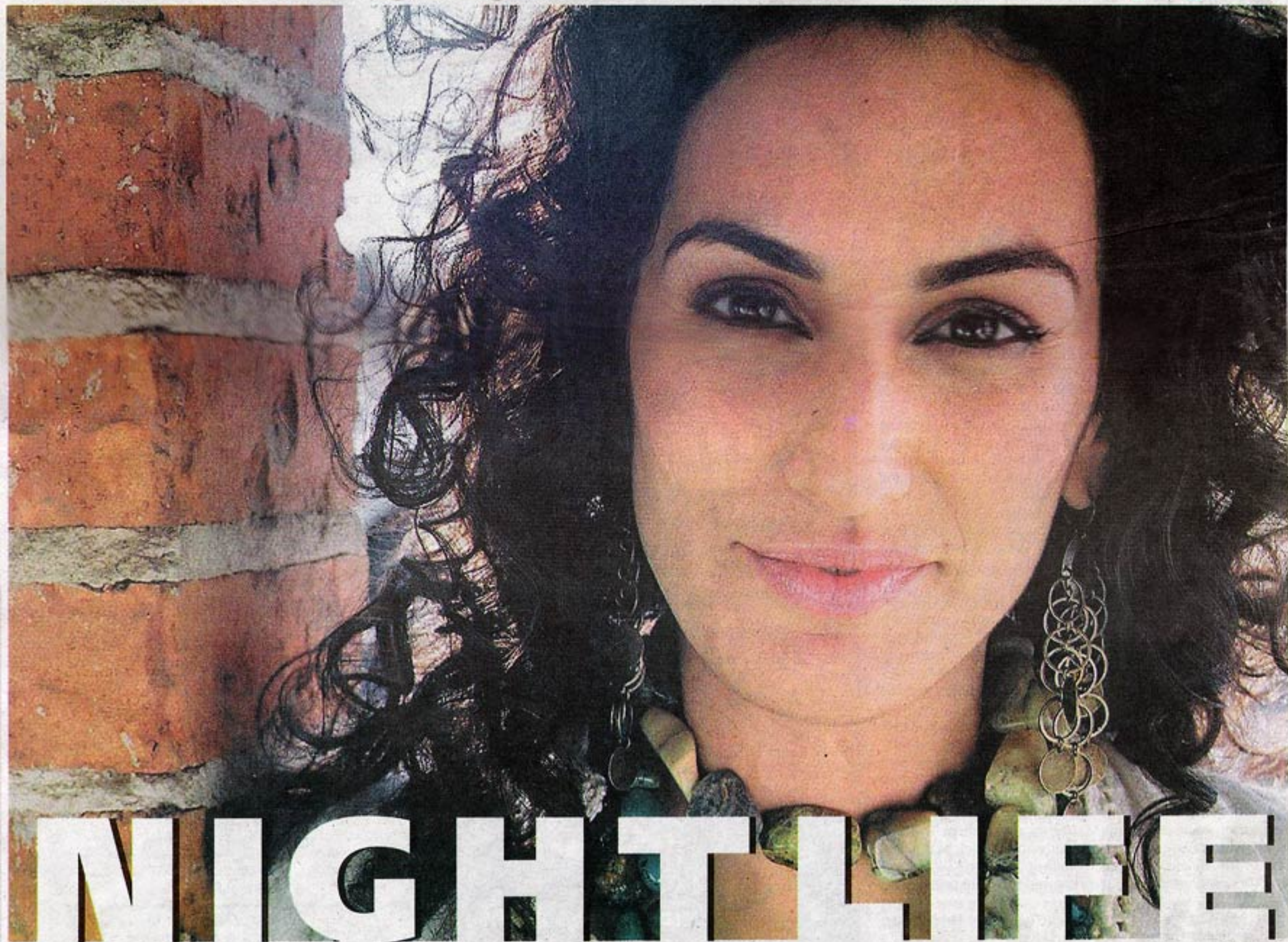


You might already recognize her from TV

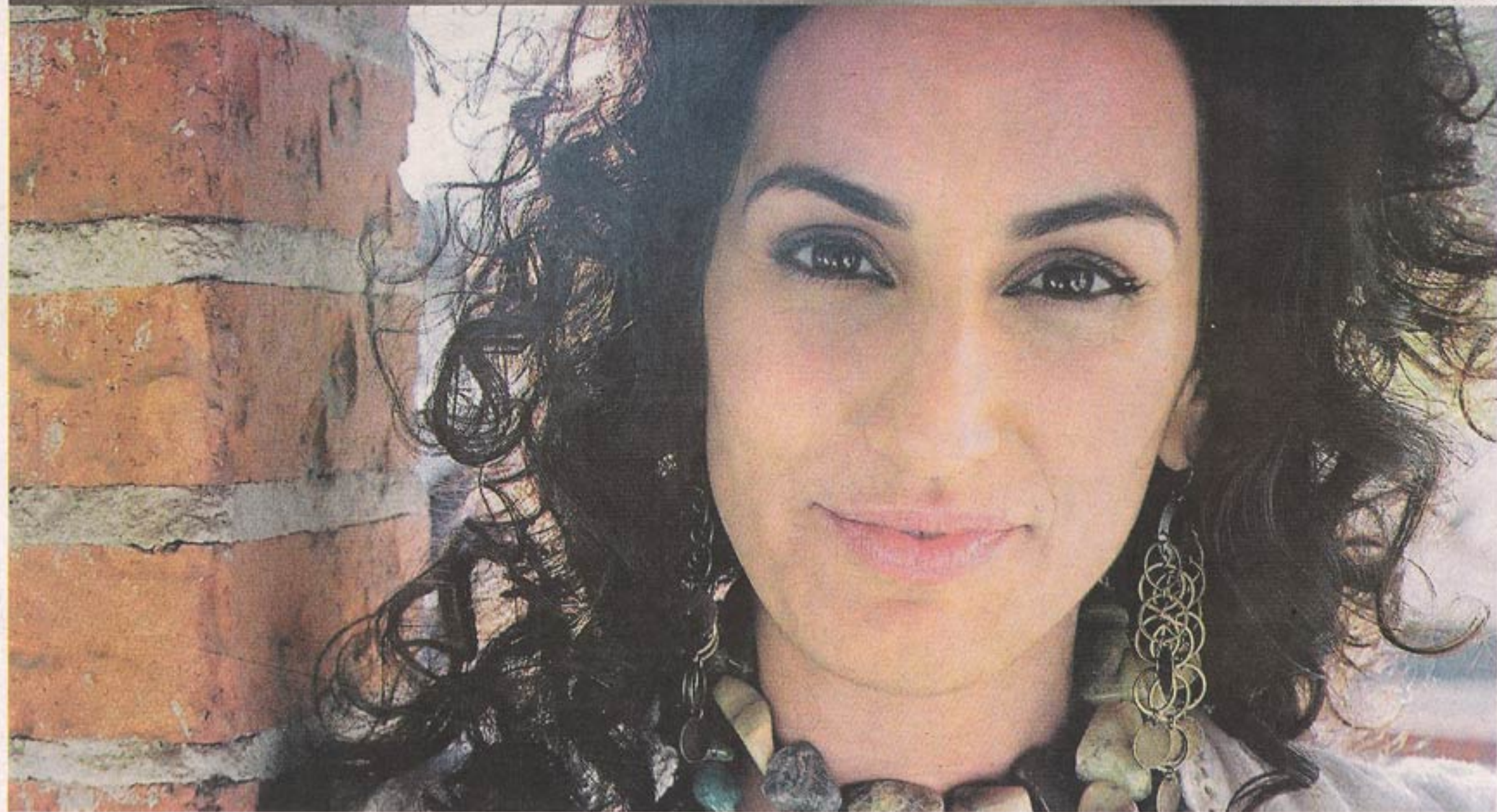
Amanda Martinez

is still in the spotlight, and she's doing what she loves

The award-winning singer talks about her passion on **page 4**



NIGHTLIFE



Million-dollar voice

BY NICK KREWEN
FOR NIGHTLIFE

Even if you discover the marvel of Latin jazz singer and songwriter Amanda Martinez for the first time when she performs at The Registry Theatre this Friday, one fact won't change: She's helped give away more money than you'll see in a lifetime.

