The author (AQΩ, University of Pennsylvania, 1989) is associate professor of Pediatrics and director of the Pediatric and Fetal Echocardiography Laboratory at New York University School of Medicine.

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine . . .” It is 8:46 a.m., September 11, 2002, and we have begun singing Mozart’s great Requiem, one of nearly 200 choruses from 28 countries singing in the Rolling Requiem. This is a particularly emotional moment, important to me for two reasons. First, of course, it has been one year since that overwhelmingly tragic day, and anniversaries have a way of releasing emotions and musings. But also, as we lift our 90 voices to join thousands of others around the world, the Rolling Requiem reminds me of the great interconnectedness humanity shares through music.

This performance heralds the start of my fourth year as a tenor in a choral group. Before that, I’d never sung with a group before. As a kid, I took the requisite classical piano lessons (for which I am forever grateful), and later I sang alone in the car or in my bachelor apartment. Still, I have always loved music: its rhythm, its melodies and harmonies, its tones and chords, its expressivity. As old as humankind, music expresses the human condition. Growing up, I used to have a “song for the day,” a melody that popped into my head early in the morning and stayed with me all day long. Almost every day as an intern, I came home from work and played the piano. But caring for patients tends to soak up time. Clinical clerks and especially interns begin a transformation away from a well-rounded, extracurricular-minded lifestyle. As these and other responsibilities grow, personal interests drop by the wayside. Life becomes all about work and, later, family. Please don’t get me wrong—I love both. But about four years ago, my wife and I, the parents of two young children, decided that we needed to do something for ourselves. She suggested that I join a local choral group.

Up until then, I had been doing that academician’s dance: the “triple threat” of patient care, teaching, and research. Add to this the struggle to maintain any semblance of family life, and one has what Scott Epstein calls the “quadruple threat.”l I asked Janet where I would find the time, told her how it would take away from time spent with the family, but she felt it was important for our sanity. How wise she was! I now look forward each week to the camaraderie of other singers and, above all, to the beauty, and the reach, of the music. The music has touched not only me, but has extended itself to my family and to my work.

Replying to the “quadruple threat” concept, I espoused the importance of being good to oneself—upping the ante to the “quintuple threat.”l This is not, I emphasize again, a license to assume self-importance, arrogance, or isolationism. I try hard not to ignore the other components of my life and, even more, have rediscovered forgotten pursuits that help me be interesting and interested in what is around me. Is work important? Sure. Are family and “quality time” important? Absolutely. But fostering personal interests—music, sports, reading, history, physics, ham radio, whatever—keeps my eyes open to the world around me and fulfills me, and I am a better person for my family and for my patients. Doing something solely for myself allows a little time and opportunity for self-reflection in the frenetic life that we all lead. Perhaps more than any other activity outside of my family, music provides me with balance. These days, I again carry a “song for the day,” to which I often walk in step.
To paraphrase football great Gale Sayers,* “Work is first, my family is second, and I am third”—the mantra of the academic physician. It will always be a difficult balancing act, and each one of us has to decide what’s important in our lives. But having tried the “quint,” I believe I am a better “quad” for it. Many physicians treat themselves “third”—or last. But it isn’t about who’s first or third. Everyone wins when one’s body and soul are healthy.

*Gale Sayers played football for the Chicago Bears from 1965 to 1971, and was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. His autobiography, I Am Third, was made into the popular television movie Brian’s Song. The book’s title is taken from his maxim, “The Lord is first, my friends are second, and I am third.”

References
1. Epstein SK. How to be a quadruple threat. Pharos Fall 1999; 62: 42–43.

The author’s address is:
Pediatric Cardiology Program
New York University School of Medicine
530 First Avenue, FPT Suite 9U
New York, New York 10016
E-mail: colin.phoon@med.nyu.edu

Instructions for Pharos authors

We welcome material that addresses scholarly and nontechnical topics in medicine and public health such as history, biography, health services research, ethics, education, and social issues. Poetry is welcome, as well as photographs/poetry combinations. Photography and art may also be submitted. Fiction is not accepted. All submissions are subject to editorial board review. Contributors need not be members of Alpha Omega Alpha. Papers by medical students and residents are particularly welcome.

Submissions must meet the following criteria:
1. Submissions may not have been published elsewhere or be under review by another journal.
2. Essays should have a maximum of 15 pages (approximately 5000 words), and be submitted in 12-point type, double-spaced, with one-inch margins. They should be accompanied by a covering letter, a 150-word abstract, and a title page with the word count (or page count), return address, and e-mail address. Papers exceeding the page count noted will be returned to the author. References should not exceed 20 unique items (see below).
3. Poems or photographs/poetry combinations should be in 12-point type, with one-inch margins, with the author’s name, address, and e-mail address on the first page.
4. Send your submissions to Edward D. Harris, Jr., M.D., Editor of The Pharos, 525 Middlefield Road, Suite 130, Menlo Park, California 94025. You may also e-mail them to: postmaster@alphaomegaalpha.org.
5. After peer review, comments on the manuscript will be sent to the author along with an editorial decision. Every attempt is made to complete preliminary reviews within six weeks.
6. The editors of The Pharos will edit all manuscripts that are accepted for publication for style, usage, relevance, felicity, and grace of expression, and may provide appropriate illustrative material. Authors should not purchase illustrative material because the editors cannot guarantee that it will be used.
7. In accordance with revised copyright laws, each contributor will need to sign an Author’s Agreement, which will be sent with the edited galleys. Information on copyright ownership and re-publication of articles is detailed in the Author’s Agreement.

Reference information
Authors are responsible for the accuracy of citations and quotations in their papers. Once a manuscript has been accepted for publication, therefore, the author will be required to provide photocopies of all direct quotations from the primary source material, indicating page numbers. In addition, the editors will require photocopies of all references: the title page and copyright pages of all books cited, the first and last pages of book chapters cited, and the first and last pages of journal articles cited, as well as the Table of Contents of the particular issue of the journal in which the cited article appeared. The foregoing items will be used to verify the accuracy of the quotations in the text and the references cited, and to correct any errors or omissions.

References should be double-spaced, numbered consecutively in the text, and cited at the end in the following standard form:

Each reference should be listed in the bibliography only once, with multiple uses of a single reference citing the same bibliography reference number. Examples are available at our web site: www.alphaomegaalpha.org.

Citation of web sites as references is discouraged unless a site is the single source of the information in question or has official or academic credentials. Examples of such sites are official government web pages such as that of the National Institutes of Health. Encyclopedia sites such as britannica.com are not primary references.