

# Songbird

Yes, as you may have guessed I am adding my own thoughts on the music of one Whitney Houston. Saturday evening, I received a text from my cousin asking me if I had heard of Whitney's passing. Right after reading the message, I checked out the hub of social activity and sure enough there were already 20 posts devoted to the diva. Growing up in the 80s, I was lucky enough to have lived to see and hear the infectious music of two powerhouse phenomenons: both of them are gone. However, they each left an indelible mark on the music world that still has yet to be surpassed. In the 1980s, Ms. Houston shared a stat of having 7 number one singles in a row! Not only was she a pop diva but frequently returned to her gospel roots with such notable entries as the soundtrack to her film *The Preacher's Wife*.

The 1990s was also a high point for Whitney with the monstrous film and soundtrack to *The Bodyguard* which featured a cover of Dolly Parton's "I Will Always Love You" as well as performing what is arguably the finest performance of the National Anthem of any Super Bowl. Who else can claim to have had their version played on radio stations across the country weeks after it was presented?

Say what you will about the tragic life outside the music. I choose to leave that for the tabloid mongers. Anyone who lived during the 80s-90s can name at least one Whitney Houston song. Like it or lump it, her music is infectious whether it be a hit pop ditty that makes you want to get up and dance (With somebody who loves me) or a powerful torch song. OH... and lest I forget, she served as the Executive Producer and Fairy Godmother on a multi-ethnic version of a televised version of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Cinderella*.

My favorite Houston's song is a duet with Jermaine Jackson that I do not believe was a major hit. I only discovered it as

part of a Greatest Hits compilation more than a few years ago.

And her remarkable Anthem from 1991:

She could have so over done this but chose to keep it straight and simple and is all the more powerful for it. Thank you Whitney!

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## King Praising King

Our new addition, Luke James, is almost 2 months old (already!), and he loves music. While I sit cuddling, feeding, and playing with him, I've been perusing youtube.com looking for music for us to enjoy together. Being the time of year that it is, we've really been appreciating Christmas tunes, especially Martina McBride and Celine Dion's versions of O Holy Night. How I love to sit with my little Luke and think about what the lyrics of these songs REALLY mean! I've also been especially appreciative of Elvis' gospel songs and praise music lately. My favorites are "How Great Thou Art" and "Put Your Hand in the Hand". Today it came to my attention that my friend's dad composed a praise song for Elvis and sang backup for the track with his music group, The Imperials! How cool is that! Thanks to Amanda who shared her dad's talent on this song, "If the Lord Wasn't Walking by My Side":

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# Getting Old... Er, Growing Up

Wednesday November 9 is the 2011 Country Music Awards – an event once so important to me that I would put my schedule on hold so I could enjoy watching this annual awards show on tv. For a few years now, I have committed my Wednesday nights to leading a small group for church's student ministries. The past 2 years, one of my kids happened to be sick on the same Wednesday nights as the awards show, so I volunteered to be the parent to stay home with the sick kid and I didn't have to miss the show nor play hooky from youth group – I had a legitimate reason for calling in sick. This year, there is again a virus circulating through our family, and I think I have a mild case... but things have changed. Even if one of my kids was ill tonight, I would be the one to go to youth group and let Hubby stay home with the sick kid(s). Luckily, I think we'll both be able to make it to youth group tonight, and I am so excited! The new series we started last week is about demons, and it gave me a great connecting point with my girls – we had a great group time last week! Now that I'm back from maternity leave and free from the distractions of pregnancy, I am stoked to build relationships with my youth group girls and help them build their spiritual relationships with Jesus Christ. I am so excited about youth group tonight that the country awards show hardly matters to me – I might try to set up a recording device so I can watch it later, but watching it live doesn't matter to me at all when once it was dire for my entertainment.

Maybe I'm getting old... no, I think I'm growing up! It's so cool to me that God is teaching me about prioritizing and also about using my free time and leading me toward hobbies that glorify Him. How amazing is it that I can be entertained,

relaxed, refreshed, and feel fulfilled, not by doing something that only **I** enjoy but by doing something that affects others in a positive way as well?

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## Date Set

Well... I finally set the date in which I will put on glorious display that which I have been concentrating on for sometime.

