



“Seize Your Moment” - Ernesto de la Cruz
(Fictional character from Disney – Pixar’s Coco)

“What is the difference between ten years of experience and one year of experience ten times?” This question was posed to my Foundations of Education class by our esteemed professor Dr. H. Jurgen Combs. This question continues to inspire me to stay on my toes and recognize that each class is different as culture continues to change. The teacher who fails to notice trends can easily fail to seize teachable moments.

Pop culture and celebrities often inspire young people to begin their musical journey. As a music educator, ask yourself whether or not you are paying attention. If so, you are better equipped to seize teachable moments.

Disney–Pixar released a computer-animated movie in 2017 titled *Coco*. The creators of the film called this a “love letter to Mexico” in the bonus features. This movie tells the story of a young boy named Miguel whose family hates music, but Miguel wants to be like his idol Ernesto de la Cruz. For those who have not seen this movie yet, I promise not to spoil it for you, but I will tell you that Miguel plays the guitar just like his idol.

Recently, I was in conversation with two middle school guitar educators who remarked at the influx of new

guitar students. I said, “It’s because of *Coco*”. They didn’t know what I was talking about. “You are teaching guitar in a middle school and you don’t know about *Coco*?!” This should be required viewing for any guitar teacher. (I have since loaned them my copy of the movie.)

Coco is a great movie to show in the classroom. The animation is amazingly accurate when it comes to both the left and right hand guitar techniques. One could even learn to play the music by watching Miguel’s fingers. What an incredible instructional moment to seize. A teacher could make an even stronger impact by having the class play music from the movie or even add Mexican music to their programs.

While the inspiration of this article came from *Coco*, many other movies, shows, games and idols have inspired young people to sing, play or even teach music. Past examples include *Mr. Holland’s Opus*, *Crossroads*, *School of Rock*, *Pitch Perfect*, and *Glee*. When presidential candidate Bill Clinton played saxophone while on the campaign trail, there was increased interest in saxophone; which continued with the popularity of Kenny G. The video games *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band* created a boom for guitar and the number of young people who wanted to play guitar.

While *Coco* was released in 2017, it is still selling well in the DVD/Blue Ray/On Demand market. What else is current with the students that we teach? *American Idol*, *The Voice* and *America’s Got Talent* are few shows that come to mind. But are our students watching TV as much as they are watching YouTube? Another question that comes to mind is once a student is inspired to play music, what keeps them interested?

Guitar Council Dr. Kevin Vigil, Chair

Many of my guitar students are big fans of these channels:

- Alexandr Misko—<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdZe30mKYilwyrLFEEbNwVw>
- Andy Mckee—<https://www.youtube.com/user/TheRealAndyMcKee>
- Marcin Patrzalek—<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZiGGE0eODctISiShAILbjQ>

While I am a guitar teacher, I also teach music theory. Many of these students are watching other YouTube channel which include:

- TwoSetViolin—https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCAzKFALPuF_EPe-AEIOWFFw
- Lindsey Sterling—https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyC_4jvPzLiSkJkLlIkA7B8g
- Piano Guys—<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmKurapML4BF9Bjtj4RbvXw>
- 2 Cellos—<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyjuFsbclXyntSRMBAILzbw>
- Daniel Thrasher—<https://www.youtube.com/user/muffinman3000>

So back to Dr. Comb’s question: “What is the difference between ten years of experience and one year of experience ten times?” In short... our students. If you are in tune with your students’ interests and fads, you will be in tune with their culture. No two years are the same. BTW... dabbing and being “lit” are on their way out... just sayin’.

Since the release of the movie, guitar manufacturing has increased significantly. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJ7IOcLvD-Y>.

Cordoba Guitars makes *Coco*-inspired guitars for young children. <https://www.cordobaguitars.com/?s=coco&submit=>