

I recently came across the two quotes below from writers on music education, addressing the issue of the development of focus and concentration. Sir Ken Robinson is a well-known education advocate whose TED talk holds the all-time record for number of views. Walter Bitner is a musician, educator and writer who presently works for the Nashville Symphony. I hope you enjoy their words of wisdom.

“The [reason that students who engage in participatory music classes in school consistently surpass most of their classmates in academic achievement](#) is because these students practice concentrated attention in their music classes daily in a focused, deliberate manner. Through their musical training, they have been given an unparalleled means to cultivate *wholehearted attention* and concentration, with a depth and inclusivity that no other activity they learn in school can impart. *They are then able to turn and apply this vital skill to anything they do* – an advantage that their classmates who do not study music do not have.

“The arts especially address the idea of aesthetic experience. An aesthetic experience is one in which your senses are operating at their peak: when you’re present in the current moment; when you’re resonating with the excitement of this thing you’re experiencing; when you are fully alive.”

Sir Ken Robinson
[Changing Education Paradigms](#)

“The [Oxford Living English Dictionary defines](#) concentration as “The action or power of focusing all one’s attention.” But I looked in vain [in the same dictionary for a definition of the word](#) attention that describes the way I understand the word in this context. It is more than “The mental faculty of considering or taking notice of someone or something” or “The action of dealing with or taking special care of someone or something.” Attention here has a deep and mysterious meaning: as Nadia Boulanger said it is a “force” that is given to everyone.

“The force of attention is the fuel, and concentration is the fire: together, these sustain any effort we make in life, if we are to live like human beings. Without attention, our efforts are empty, mechanical, “half-hearted.” But with an active, engaged attention, anything we do is enlivened by this deeper participation in experience. When we live this way, when we are engaged with this [Wholehearted Attention](#), we experience our connection with all living things, with the universe.”

Quotes from the website and blog of Walter Bitner:

<https://walterbitner.com/2017/11/15/concentration/>