



HARMONY

I'm not a great singer, but I do like to sing. Like all Scottish men of my age, I only sing in a few, very prescribed venues – a soccer stadium, large family gatherings and, best of all, my car. In my car, volume turned up high after a hard day of work, I can really belt out a song. In those private moments I can convince myself that I don't sound too bad. And like all amateur, in-car singers I really want to be able to harmonize. That's the goal – "Africa" by Toto in perfect harmony. But even in the confines of my own vehicle I can tell I'm awful – harmonizing is just too complicated.

A few months ago I picked my daughter up from her part-time job. It was cold, dark and late. We were both tired. As seems to be the way with teenage children she took over the music selection in the car. She put on a beautiful song, a song I love, a song full of harmony. My daughter is a lovely singer and started to sing, harmonizing effortlessly. I started to sing too, picking out a different harmony to my daughter's. I have no idea what I did but for the purest five minutes, as the rain beat rhythmically against the car windows, we sang in total harmony. It was lovely.

As we got out of the car nothing was said. My daughter leaned into me, I rubbed her head. It was a tender moment.

Harmony, as I understand it, is when something manages to exist beside something completely different, in perfect alignment. In fact, for something to be in harmony there needs to be difference. Harmony does not exist when things are the same.

Harmony acts like compound interest – its outcome is more powerful than the individual parts it is made from. A two-part harmony in a song sounds lovely, however, a four-part harmony, which is infinitely more complicated to achieve, with significantly more room for error, is profoundly more beautiful – deep, rich, multi-dimensional.

But here is the thing about harmony. It's not easy to achieve - it's not even likely. It takes a lot of effort and practice. It requires repeated trial and error. Ultimately, it requires trust and forgiveness. Trust that it is acceptable to be different. Forgiveness to understand that difference does not immediately create harmony and at first might not sound great. We live in times, in which difference is not celebrated. Not difference of opinion, difference of perspective, or difference of background. We are surrounded by weary souls who criticize, judge and shout with no thought to listen. It's in the news, on TV, on the radio, and online. It causes friction and it seeks to separate.

But while this context surrounds us, it is our students at TMS that give me an ember of hope.

Please don't get me wrong – our students make mistakes, they are complicated, feelings are hurt, poor decisions are made, good character is not always on full display. In short TMS is not full of angels.

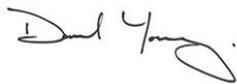
But in our students is also where I hear the tender sound of harmony most often. It's in our students that I see an abundance of forgiveness; a willingness to move forward. It's in them that I see authentic encouragement, clumsy and clunky for sure, but meaningful. It's through them that spirit and optimism spreads. Not always but often. It's our students who continue to show the capacity, at least the capacity, for differences to be aligned such that the harmony is heard, soft and unsure, failing at times, less than perfect, but harmony nonetheless.

I'm proud of our students at TMS for many things. They show themselves to be excellent in so many ways, but their endeavor to create harmony is what I am most proud of. It always humbles me.

Thank you for your ongoing and ever-deepening support of our community. You can see the impact your engagement is having; the momentum it is generating. Something very special is happening at TMS because of you.

We are a community rich with difference. It is such a joy to see and I'm so thankful for it. That difference, when sung with confidence, rings out in a gorgeous, beautiful harmony. It is lovely. It is powerful.

Wishing you a safe and harmonious summer.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Young". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

David Young,
Head of School,
TMS