

## Remembering Ben – Miles Kredich

Something I've always loved about Ben is that any string he could get his hands on, he turned into a musical instrument. I've always preferred to think of them as strings on a bass — arguably Ben's favorite instrument. He'd tighten the string, put it up to his ear, and would pluck a jammin' bass line. He'd do this with any and every string thicker than a dog hair. A thread from a shirt, the broken off appendage of a rubber stress toy, and most often, the elastic string that's meant to tighten your gym shorts. On top of an *incredible* resume, he's the *only* man to ever turn pants into an instrument.

I like to think of our souls as intertwined by strings that when touched, or plucked, make sound. These strings weave and wind, tighten and loosen around each other. They're like the strings that Ben plays, but no matter how tight the strings connecting our souls might get, they never, ever, break.

When people hear I'm a twin, they often get an intrigued look on their face, and then ask if we're identical. We're not! And Ben would be the first one to tell you we do NOT look the same — he's a very big fan of *his* handsome looks and *his* beautiful eyelashes. Our visible differences can easily be seen, but like every single person on this Earth, we share so much more in common below the surface.

One of my favorite memories I have of our relationship is composing the music for my Master of Arts final project, which explores the perfect pitch and synesthesia he and I recently learned we share. Perfect pitch is the ability to name a pitch just by hearing it, which is something only 0.01% percent of people on Earth can do. Synesthesia is a phenomenon that occurs when one sense is activated, and another “unrelated” sense is activated at the same time. So for me and Ben, when we hear a pitch, a color pops into our heads involuntarily.

For instance, (whistle a D) — that's a D, and for *both* of us, D creates a vibrant green, or a variation of chartreuse. But a B, (whistle a B) creates a *red* wash in my head, and creates a *violet* wash in his.

We only discovered we share these traits within the past few years — but the moment we figured it out, we wouldn't stop calling each other on the phone and discussing the “musical colors” we each experience when we're listening to our favorite songs. I can't begin to imagine the symphony of colors he'd experience while listening to Victoria by the Kinks, or Praise the Lord by A\$AP Rocky featuring Skepta.

Our synesthesia and perfect pitch are only a few shared interests and traits that brought us closer together, and being a twin is of course, a very special bond. But no matter what your relationship was with Ben, I know it's worth writing a speech about. There's only one Carolyn Cantrell, who shares the most absurd sense of humor with Ben, and never failed to make him laugh. There's only one Joe Peeden, who's patience and love allowed Ben to feel included, for sure, but his patience also finally taught him how to finally perform a semi-proper dive into the

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pool. And there's only one Anna Kate McGinty, who's name alone brought Ben a sense of peace and happiness that is truly remarkable. Anna Kate, Ben, and Miles hot tub nights at the beach, looking up at the stars, talking about our lives and dreams, bringing up hypothetical questions, and talking about the only three counties of her home state of Alabama that touch the Gulf of Mexico. Every single one of you have been impacted by Ben, just like he's been impacted by you, and that's something everyone should hold close to them, forever.

Diana Warner, one of many fantastic art teachers in Ben's life, reminded me the other day that there is no physical distance anymore, between me and Ben. Being away from him, especially in times of struggle for both of us, hurt like hell. I felt alone, and when I'd look in the mirror, I'd only ever see myself. But for the rest of my life, every time I see myself in a picture or reflection, I'll see both of us. We have the same nose, same dark circles, and the same chipped and grinded teeth. Same wrists, same piano hands, and same tiny Kredich butt that can never keep our pants, or speedos, above our waists. Same love of geography, but often different opinions on what region Kentucky belongs to.

Ben often used to say to me that you should only play songs in Tennessee that are in the key of C. He said this about many states, such as Florida, which is also the key of C, and Kentucky, which is a mix of C and F. I didn't understand what he meant by that for a long time, just going along with what he was saying. This all changed when I moved to Chicago and I put my "Ben Ears" on. I realized that the CTA train car, when arriving and departing from the station, emits this beautiful open F chord that rings through the streets. I then started listening more, and found that various sounds of the city — like the sound of a car going over the Lake street bridge, the beeps of my elevator, and the constantly ringing bell from the commuter train, were all in tune with each other — in the same key. I finally figured it out, and we continued to have these conversations every time we called the past few months. I could tell how relieving it was for him to know someone else finally understood!

This week has been unbelievably painful, but there have been moments where I felt absolutely elated. The most magical moment was when I sat on our porch outside, listening to the cicadas and crickets of East Tennessee, which is my favorite sound of all time. I put on my Ben ears and heard the cicadas emitting a very unique cluster chord, while the crickets took turns giving their own intermittent solos in the key of C. And that's when I TRULY realized why he always said Tennessee is associated with the key of C. Coleman Ben and I would listen to nature sing us to sleep in the key of C, every single night.\*

*\*(September 29th, 2023) After having listened and recorded a few hours of cicadas and crickets in Knoxville, I've found there are many modes of C being sung, including E, Eb, Bb, B, G, F#, C#. A quick google search told me "The dominant frequencies of sound production for the Cicada orni and Cicadatra atra species are 2.13 kHz and 10.23 kHz" which comes to about an E on the piano (major third above C). I'm typing this to put on the record this topic is actually way more complicated than "just the key of C."*

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His beautiful ears now carry on with me, my mom, and all of his musical influences. His sense of wonder now carries on through all children he's interacted with. And his smiley, infectious laugh, is carried on through his hilarious Dad, younger brother, aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, teachers, friends, dogs, cats, and screen recordings of his randomly-timed Instagram livestreams.

What I learned from Ben is that when you are gentle, kind, inclusive, accommodating, and loving, your world will be in tune — and you'll find beautiful music in everything, everyone, everywhere you are.