

《How easy to fall out tune with daily life》

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On one of those sizzling days last week, I was late getting out the door to head for work and had to run a fair distance to a corner where I could catch a taxi. When I got there, my freshly washed and ironed shirt was stuck to my back with perspiration.

The day's off to a bad start, I thought.

It got worse. I wanted to call my colleagues to let them know I would be late, and reaching for phone in my pocket, I found that in my haste to get out the door, I had forgotten it.

Making matters worse, I had also forgotten to bring small change to pay the taxi fare. I had only a 100 RMB note in my pocket.

The last time I had tried paying a cabbie with 100 RMB, he grimaced at the bank note -- you'd have thought it was a thousand instead -- and made me run into a convenience store to get change. And once before that, a driver had made me the gift of a very shiny, very new and very fake 50 yuan note as he counted out my change.

In the few minutes it took to get a taxi, I had already managed to work myself into a foul mood.

The cool air gushing from the cab's dashboard, when I got in, did little to soothe my funk. And we had driven for only seconds when we had to pull up at the end of a long line of vehicles waiting for an even longer red light to change.

We were one car too far back, as it turned out, and the light flashed red again just as we approached the intersection.

More time lost.

The driver pulled up the emergency brake, took the cab out of gear, and reached over to turn on the radio.

Usually, I've found, cab drivers enjoy listening to cross-talk performances or story-tellers on the radio, neither of which hold much interest for someone of my sadly limited abilities in Chinese.

But this driver was different. He passed over several radio stations and finally stopped on one with a woman singing folk music. How beautiful it was!

Before the light changed to green, the driver turned up the volume and began singing along with her. My petty worries and needless stress melted away. I joined them, humming the melody as best I could.

Eventually, we got underway again, and after what seemed far too little time, the driver pulled up at China Daily.

How quickly those worries I had manufactured for myself were washed away by the simple, and for that all the more sincere, beauty of that folk music, and by the opportunity of sharing it with a Beijing taxi driver.

It makes me think of something the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche once said: "Without music, life would be a mistake".

