

# Strength

Saturday, August 29, 2020

## Zoom

Should I Zoom simply to make my dancers happy?

Is their happiness enough motivation?

Basically, I hate Zoom. Dancing on Zoom is no fun for me. No real people to hold, touch, dance with, no human sweat, wild energy, pungent odors, or vibrant smiles. Nothing.

I love, want, and need to dance. But I'll need a good reason to do it on Zoom. Since I can't find one inside myself, can I find it outside? Maybe in the shine of their exuberant faces or the 11/16 kopanica rhythms pumping through their ethnic dancing hearts? After all, it's quite pleasant sailing down the Danube to a Balkan beat. Could I ever do it on Zoom? Is making them happy, fulling their needs enough to push me over the artistic top and force me to do what I want and love?

What makes my dancers happy? Socializing with each other, holding hands, dancing in a circle, seeing the flesh of actual human beings, not on a screen, but right before their eyes! Zoom can't offer this. But in person dancing can.

I could send out an email, ask for Zoom dance requests, create a program. That would be a start.

Monday, August 31, 2020

## How Good to Practice!

### Benefits of Long Term Practice

Fast, fiery, dynamic guitar playing.

As I practice, fear of back sliding fades away. Such ancient playing will be a memory, and finally, even the memory will disappear. All a good thing.

As my playing changes, my self concept changes.

If I can do it with guitar, why not with everything else?

The experts say your body stiffens as you get older. And it only gets worse with age.

But they could be wrong. Suppose instead of getting worse with age, your body gets better! It's happening with my guitar playing hands. They are getting better. Why not the rest of my body?

Maybe the experts are off base, and I am right!

Truth is, I am the only one who knows myself. So only I can decide whether I'm right or not.

I see the truth flashing in my guitar playing hands.

Best to decide I'm right.

I fear this truth. I'm right.

With it comes fear of my confidence, fear of the unknown, fear of new paths, fear of my power, and ultimately, fear of the truth.

But isn't life about conquering fears?

### Stocks

Why do I spend so much time trading stocks?

Partly to distract from my descent into hell.

What is hell?

A free fall into chaos of the abyss.

But note: Dangling at the edge of the abyss is exciting!

Excitement breeds enthusiasm.

Enthusiasm counters fear

So dangling over the abyss is part of my journey.

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Banned Is Beautiful

My stock jumped. A happy surprise. I got something for nothing.

The hope for happy surprises is why I trade stocks.

But somehow trading stocks, also called gambling in the stock market, feels unhealthy, dark, and evil.

That may be why it's attractive.

I'm attracted to light, but also to darkness. I like to try new things often in secret. No criticism when its secret. It also feels vaguely evil, wrong, banned, bordering on criminal, but also exciting.

Do banned and beautiful go together?

Banned is beautiful.

This speaks to the dialectics of life, how opposites attract, fuse, synthesize, and create something new.

Thursday, September 10, 2020

Zoom

Watched Lee Otterholt's Zoom folk dance class. He's such a good teacher.

I tremble to admit, but maybe I'm ready to finally enter the Zoom world.

I'm in a different place now. Watching Lee, and his excellent presentation—he has even improved!—I realized Zoom can be its own art form. Certainly it is in Lee's hands. (Or feet.) Why not in mine?

Two questions:

First, why have I avoided Zoom up to now?

Too angry, furious, and panicked with the political lock-down, social distance, and masking reactions to the virus, and its shutting down of all my business. (I went into a two-month melt-down.) This, of course, included the beauty of folk dancing with others, seeing, holding hands, and touching live humans beings. All gone. I was, and remain, furious.

However, my fury and panic have softened over the months. I have also finished the hermit projects I gave myself to accomplish during these shut down-shut off months.

When September arrived, a fresh breeze blew my way. It said, "I'm ready to go back to work!"

But I have no work. No folk dancing, folk dance teaching, folk dance tours. No nothing. Therefore, I have to create work. And I'm ready to do it.

That's step one.

Step two began when I started my Outdoor Folk Dance class last Sunday in Teaneck's Fairleigh Dickinson University parking lot. I bought a strong speaker, checked everything out, ran the class. Big success. Everyone loved it. I'll do more. Outdoor classes for Wednesday and alternate Sundays are now scheduled through November. After that, we'll see.