For a couple of years, Martinez was the host of CITY-TV's Ontario Lottery Tonight, offering one of the warmest smiles on television as she announced winning Lotto 649 and Super 7 lottery numbers for the Ontario Lottery Corporation and helped award untold millions.

"I was there from 2003 to 2005, three nights a week," Martinez says from her Toronto home. "It was actually pre-recorded, so we would record 12 segments in a day. Then they would just have my voice saying the numbers in different ways so that they could plug them in when the numbers were chosen live. But the actual part in between where I was just welcoming people and talking trivia — that was all done beforehand."

Martinez, who now hosts Cafe Latino on Jazz FM 91.1 on Saturday afternoons, says the lottery gig was fun while it lasted, but she's thankful it ended sooner than later.

"It ran its course, but for me it was a blessing in disguise," she says. "It was a very well-paid job, but at the same time I didn't really want to be branded as the lotto girl, and I think that's really easy with TV, just to become the face of something."

"And around the time when that contract was ending, I got the position at Jazz FM where I was the voice of this Latin music."

Now Martinez has decided to put her own voice to Latin music. Her recent and first independently released album *Sola* features songs mainly sung in Spanish and Portuguese, spiced with flamenco flourishes and bossa nova beats, and songs like *C-n-tame* and *Diciembre* offering a sensuous syntax of poetic imagery that courses through the veins of an obvious romantic. "The music that I sing in Spanish I find is juicier than a lot of the music that I sing in English," chuckles Martinez, who counts Pablo Milanes and Mercedes Sosa among her influences.

"I love performing onstage and I've found that a lot of the Latin American music that I grew up with, I have a very strong connection to it in my heart. I feel such a passion for it and I think it comes across when I sing."

"When I first started performing in Toronto I was singing mostly at jazz clubs. I really wasn't sure how that type of music would go over and I knew a lot of jazz standards, so I started with that and then throw in the odd bossa nova tune in Spanish. Then I would get a really strong reaction from the audience like, 'Wow, you just really light up when you sing in Spanish. Can you do more of that?'"

"So eventually, I went with what my heart was really telling me to do and didn't want to do so much of the background easy-listening and do stuff that had a little bit more drama to it."

Martinez remembers embracing her Mexican/South African roots at a very early age.

"When I was quite young, my parents took me to Mexico and I remember being awestruck by the Mariachi bands of Mexico," recalls Martinez, who is trained in classical piano.

"Also at most of our functions, sitting around with one of

my uncles who played the guitar and sang. I remember that from being quite young, sitting around and singing with them."

However, her family discouraged her own professional aspirations. "It was never something I thought I could make a living at," says Martinez, who will perform Friday night's Registry show with a six-piece band.

"I never considered it a reality. Although my parents were supportive of my shows, they always encouraged me to pursue something that they thought would be more secure, like business or science. So that's the path I ended up following. But I realized one day that I was just fooling myself thinking I could brush it off as a hobby when inside I knew it was something I felt I should be doing."

And even though her father warned her about the cut-throat music business, Martinez decided it was worth a shot.

"One thing my Dad said is that music would be competitive, but most fields are competitive," she reasons. "You just have to look at what you have to offer and focus in on your strengths. And I think it's a lot easier to work hard when you enjoy what you're doing."

Martinez hasn't given up acting — she can currently be seen on a Canadian Tire commercial and will appear shortly on the Disney Channel TV series *Life With Derek* and the Paul Reiser-produced independent film *Love Bites* — but it's clear that music, even more so than her Lotto gig, makes her feel like a million dollars. She intends on sharing her fervor with others and says you don't have to necessarily understand the language to feel the music — especially considering music is a universal language in the first place.

"I think people might discover that it can touch them without them having to necessarily understand the language," Martinez says. "It's quite varied: There are songs I perform from my album that are soothing and others like *Guajira Sola* that can get you up and dancing."

"The music itself is very freeing."

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