

Artistic Integrity and Innovation vs. Selling Out (Part III) Luis C. Engelke

Cultures and art evolve over time. Certainly, racial relations evolved greatly during the 20th Century, and we delve more into this topic later in the course. Legendary and innovative Jazz artist Miles Davis reflected on his predecessor Louis Armstrong's stage demeanor. First read Davis's commentary from his autobiography. Then, watch Louis Armstrong sing *What a Wonderful World*. Do you feel Davis's commentary is accurate and just, or not? If Louis Armstrong were performing this song today, would your view of his mannerisms be the same? Is Louis Armstrong's deportment just excellent stage presence, or is he indeed catering to the elite audience of the time?

Many music faculty have performed in a wide variety of situations throughout their career. In most cases, this not only included performing artistically fulfilling music to highly engaged audiences but also conditions that were not as enjoyable. Other times the music may not have been as artistically enriching yet performing a wide range of styles in a variety of situations was still rewarding. Often some musicians complained while others enjoyed the variety of musical products. Examine the photos of your faculty in several different situations:

- 1) The performance of a concert featuring popular music from the 1960's with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra;
- 2) An all-Mozart program with the music director and orchestra all dressed in period attire – including powdered wigs;
- 3) A performance of *Dead Elvis* with soloist dressed as Elvis.

These were actually all enjoyable experiences, while other musicians did complain about dressing up for some of these occasions. How do you feel about the transformation of the classical orchestra in the first two examples or the soloist in the third? Is this selling out or just a different musical experience perhaps contributing to the aesthetics of the music?

A brief excerpt from Blair Tindall's *Mozart in the Jungle* discusses some ethical situations. First, the use of recorded music to replace live music not only displaces musicians from employment but can also change the musical aesthetic. Recorded music replaced many musicians as audio fidelity improved during the 20th Century. Even in recent years touring companies have utilized less musicians and more electronics to replace them. Where should the line be drawn between producing a successful business product and the best artistic product? Can audiences really hear the difference? Tindall also exposes her thoughts and provides another perspective on using sex to sell music as discussed earlier in this portion of the course.