

## The Space Between Notes

I spent years thinking that being a good pianist meant interpreting everything quickly. I practiced with a metronome, memorized pieces, and wished I could skip the work so my fingers could just move on their own. As a pianist, I felt a sense of pride that I could go through entire pages quickly and not stop.

To me, speed felt like success. Pauses felt like failures.

My teacher, Mr. Eghoyan, had a different perspective. In one of my lessons, I raced through a Chopin nocturne at a blinding speed, barely breathing. When I was done playing (a huge rush), he stared at me and said, 'You missed the silences.'

I didn't understand him. There was no silence in the written music note; there was absolutely nothing.

He played the piece himself, which I had never heard. It was slower than I had ever heard. He moved his hands so slowly, and he held on to moments I had rushed completely past. It sounded like a different composition altogether; it was sad, full, and like it had a statement.

That was the first time I began to see music not just for the sound, but also for the things that exist from silence. It has changed how I practice.

I no longer practice for speed. I hear the space between the notes. It was hard at first. I felt vulnerable playing so slowly. But the more I practiced this way, the more I started to relate to the music and, oddly enough, to myself.

Things began to change in my life outside of music too. I used to fill silence in conversations, for fear that not speaking meant something was wrong. I used to barreling through days, through moments, through tasks, through feelings, just so I could feel ahead of something. The piano had taught me something I couldn't ignore any longer. Sometimes, the pause is the most truthful part.

Now, I take my time in music and in life. I listen more. I let moments breathe.

I still love playing fast when a piece calls for it, but I won't say I ever measure my ability by how fast I finish something anymore. Growth for me came when I learned to linger and let the silence mean something.

And that, I think, was where I first began to develop an understanding of what kind of musician and person I want to be. Not the fastest, not the flashiest, just one who pays attention to what matters, even when it is quiet.