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Even Schubert Got the Blues

by **BLOGGER** [Jill_Dearman](#) on 06-25-2009 06:54 AM - last edited on 06-25-2009 10:49 AM by **ADMIN** [Jon_B](#)

I recently had the pleasure of seeing Free For All at Town Hall thanks to dear friends Alice and Jacqui who worked on bringing this annual classical music event to New York City. Sunday's program was Schubert, compliments of The Emerson String Quartet <http://www.freeforallattownhall.org/>. For a few hours I was lifted from writerly worries, and transported into a magical place of transcendent beauty. The music was filled with emotion and precision. The presenters, and the musicians themselves, who spoke afterwards, placed Schubert in historical context. They all viewed him as truly unique in the way he mixed a true romantic, lyrical sensibility with the control of the classical form. The program noted that Schubert was deeply self-critical and left behind an unusually large number of incomplete works. (Most notably "The Unfinished Symphony".)

In learning a great deal (viscerally and intellectually) about this great composer, who died at age 31, I was reminded of the silent truth of every writer, every artist's life. Rejection is a part of our business. And often, like Schubert, writers tend to reject themselves first -- by not finishing work, or not trying to get it out there. We so deeply want to connect with likeminded folks, to find acceptance. But rejection is the norm.

Knowing that Schubert was not lauded till generations after his death, and hearing how deeply he criticized his own work made me wonder (forgive the cheap Sex & the City segue!) how writers handle the burden of creating art, first for themselves and then for the public? We are in a strange vocation, my friends!

I recently chatted with Colorado-based Young Adult author Sherry Ficklin. Sherry's first novel comes out with Lilley Press in mid-November. Congrats, Sherry. But it took a while to get there. Sherry is 30 and this is her third manuscript.

Sherry, shared this about the rejection cycle: "We send off these seemingly harmless return envelopes hoping they will contain an enthusiastic 'I love it! I must have it right now, and by the way the truck load of money should be arriving in ten minutes!' or even the simple, 'Please send the entire manuscript.' We'd even settle for, 'This is good! But it still needs some work in chapter X'. What we usually receive, however, is an impersonal form letter saying thanks, but no thanks. Sometimes it reads 'after considering your work, I don't think it's right for me, but good luck with another agent/publisher.' What we see when we read this note is actually, 'This is horrible. I wouldn't line my bird cage with this trash and you should just get a job at a fast food joint, because you'll never hack it as a writer.' Needless to say, those tiny emotional ninjas can send even the most confident writer into a downward spiral that usually ends up with me curled in the fetal position in the bathroom, clutching a bag of Oreos."

I am eating a bag as we speak! But for those of you minding your calories, please check out Sherry's helpful 10 Tips for Dealing With Rejection: <http://blog.sherryficklin.com/2009/01/09/query-letters.aspx>: <http://blog.sherryficklin.com/2009/01/09/query-letters.aspx>

Reading the journals of great writers gives you a sense of how they dealt with rejection: product links here. Check out Kafka and Plath to really get a taste of their own personal hells.



The Diaries of Franz Kafka The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath



Thanks for stopping by the Writer to Writer blog (that's the official handle now) and please pick up more tips at: <http://www.bangthekeys.com> As well as in my book B

About Unabashedly Bookish

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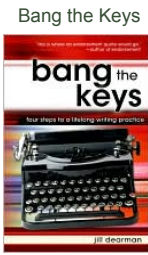
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How do YOU deal with rejection?
Message Edited by Jon_B on 06-25-2009 07:49 AM

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by SDFicklin on 06-25-2009 09:05 AM

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Great article! Thanks!

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by BeccaS on 06-25-2009 09:12 PM

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Great way to tell it like it is--Emotional Ninja's!

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by KathyS on 06-25-2009 10:23 PM

Options

Jill,

No, I don't need Kafka, or Plath, to tell me what personal hell is like. I've stepped up, and I've stepped down. I've fallen many times in my personal life. I won't go into detail. Board revelations can be never-ending.