It is just less than 5 months away but it will be here before I know it. Even with this leg of mine the last 7 months have not been slow... although I am sure others would disagree ;). I checked the school calendar to see if there was a weekend when there was no school event going on so there would be no excuse for some to not attend ☐

[At my latest blood test on Monday, I was informed that the blood is right where it needs to be. Not too thick, not too thin, but just right. Just call me Goldilocks]

Why so long? I had a feeling there was going to be a wait with not one but two shows in October, the Christmas show in December, the awards night in January, and any other events scheduled in between so February was the first month available.

In the meantime, I will dig through the books, find more material for future use, and focus on the program without making it stale. I was reminded of some of the splendiferous music from *West Side Story* the other night courtesy of "Glee."

Music, yes... choreography not so much. Plus, I suppose I can look back at the foreign pieces I had glanced at a few months ago. A small challenge.

I do see ads on television for *Jersey Boys* (the Frankie Valli

and the 4 Seasons story... one of the few jukebox musicals I would like to see) set to play the Stranahan in February, too. Maybe it ISN'T that long away.

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## The Buzz, Buzz, Buzz of Those Irritating Bs

Good rehearsals and not so good rehearsals... all good just some better than others. Yesterday was one of those "some better than others." ☐ Only made it through two songs... the last 2 on my song list. The first song was the one giving me all the headaches. Probably concentrating too hard... relax! And the note I was having trouble with was a lot of bs ... no really there were probably 10 of those little devils wrecking havoc, but they felt like a load of well... HEHEHE However, I decided that instead of throwing the song out the window and not wanting anything more to do with it, I decided to go back for round number two. Much improvement!

The second piece always had some problems for one big reason. I had made a copy for myself and let K have the original. Looking at both copies, I discovered that I had two pages in reverse order! Fixed everything! And not one flaw... THIS TIME! ... "I AM my own worst critic"

I also purchased a copy of K's new debut CD. Kind of a folksy sound that I really like. She wrote most (if not all of the 12 songs) herself and included her oldest son in one of my favorite pieces on the disc "1 Plus 1 Is Drew." Follow the [link](#) to the website to preview the effort and perhaps purchase the album digitally or a hard copy.



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# Who Knew In NW0?

Tonight, I joined Megs to partake in a concert performed by The Black Swamp Strings of which CC is a cellist. I remember learning a month or so ago that the concert was this weekend but I was not sure of the date, thank heaven my friend invited me to come on my SATURDAY OFF!

The music was phenomenal! It ranged from Bach's *Jesu. Joy of Man's Desiring* (one of the most beautiful pieces EVER written) to more contemporary fare such as theme from *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *Schindler's List*, and "All I Ask of You" from *The Phantom of the Opera*. Another favorite of mine... Brahms's *Hungarian Dance No. 5* was also presented. I know that almost everyone has heard this piece somewhere.

I was particularly impressed with the age range of the musicians. There were several who had just or were about to graduate high school who started with the group at age 14 back in its "garage days." There were also the seasoned veterans. I don't know how long it takes to become even close to being proficient enough on a stringed instrument to perform with a group of this talent, but it seems like you would have to start at birth!

One of our neighboring audience members has a nephew who was a member of the group who is now a professional musician. He will soon be heard on the scores of two of this summer's sure-fire hits: Steven Spielberg's *Super 8* and *Cars 2*. He is also in the Santa Barbara Orchestra. I guess it is possible to achieve a life-long dream no matter where you grow up. The audience member told me to congratulate "my wife" on a great job! Sorry, she only plays my wife on stage. ☐



THANKS MEGS...Had lots of fun! And great job, wife ☐ Until next time.

Here is Brahm's Hungarian Dance for those of you who think they have never hear it!

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# ACM Awards – 2011 Edition

Was it really 11 years ago already that we got to attend the 2000 Academy of Country Music Awards in Los Angeles? Newcomer Brad Paisley won that year for Best New Male Vocalist, and he's now a country music veteran who took the Top Male Vocalist prize in 2011. Someday, I'd like to attend the recording of another live awards show. Nothing beats the excitement in the air and participating in a live tv show taping where anything goes. And never in one place will you see so many super performances by a variety of outstanding performers – both from country music and also outside the genre. But my 4.5 kids keep me grounded, and I don't travel as much as I would or as much as I used to. So until the day when I can get back to a live country music awards show taping (and I will be in no hurry to go to the ACMs until they move it out of Vegas!), I will enjoy watching and voting along at home.

