- How does artistic experience benefit the learning of language, history and mathematics?

Different languages, history, and mathematics are all in arts. In music we have musical languages. Italian, French, and German are a few that definitely have terms that are normally used. Music History that dates back to the Gregorian times. Time Signatures and counting...mathematics...They are all present.

8-What is the difference between learning in an art class and learning memorized content?

I believe that it depends on the atmosphere. We could have a room full of musicians that are listening to one teacher and that teacher is telling them what to play and/or sing without the student having any music. Students can also learn that way on their own. We call it "Learning by ear" or if a teacher is doing that without the students seeing the music it is called "Learning by Rote". Then you have the teacher that uses books to teach students how to read music or play and they are able to master it that way. Both techniques can be very effective.

9-Can receiving an artistic education make us better people?

I say yes. I believe Artistic people are more prone to the gentler side of Humanity.

10-What has art meant to you? If you hadn't dedicated yourself to art, do you think your life would have been different?

Art has been everything. I honestly do not know what I would be doing if I was not a full time Artist.

11-Have you worked together with professors of other subjects to support your teaching content? If so, do you think that the collaboration made a difference in the children's learning?

Yes. I have teamed up with academic teachers to fuse together what their subject matter was and how the music was or fits in with what they were teaching. On many occasions I would have the History or Geography teacher talk about their subjects and my music students would study and perform music that went along with their

content. For example, the Geography teacher is talking about European countries. I would pinpoint which country and focus on composers and/or music from that country.

12-When you were a teacher, did you have time to dedicate to your personal artistic work?

I was able to split my time as a full-time teacher and a part time performing artist. Eventually, I switched things around and became a full-time performing artist and part time teacher. I still get opportunities to visit classrooms and share knowledge.

13-What do you think are the biggest prejudices against art or against artists?

Unfortunately, there are many stereotypes about Artists. In some cases, people think artists are uneducated, prone to substance abuse, judgmental about sexual orientation, no stability...there is an unfortunate long list of things.

14-What does art mean to you, beyond being a profession?

It is everything! I make a living doing it!

15-What it means to you to have won Grammys and how do you think these impacts young people in the neediest communities?

The biggest thing about winning a Grammy award is being recognized by your peers. Being from a small town shows the younger generation that IT CAN BE DONE. All you have to do is stick to your gut and be yourself. Your success is built on what you put into it.