On the more or less positive side: Over thirty years of writing this and that, I've never been rejected. I've, for the most part, stayed in control of publication. I've filled a need for both reader and myself. But I've shyed away from any major publications, not that I haven't been asked. Is it being shy of rejection?

Writing novels is more or less a test for me...the first one was enormously enjoyable to write. But seemed silly and trite. This second one is painful. I doubt that either one will be submitted.

As far as my visual art [not that words aren't] I've produced a ton.... I've been gratified by everyone who has seen what I do. I mostly give it away. As with a lot of what I've written on these boards:

I find the psychology to all of this, I give it away to avoid rejection. It's apparently as simple as that, at least for me. In the same breath, the nemesis of an artist is fame. There's a tug of war. You want to be recognized as important, but how do you handle the masses of the madding crowd? I don't think I could handle that. You want space to create...people can't give you that.

As Schubert...if it isn't finished.....is it self-critical, or what?

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by jynyc on 06-26-2009 02:51 PM

Options

Great article Jill. I very much resonate with rejecting yourself first to spare the pain of being rejected by "the world." But of course I am working on that! I think the best way to deal with rejection is to eat a lot of chocolate. ☺

-Judy

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by oiloncanvas on 06-26-2009 07:53 PM

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- Vermontcozy on: Let's Have A Round for These Friends of Mine

as usual, so much food for thought (and rejection).
thanks jill!

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by [Shotmonster](#) on 06-27-2009 10:09 PM

Options

Stephen King, when he was a kid, banged a spike into the wall and impaled rejection letters upon it.

As a writer, you are inviting rejection into your life. Get used to rejection. You have to have a thick skin. Cliche, I know, but true. Get your stuff out there, don't be afraid, and don't take it personally.

Calvin Coolidge has a great quote about persistence. Google it.

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by [KathyS](#) on 06-28-2009 12:36 AM

Options

Ahhh, Shotmonster.....the cliché's reign...**Get your stuff out there, don't be afraid, and don't take it personally.**

Words, words, words....simply said...., nothing but words...until you impale yourself. Good words...no less. But which ones don't you take personally?

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by [GSimmons](#) on 06-28-2009 02:27 PM

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I try to channel sci fi writer, Dr. David Brin. Met him at a book signing. Enthusiastic about his work, but talks about his books as though they were objects separate from him. "What kinds of books do you like?" he asked. I mumble something. "Then you'd probably really like this one," he says as he hands me *The Postman*. I really liked it. Later I read an interview with him about his writing process. He welcomes criticism, tells people in his writing group "be brutal." Psychologically criticism seems to connect him to the idea of becoming a better writer, which gives him joy. So criticism gets linked to joy. Still working on that one, but love the concept.

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by [KathyS](#) on 06-28-2009 03:14 PM

Options

GSimmons, interesting concept..."criticism gets linked to joy".

I'm currently reading a book called, *EXUBERANCE, The Passion for LIFE*. Dr. Kay Redfield Jamison links Exuberance to Joy. I'm only on page 53 of this wonderful book... it's 405 pages, a hundred of them are notes. I'll let you know if she links criticism to joy!

I think, just from my own experiences with "critiques", they can be very helpful, if constructively given. The "joy" in your work isn't deminished with these. But can become destructive, if not given wisely. I had had an art instructor reject a piece of work I'd done, telling me it "wasn't me". I felt personally rejected at that moment, and left in tears. How did she know "who I was", and what did she want from me? I slept on the rest of the words she'd said to me. I realized she saw something in me that could, and would, evolve both myself and my work into something better. She challenged me. I took the challenge, and came out on top.

Readers, in general, can be brutal in their "non" professional perspectives in giving feedback, or advise about a book, linking the book back to the author, who'd given their heart into the writing. Same with any art form. With music, as well...so many tastes, and so many opinions. You really have to know what you want, and from whom you want it.

I have a feeling this author, Dr. David Brin, disassociates, or emotionally detaches himself from his writing/books. They seeming become structural objects, (you can't be hurt if you view it this way) rather than his "babies", as so many authors refer to their work. I think being emotionally, or un-emotionally, attached is the key to this issue.

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