

## **Beauty In The Eyes Of The Beholder**

I was thinking the other day about our perception of people and our response to them in relation to that perception. I would like to share my thoughts on this, starting with a simple example in my life many years ago.

I was 16 years of age so at a very impressionable phase of my development. I had transferred from grammar school after I had sat my GCEs so I was now beginning my full time study of music in the equivalent sixth form at the local college. I had two years to catch up in theory and practical musicianship before going on to college. I had taught myself piano from a recorder tutorial in primary school. Apart from a very brief period of lessons (about three of them) I continued to learn at my own pace but without any professional help. I had heard of a free music school at the local college, on a Saturday morning. To this I went along and auditioned for a place, which I received, and spent three months of the remaining school year discovering the joy of music. That September I transferred to this college and excitedly joined the small group of music students on the first day of term.

Our department was in a house attached to the main building. It was informal and cosy and there were only a few students compared to the large classes in the main facility. Several girls and fewer males. So, there I was, having been introduced to the other students and sitting on the top of a long table, by the door, with a new friend. I remember swinging my legs and observing all that was happening around me. There was a low chatter of the other girls in the room when suddenly the door swung open and a young man started to enter. He gave me a smile and chatted to a couple of the older students and then left.

He took a piece of my heart with him! I had fallen, instantly, in love. Of course, I was not one to wear my heart on my sleeve so I made no attempt to broadcast it around to anyone. I decided to play it very cool. I found out later that he too had fallen instantly in love and desperately wanted to ask me out but was afraid I would refuse so he too kept a low profile. So, there we were, two young adults smitten but hiding it. This young man was rather attractive, as, so it seemed, thought a few other females, and I decided there was no way I was going to join a queue of silly girls vying for his attention.

Time went by and I got to know my fellow students better as the days went by. This, of course included the male fraternity. Aural lessons and composition were joint events. The practical lessons re the instruments were individual. However, my singing tutor, decided it would be helpful if I had extra help with my singing lessons. When I auditioned at the original Saturday morning school, I discovered I was, in fact a contralto, a bona fide, full-blooded contralto. What a shock to my system. I knew the wonderful voice of Kathleen Ferrier but it wasn't one I appreciated personally although I rated its excellence highly. Up to this point my musical experience was very limited so I had quite a lot of catching up to do.

Lo and behold, it was arranged for this young man, Mike, to meet up with me at 8.30 on Monday mornings to help me out. Imagine my rapidly beating heart when I discovered this. Had I died and gone to heaven? Well, no, but we did meet up regularly; he at the keyboard, and myself at the other end, of a concert grand piano. Oh, what bliss, and the exercises prescribed by the aforementioned young

man were quite beneficial too. I discovered as time went on that he had the most amazing gift of musicality. He could make the simplest melody blossom and pull at the heart strings.

All this, of course, added to the lure of his person. I, and he, held out for 8 or nine months and then we started dating. He had left the college by then. I can remember even now, analysing my emotions. What attracted me to him? Was it his looks, his talent, his personality? Yes, it was a physical attraction at first but it became something more. The more I came to know him the more I liked what I saw. The external attraction faded, in a sense, to be superseded by the attractiveness of who he was inside. I even once tested myself regarding this emotion I felt. "Now," I said to myself, "*If he was blind and had only one arm, how would I then feel.*" Please remember I was still quite young and impressionable and very much a romantic.

Despite all this excitement of 'first love' and the power that music can, and often does, wield over the human emotion, my love for him grew (as did his love for me) and it became strong and abiding over the years. Our love and gifting in music became a joint ministry, surrendered to Christ from the outset of our walk with Jesus. We realised with joy that even before we knew Him, our Messiah had chosen us to be as one in His purpose and will, both for us and in the outworking of the ministry he had entrusted to us.

This was more than a simple love story. It was a lesson where I have since learned that the Holy Spirit can help us see the true person. Getting to know people in this way, allows the space to see beyond the outer. Being open to the Holy Spirit has also taught me the value of wisdom and discernment in relationships. Applying this to being in the body of Christ, taught me how to see other believers as clothed in Christ – not as they appear to the human eye. As Peter wrote:

**1 Peter 3:3,4** *"And let not your adornment be merely external – braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewellery, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God."*