This year was a super show; I had a nice time watching it last night. And a surprise awaited me at the end..

Some highlights:

– Brad Paisley opens with a performance, and then he's joined by none other than – ALABAMA!! They were so awesome; this number really got my country blood pumping!

– Some unlikely duos performing this year:

Unlikely duet #1 – Jennifer Nettles from Sugarland and pop star Rihanna. Their duet made for an interesting performance. Not my favorite kind of music, but they sounded good.

Unlikely duet #2 – Country music sweetheart Carrie Underwood

screaming alongside Aerosmith frontman turned American Idol judge Steven Tyler. The first song wasn't great; it was more for Tyler than Underwood, in fact, I thought it a waste of her lovely voice. But their "Walk This Way" duet was toe-tappin' fun!

Unlikely duet #3 – Zac Brown Band and James Taylor. I'm really starting to enjoy the harmonies of the Zac Brown Band, and their performance with James Taylor tonight was thoroughly enjoyable!

– Probably the first time I've cried while watching the ACM awards – Darius Rucker's song backed by a chorus from the Lifting Lives music camp was incredibly uplifting and awe-inspiring! I loved every minute of it!

Overall, a wonderful show! Except one thing – where the heck was Rascal Flatts?!

And oh yeah, that surprise at the end – Taylor Swift won Entertainer of the Year. No surprise there; if I had paid attention when I filled out my fan ballot and realized that the Entertainer award was fan-chosen, I would have picked Swift in a heartbeat. But I spaced and chose Miranda Lambert (still beat Hubby on the ballot 7-3, just sayin') for some reason. The real surprise came when they announced the nominees for Entertainer of the Year, and I actually found myself rooting for Taylor Swift – what was going on? I've never been a fan of Swift's music, and I hadn't voted for her, so what gives? My 6-year-old daughter was enjoying the show with me, and every time Taylor Swift came on or her name was mentioned, Sammie got SO excited. So I told her I would let her know when "the big award" was coming on, and you should have seen her face when Taylor Swift won – she cheered! It was adorable, and I cried. I cried at the ACM awards twice last night, what is wrong with me? Oh yeah – pregnancy will do that to you. Probably a good thing that I was watching from the safety of my own home.

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# Drifter

I really like this song our church worship band has been playing lately. Enjoy Drifter:

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# CMA Time Already!!

It's that time of year again! Dust off your cowboy hat, put it on, and get ready for a rootin' tootin' time watching the 44th annual Country Music Association Awards!!



I'm going to try something different this year – I'm not going to watch it.

Not that I don't want to, because I really do, especially when I [go to the website](#) and see all the stuff about live streaming comments and things like that. It wasn't too many years ago when I made my own blog of live streaming comments, and I had fun doing it. But I won't be able to watch the CMAs this year because I have something much more important to do: I lead a small group of 6th grade girls at our church's youth group on Wednesday nights. I'm not about to put a tv show above those girls, and I certainly wouldn't be prepared to tell them the reason for my absence was because of the CMA awards – that would not be acceptable. If one of my own kids was sick and I stayed home for that reason (as it happened last year on CMA night), that would be a different story, but it's a great thing that everyone is healthy enough for me to have to miss one of my two most favorite tv events of the year (not including a year the Chicago Cubs would make it into MLB playoffs, but that hasn't been anything I need to concern

myself with in quite some time, Grrrr – my other favorite tv event is the other big country music awards show, the ACMs in the spring).

If you watch the CMA awards, HAVE FUN!! I'm hoping that whatever recording device my husband has in mind to record these will work – we often have bad luck with recording devices. Part of me will miss being a part of the event, reading the live commentary and providing my own, and part of me was ready to move on anyway – seems I've become increasingly disconnected with today's country music scene (now I just sound old). I'll still give my picks, but they are guesses at best because I really haven't been following the genre lately. I didn't even know until I looked last night to find out what time the awards came on that Gwyneth Paltrow, the movie star, has a hit song on country radio right now. I'm actually more into Christian music than ever before; there is some pretty good stuff out there. And listening to Christian music gives me a chance to practice my dances I have on Sunday mornings with the 1st graders ☐ But all of that leaves less time to listen and keep up with country music.

