

*Alan Fraser*  
*On Beauty*

Beauty is absolutely central to my work. Not only because I am a pianist and the music I play is beautiful, but because every moment of my life seems more worthwhile if it is laced with beauty. In modern architecture it seems that beauty has become a dirty word: the idea's the thing, and if it's beautifully rendered, it's considered kitsch. This to me is a tremendous shame; we are forced to live in ugly buildings that supposedly communicate some idea to us – but we suffer... we suffer... The same with a lot of “modern music” – it seems it has to be ugly to be acceptable. It may stimulate the intellect but the soul is left arid and starving. There's a reason we keep running back to Brahms and Beethoven...

Beauty is valuable because of our instinctive response to it. Something moves within us. Something awakens. An inner impulse is evoked.

But isn't this exactly what I seek in FI? When I touch, I don't seek to impose my idea of movement on my client. I seek response. I seek that moment of awakening within. If I impose my movement, we have gained nothing. It's all about listening.

This is also how I play the piano. I don't impose my musical idea but seek to discover the musical gesture within. I do this by touching the piano as I would touch a client in FI. Not to impose the notes but to try to get inside the key, to sense how it wants to move instead of moving it. This “playing from inside the key” gives markedly different musical results from the more external, bravura approach. Strangely enough, lending my touch this more subtle, more organic, more connected quality also lends the music a more subtle emotional quality – there is more nuance, more tenderness and intimacy. There is a completely new world of sonority and singing, of dance and dialogue. It is not an enforced expressiveness but a discovered expression that comes not from me but from my intimate physical connection with my instrument.

And yes, it's more beautiful to play that way. It touches the soul.

It's the same in ATM. In a successful class there is always that moment when the movement of every single participant becomes fluid, organic, “well-organized.” And that moment is beautiful. I often tell the class I wish they could be me so they could see how beautifully they are moving right now.

Beauty is essential to my life. Whether it be the dusky growl of a voice newly enriched after an FI, the scintillating bell-tones of a Scarlatti sonata played with ephemeral delicacy, or the roar of an orchestra in full flight through a Mahler symphony, it's more beautiful when the movement within is organic, complete – no parasitism even at the molecular level. It all comes together.

Life is movement. Life without movement is unthinkable.

Movement is beauty, beauty is movement. Life without beauty is unthinkable.