I wanted to learn Busuiocul, so I contacted Lee and asked if he knew it. He said the best way to learn the styling is to watch his Zoom class. Which I did.

Since I am in a new mental place, I watched it with new eyes.

I also conferred with myself. "Why am I still avoiding Zoom? Is it cowardice, laziness, hatred, or other?"

Well, my Zoom hatred, with its sister, panic, has diminished to the point of disappearance.

Then comes laziness, which I don't believe in anyway.

Finally, I arrived at cowardice. And yes, I have to admit it, my avoidance of Zoom is partly due to cowardice: the hesitation and resistance toward trying something new. I can't live with cowardice. Which means I have to take Zoom by the horns, wrestle it, and dive into all the glories and headaches that come with learning to use it.

I'm trembling with hesitation, glory, disgust, excitement, annoyance, and all the stops and starts that come with a new project. But there is no longer a choice.

Sunday, September 13, 2020

Sales and Promotion

I'm A Both Kind Of Guy

Where did the arrogance of “not needing other” come from?

First thing that comes to mind is “being an artist.” A true artist lives alone, stands alone, is impervious to the demands and desires of others, of the audience (the political masses) to please them. He is above them, a tower of strength in his isolation and the independence of his artistic vision. A true artist does not need to sell. He rises above self-promotion. Let the manager do it. That’s what “they” are for. The pure artist stays in his ivory tower, unsullied and un-dirtied by promotional and sales of self and his artistic vision.

Such disdain and contempt for the public, the audience, the others! (Softer for my “clients and customers.” But that is since I got into business.)

How did I arrive a such nonsense?

I’m not sure. In any case, this Corona isolation has totally cleansed my mind of such poisonous, disastrous, destructive, and untrue notions. The river of nonsense has run its course.

I need and love my audience. I am totally bound to others. Selling and promoting to them invigorate and energize me. Making money from them and through them is the grand symbol of connection. Without them I am an isolated turd, with them, a shining symbol of strength, defiance, and hope.

And after six months of isolation, I suddenly found two tour registrations in my emails. A miracle! Suddenly, I feel alive and hopeful. My tours and my future are on again. (I felt the same thing after I led our Parking Lot folk dancing last Sunday: I have something to sell and promote again.

Result: I need and love to sell and promote things. Evidently, it is a visceral need. It invigorates, energizes, and inspires me; it gives me a future and pushes me toward the light.

And obviously, sales require others to sell to.

Yes, I need to sell something to others. They, and the sunny process, are my energy source. I need to teach folk dancing, organize and lead my tours, promote my books, and give concerts.

Isolation, aloneness is the inner engine.

But the outward direction of sales makes the car roll.

I need both. I'm a both kind of guy.

Wednesday, September 16, 2020

Guitar morning practice: I wonder if I get sleepy because of lack of oxygen. I focus, concentrate so hard, I stop breathing.

No warm-up.

Just jump right in with Milan's Pavane in C.

Start going public right away, with all pre-warm up weakness proudly on display. A reality show.

### Resurrection of my Dreams

Old age, fear of old age, death, my demise coming up soon, and, of course, added to that, losing all my business through the idiotic decisions of our political leaders, has caused me, not only to give up hope, but also to give up my dreams, and with that, dreaming itself. My former dynamic dream state has been replaced by "Why bother? I'll be dead soon anyway."

Is this a positive attitude?

Is it realistic?

Yes. But perhaps this so-called realism is short-sighted, and its lack of vision makes it unrealistic.

Okay, I like this line of thinking.

Now, realistically, can I replace these negative thoughts?

As a mental construct, upbeat is better for your mental, physical, and spiritual health! So maybe my former so-called realistic attitude is really an illusion, a poison pill.

Maybe its just a disguise for depression. Since this kind of depression is really anger turned inward, maybe I'm just angry. And if I stop and check, deep in my heart, it's true: I'm mad as hell!

First, I'm furious at all the idiot politicians for closing down the economy, and thus destroying my business.

As for my old age stuff, every age has problems. So deal with it and move on. Besides, old age is a secondary annoyance. Primary, is rage at the corona lock-downs.

What's is the best fighting medicine, the best way to kill my enemies? Resurrect my dreams and form new shining goals. That'll show 'em! And me, too.