But what the hey, I've had fun trying to pick the winners every year so here goes. My picks are in **green** with random thoughts in *itallics*:

♦♦**Entertainer of the Year – Brad Paisley**, Lady Antebellum, Keith Urban, Miranda Lambert, Zac Brown Band (*What?!? No Kenny Chesney?? That's great news for those of us who aren't big fans... now, who to choose to take his place?*)

**Female Vocalist – Miranda Lambert**, Martina McBride, Reba McEntire, **Taylor Swift**, Carrie Underwood (*So great to see 2 of my favorites (Martina and Reba) back in the game! I don't think Martina will win, but I SO WANTED to choose her!! Carrie Underwood is great too – I'm not a big fan of Taylor Swift, but unfortunately, I think she will win this one*)

◆◆Male Vocalist – Dierks Bentley, Brad Paisley, Blake Shelton, George Strait, Keith Urban

New Artist – Luke Bryan, Easton Corbin, Jerrod Nieman, Chris Young, Zac Brown Band (*Explain to me how Zac Brown Band is still considered “new”? They have some great music and have proven themselves, as I would think being a nominee for Entertainer of the Year would prove!*)

Vocal Group – Lady Antebellum, Little Big Town, Rascal Flatts, The Band Perry, Zac Brown Band (*Let’s be honest, I think Lady Antebellum will take it. But I just love the music of Rascal Flatts, and can’t bear to vote against them. I’m not trying to get 2 votes in – officially, my pick is Rascal Flatts*)

Vocal Duo – Brooks and Dunn, Joey + Rory, Montgomery Gentry, Steel Magnolia, Sugarland (*The last year for Brooks and Dunn, and I don’t think they’ll pull a GARTH Brooks and pull out of retirement, so this powerful duo gets my vote – they are so talented, so they deserve it anyway. I was lucky enough to see them in concert 3 times, and they did not disappoint once!*)

◆◆Single – A Little More Country Than That by Easton Corbin, Hillbilly Bone by Blake Shelton featuring Trace Adkins, Need You Now by Lady Antebellum, The House That Built Me by Miranda Lambert, White Liar by Miranda Lambert

◆◆Song – A Little More Country Than That, Need You Now, The House That Built Me, Toes, White Liar

◆◆Musical Event – Bad Angel by Dierks Bentley feat. Miranda Lambert & Jamey Johnson, Can’t You See by Zac Brown Band feat. Kid Rock, Hillbilly Bone by Blake Shelton feat. Trace Adkins, I’m Alive by Kenny Chesney with Dave Matthews, Till The End by Alan Jackson with Lee Ann Womack

Music Video – Hillbilly Bone by Blake Shelton feat. Trace

Adkins, Need You Now Lady Antebellum, **The House That Built Me** by **Miranda Lambert**, **Water** by **Brad Paisley**, White Liar by Miranda Lambert

**Musician** – Paul Franklin – Steel Guitar, Dann Huff – Guitar, Brent Mason – Guitar, **Mac McAnally** – **Guitar**, **Randy Scruggs** – **Guitar**

Hmm, 5 correct of the 11 I guessed... not too great. Oh well, it was a good show and fun to watch!

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## Two Week Break

B00000! No break, please. But I suppose my vocal coach and her family is entitled to some fun over the summer. I can take this time to scour my books and find more and More and **MORE!** music to work on... no worries, I won't kill myself just get some more songs that appeal to me. Kathrine has offered to make some copies of Conductor pieces, but I still cannot find a copy of "Thuy's Death/You Will Not Touch Him" a powerful, dramatic duet from *Miss Saigon*.



I have already copied some music from a few Lloyd Webber shows, some of my favorite Alan Menken/Howard Ashman Disney character pieces, and a few more duets. I have had a few people state an interest in singing a duet with me so I'm doing my best to find some. I have a serious one to work on with another [tangenteer](#)... wherever she is. YOOHOO! Plus, I am still continuing my preparation for *Hound of the Baskervilles*.

Why does it seem to me that most guys grow a beard in the winter? I'm one of the few who grow one in the summer in the 90+ degree, humid weather... ah, well such is the life of a performer. You would have thought my time Fiddling on that Roof 8 years ago would have made me leary of growing another beard, but Oh, No... not me... whatever the role calls for, I will do! Even before the audition ☐

Ooook... so two weeks off. ☐ Still thinking a weekend gig would be fun with some friends joining me. Come on tangenteers!