

Weaving the Arts into Presentations

Jaine Toth

Slide 1 Cover slide – on during welcome

Slide 2 Generally, during firesides, public meetings, and conferences, artistic offerings are set aside, usually at the end of the program, placing them in the category of **[click]** “entertainment.” Usually it is a musical contribution and the pieces played and/or sung don’t necessarily fit with the theme of the program. Not that there is anything wrong with entertainment, but it shouldn’t be the *only* use of the arts.

It would be more beneficial if they were inserted at intervals throughout a presentation. The musical pieces, poetry, or dramatic offerings, and even visual aids, should be carefully selected to punctuate points being made. They emphasize them and help the audience to better retain the message.

An important element for consideration before any talk is musical introduction.

According to the Master: **[click]**

Slide 3 *If a person desires to deliver a discourse, it will prove more effectual after musical melodies...*¹ He gives the following illustration: **[click]**

Slide 4 *The ancient Greeks, as well as Persian philosophers, were in the habit of delivering their discourses in the following manner: – First, playing a few musical melodies, and when their audience attained a certain receptivity thereby they would leave their instruments at once and begin their discourse. Among the most renowned musicians of Persia was one named Barbod, who,*

¹ **Error! Main Document Only.** 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Table Talk," quoted in *Herald of the South*, January 13, 1933

*whenever a great question had been pleaded for at the court of the King, they would at once refer the matter to Barbod, whereupon he would go with his instrument to the court and play the most appropriate and touching music, the end being at once attained, because the King was immediately affected by the touching musical melodies, certain feelings of generosity would swell up in his heart, and he would give way.*² [click]

Slide 5 *If you have a great desire and wish to attain your end, try to do so on a large audience after a great solo has been rendered...*³

If we stop and think about it, how good and how accurate is our recall after we've heard a great lecture. No matter how profound the message, how eloquent the speaker, we remember but a fraction of what they said. We can take notes, which will help us retain more of what we've written down, but at the risk of missing something valuable that is currently being said while we are busily jotting away.

When something is presented visually, musically, or dramatically, we increase our retention, especially if it is easy to put to memory like a song or poem. [click]

Slide 6 Children learn the alphabet by singing their ABCs. [click]

The number of days in any given calendar month can be recalled easily by reciting the poem *Thirty days hath September...* Just about everyone remembers that one from their school days. [click]

Slide 7 Changing Education Through the Arts (CETA), a program of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, has as one of its main goals, to **Help students** [click] **learn more fluently and with greater motivation** [click] by

² Ibid

³ Ibid

providing professional development that builds teachers' knowledge and skills in **[click] integrating the arts across the curriculum...**

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One CETA Teacher remarked, **[click]** “Through the CETA program, teachers come to understand that **[click]** the arts really turn on lights in children's minds—**[click]** **their learning is more meaningful and deeper.**” **[click]**

And a third grade student in the CETA program said, **[click]** “Just reading a book doesn't make things stick in your head, but **[click]** when you do a tableau, what you read really sticks in your head.”

This can also relate to our use of the arts in Feasts and Holy Day observances, firesides and public talks. By integrating the arts, weaving them throughout our presentations, the understanding that people take away will be more “meaningful and deeper.”

In her article, ““Brain Enhancement Tips for Improving Memory,” published on Amazine.com, Luna Mohanty wrote: , **[click]**

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“Use more than one sense. The more of your five senses you pay attention to when trying to create a memory, the more connections you will make in your brain, which leads to a stronger, longer-lasting memory.”

Likewise, the more art forms included in our talks and presentations, the better the recall of those hearing it.

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EXAMPLES OF WORKS THAT CAN BE WOVEN INTO PRESENTATIONS

Feasts

Tom Lysaght, who wrote some of the dramatic material for the World Congress penned a piece for the Feast of Will that addresses the struggle to subdue our own will so we can submit ourselves to the Will of God. It consisted of two narrators reading quotations from the Writings on this subject while an actress and actor illustrate the emotional battle and the ultimate submission through their actions. Musical selections are expertly used for emotional effect.

Jai Kenyatta-Anderson of Kansas City, MO wrote songs to be sung during the Feast to remind the friends of the importance of giving to the funds. They are sung to tunes from popular musicals:

[Play them or have someone sing them.] [\[CLICK\]](#)

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WHEN THERE'S NO FUNDS (As sung by a Spiritual Assembly)

Sung to the tune of "When You're A Jet" from *West Side Story*

[\[CLICK\]](#)

Slide 12

TOMORROW (As sung by a new believer)

Sung to the tune of "Tomorrow" from *Annie* [\[CLICK\]](#)

Slide 13

TONIGHT (As sung by a longtime believer)

Sung to the tune of "Tonight" from *West Side Story* [\[CLICK\]](#)

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Holy Days

Rad Schreiber of Santa Barbara, CA took the friends on a journey to imagine ourselves in various places where Baha'u'llah had been. She searched throughout the city to find appropriate locations that would offer the correct feel of the different sites associated with His blessed life. At each stop one of the friends was selected to offer a brief explanation about His experiences during that period and place and when they concluded we were given an envelope containing directions to our next destination. Also included was a quote from the Writings along with a thought taken from it on which we would consult en route. These “travels” concluded with a potluck lunch in a rose garden. This did not include any “arts” but was quite creatively thought out and put together, which in itself is an art.

Anne Perry is known for her Ridván pageants. She and husband, Tim Perry, wrote a comedic skit for Naw Rúz called *The Bumpkin Bahá'ís of Cow County, Texas*. We presented it in Santa Barbara and it was very well received, especially by guests of the Bahá'ís who enjoyed the deep message delivered with light-hearted fun.

I've created Power Point presentations with poetry and music—even music videos included. And when appropriate, I use visual art. For example, if I want to make the point that racism is not inherent in our nature, but it is learned, I could probably cite scientific papers on the subject, but why not just use a picture?

Sample programs for some Holy Days and artistic suggestions for artistic additions for a variety of purposes are on separate handouts. [\[CLICK\]](#)

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When hold up a picture like this, it speaks for itself. No further words are needed. [\[CLICK\]](#)

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You can also do your own searches for material. You can find poems, songs, skits and more. And if you can't find what you want, create it! [\[END\]](#)