

# Christine Haggerty

1234 Main Street  
Palos Heights, IL 60463

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Miss Dana Boulukos  
6610 W. Highland Drive  
Palos Heights, IL 60463

Dear Miss Boulukos:

Recently, you stated that “music has the power to connect people from vastly different cultures.” In light of the Jazz unit we recently completed in music class, I find your statement to be particularly true. Music is extremely powerful. We have learned that Jazz music inspired and influenced our entire nation during the 1920s. What began in small African-American communities in the southern part of the United States, swept the country like a virus without a cure. Citizens from all walks of life were bonded by the toe-tapping tunes produced by such great musicians as Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington. Your statement sums up so much of what we have learned about the power of Jazz music specifically.

Though we consider Jazz music to be 100% American, it was inspired by music from various different cultures from around the world. Specifically, Jazz music was inspired by slave spirituals. Slaves came from western Africa as well as the Caribbean Islands. Though many of these individuals did not know how to read or write, they clung to the musical culture from where they came. Many of the early Jazz musicians were related to former slaves and the spirituals became a part of their musical upbringing. Additionally, the birth place of Jazz, New Orleans, became a melting pot of cultures due to its convenient port location. Originally, New Orleans was settled by the French; however, the Spanish had control before the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 when Louisiana became part of the union. Many Haitians migrated to New Orleans after escaping a slave revolt in the year 1792. All of these cultures have contributed greatly to what we now know as Jazz music. Clearly, different cultures created one style of music that unites people from different cultures. Due to our different cultural backgrounds, we all have opinions on what music is good. According to Duke Ellington, “Music is music, and that’s it. If it sounds good, it’s good music, and it depends on who’s listening *how* good it sounds!” Ellington was aware of the power of music to connect different cultures. Perhaps that is one reason why he spent so much of his time touring with his band throughout Africa and also Europe. He wanted to use his music to connect other cultures.

In my own life, I have also found this statement to be true. There are people I have encountered with whom I have shared no common ground. Though our personalities are drastically different, our taste for music is the same. I have often wondered, “how can two such different people share the same taste in music?” It is the undefinable power of music that connects us. This connection forms an unmistakable bond that links two very different people. To me, music does not just have the power to connect people, music simply is power.

Sincerely yours,

Christine Haggerty