

It's all in your brain but you gotta dig deep. Everything you've played or heard as a musician is stored in your brain's amazing storage space, and you don't even pay a subscription fee. Have you ever come up with a sophisticated word, used it in a conversation, then wondered where it came from?

Similarly, a musical phrase, a sentence, or a lick, may suddenly come to mind, and we're left wondering where it came from.

When I am improvising, I try to record everything on the music device of my choice, be it a tape recorder or electronic device. A few times, I've improvised whole new pieces for the piano, which thankfully I have recorded for future reference.

One particular moment stands out. I had gone to bed, hoping to sleep, when suddenly the first part of a new piano piece popped into my head. I knew instinctively that this would be my next composition. I scurried downstairs to the piano (in my nightgown no less), played it, and immediately made an audio recording of it. Knowing that I can't rely solely on my brain to recall moments like this, the audio recording meant that I wouldn't need to dig too deep when working on the piece in future.

Music activates many memory regions of the brain, and I'd like to tell you where all this good stuff is stored so we could consciously target the sources. But, alas, I won't lose any more sleep trying to find the answer.

Having said that, playing an instrument stimulates areas of the brain that commit the new experience to the brain's storage bank. As you improvise, your brain creates neuropaths as you explore amazing new material. Over time, muscle memory comes into play as your fingers automatically massage the instrument as if by some unseen force.

Sometimes, powerful catalysts can steer the musical brain onto passionate musical paths. Revolutions and resistance fighters against unfair wars have spurred whole new bodies of music. In recent times, think of the '60s, the peace and love years, the Vietnam War years, and the equal rights movement in the US. Once a new style of music inspired by these events becomes popular, composers produce a flood of music in that genre.

But what if you are the product of a safe environment where there is no immediate threat, concern, or passion to inspire your creative faculties? I suppose, then, that one must rely upon the brain's storage bank. As a musician with aspirations of composing, you can draw upon the vast amount of music that you have listened to and retained. These resources, then, are within you,

and perhaps one day you will stumble upon something new—an avant-garde angle, a newborn genre, a novel musical concept, a spark that sets the music world ablaze!

Everything you've played or heard as a musician is stored in your brain's amazing storage space, waiting to be transformed into something awe-inspiring.

*"Some succeed because they are destined to, but most succeed because they are determined to."*

Henry Van Dyke