

## Article Transcript

### Healing through Music and Medicine

By Matt Ward

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Aboard the unpainted stainless steel-clad, 20 D-battery powered, Japanese precision engineered driftwood raft on its journey into the burnt umber and raspberry-colored sunset of what might be the final era of classically-inspired musical arrangements in popular music, dutifully ferrying the few enterprising R&B and rap artists who then found it fashionable to affix questionable social honorifics to their stage names, just how many of them do you think were, in a previous life or currently, actual practicing doctors?

The budding young keyboardist V. Shawn Trent, then aged five when he began his classical piano lessons, seemed to be at a crucial junction point in his own personal space-time continuum, for in that year he would be introduced to the two disciplines that would forever dominate his destiny. T'was thanks in no small part to his father's love of jazz, and also to the prudent intentions of his mother—a medical technologist—who gave her son the greatest gift any parent could give their burgeoning artist offspring: a firm push towards a solid fallback position. But still, a stem degree in the wings doesn't hurt, for safety's sake. Though not exactly that cut and dry (his parents pushed not just 'STEM' activities, but 'STEAM'), Trent's cuisinart pitcher of extracurriculars helped keep him off the streets, and on the way to Wayne State's School of Medicine. Now the adult Dr. V. Shawn (MD, Pathology) has spent the past several years striving to find the time and resources to make more room for his lifelong love of music, which he calls his "therapy. It's what was really my passion," Trent elaborates, "—I enjoy medicine, but music is what I'm really driven to do." Trent's classical training and love of baroque masters such as Bach informs his penchant for exquisitely pinched and knotted closing flourishes, which when combined with his love of the traditional and post-bop exuberance of Thelonious Monk, as well as the fusion of Chick Corea, allows Trent's occasional flights of improv to soar with intelligence.

DIJM: How exactly did you become involved with medicine?

DVST: Well, my mother worked in the medical field as a medical technologist. And at the nontypical age of five, she picked me up and took me to the laboratory, and let me look through the microscope and different things. So I was exposed to a lot of the things that influenced me later in life at a very early age.

DIJM: What about medicine appeals to you, exactly? That's a lot of school to go through; you can't just be in it for the money.

DVST: Absolutely not. For me, I enjoy investigation—being in pathology is like putting a puzzle together. Trying to figure out why this happened, how that happened—there's always a part of the investigative process that I enjoy.

DIJM: So what was happening in your life that led you from being a pathologist to

the production of That's What's Up?

DVST: I have been, for a long time, striving to be a physician... To be involved in something fulfilling, and I haven't been paying enough attention to my musical side. Music is my therapy; it's what was really my passion. I enjoy medicine, but music is really what I'm driven to do. So I needed to put something together to fulfill that

side of me. And that's what I did; I took some time off, we tried to pull some money together, get some people together and make a production with my original material.

DIJM: Can you give details on the play for which you served as musical director?

DVST: I was actually working as a musical director, and the name of the play is Ain't Nothing Promised. We did a run of it for a weekend, and then my friend's production company fell into legal battles and we suffered from some personal and financial issues, so the project had to be set aside. But I also happened to befriend some of the musicians I was working with, and they took me to a level where I thought I could create something original. The legal issues are resolved now—funny you should mention that play—and we're thinking of putting it back into production, hopefully next year. And that's how it all happened in a nutshell; you meet people for one reason, and then another door opens. And it led to the perfect fit for what I wanted to do with my own production. We put out a soundtrack for the play as well, and I'm laying the groundwork for another CD that will be out hopefully by mid-2016.