### A Heavenly Start

I'm renaming my Milan "Pavane in C." I'll call it "Resurrection of my Dreams Pavane." And it will be my opening number, my introduction and Hello to the world.

How uplifting are Pavane's majestic opening major chords! I'll think and play them that way.

Thus I'll immediately, from the start, bring a great message of optimism and hope to my audience. . . and to myself. The gospel of resurrection in the very first C chord!

What significance is the C chord?

First letter of "celestial."

Saturday, September 19, 2020

### Small Audience Approach

See what this does to my guitar tone. I no longer need a big audience.

Mine will be a small audience approach.

Mentally, try playing for a new audience of one, two, or a few people.

I no longer need their money. Although their money is always be nice to get, I can get along without it.

I no longer need fame and recognition. Again, although recognition is always nice to have, I can get along without it.

### A New Look At The Index Finger

Focus on my index finger helps focus my mind on my playing rather than on the audience. It brings me inward. I feel its flesh against the string. Digital muscles and wrist relax. Soon my fingers align correctly, my body eases into the guitar and the inner mental focus follows.

It is quite lovely.

Sunday, September 20, 2020

### For The Glory Of God

Bach composed his music for the glory of God.

I like that.

### The Path of Salvation

Maybe you work at something for years and nothing happens. You keep working for more years. . .still nothing happens. More years. . .then one day, you pass out of the old life and enter the new.

You can't rush the process.

All you can do is practice, work, stay on the path.

And one day it simply happens. Or may.

The moral: Keep working. Your power is the power of choice. You can choose to stay on the path.

The path leads to salvation.

But when and if you arrive are not up to you.

### What Do I Want The New Jim To Look Like?

I'm forgetting the old life.



Who am I? Who was I? Did I actually teach folk dancing? What about tours? Did I really lead them, organize and run them? In the other life? Do I still play guitar?

I find my definition and meaning floating away into the fog. Even the stock market and money worries are fading, dropping into the bin of the ancient.

My guitar playing this morning started with a dizziness, a cramp in my neck, and a vague feeling of superiority.

From there I moved on to playing confidently, with a feeling of esse, no worries, even a touch of greatness.

Even though my body and fingers were cold, my opening "warm-up" "Pavane in C" felt effortless, a breeze.

From there I played the Fernando Sor "Study in A." Again, easy, medium speed, somewhat effortless, a breeze.

Then "Alhambra" with new confidence. This will work.

I'd love to forget about my old guitar-playing attitude, my fears of money, and lots of other confidence busters.

What do I want the new Jim to look like?

1. He plays guitar well.
2. He has few to no fears about money.
3. He is motivated to perform his professional and private tasks for the glory of God.
4. He walks like a dancer, runs like a dancer, and lives like a dancer, with the glory of God ever in mind.
5. He practices physical and mental balance

Yes, the Corona virus agent of forgetfulness has wiped my slate clean. I am open and ready.

Will my mind stay fresh and new?

Will this cleansing last?

I don't know.

But I hope it does!

Monday, September 21, 2020

### The Bible Promotes Fun

It says in the bible that David danced to worship God v'simcha (with joy).

Worshipping God with joy is the way to go.

One of the goals of adulthood is to see things fresh and new and thus think like a child again.

In other words, to have fun.

It's a worshipful and worthy goal.

### Soft

To play the guitar softly seems too radical.

To do so is to take a new look at masculinity and power.

Where does power reside?

Can it be found in being soft?

Play guitar softly, very softly.

Forget about the big audience out there.

Forget about the small audience out there, even the one or two.

Forget about everything except the inner music, the sound, relaxation, and touch, the healing of being loose and letting loose, the powerful cure of invisibility.

So—soft and softer, power through hidden power. Vibrational energy discovered in yielding. Revelation through the quiet of the hidden sun within.

The soft approach may well be the next step on my road to power.

Tuesday, September 22, 2020

### Attitude of Curiosity

Why did I get a cold? Sure, perhaps I overdid walking, first with Ben two days ago, then yesterday again for two more hours. But I sense it's more than that, and related to concern about the upcoming opening of our first Wednesday outdoor folk dance class.

Somehow, I have, once again, worked myself into a grand tremble of pre-performance anxiety, and the attempt to deny my fears is creating a cold as a distraction. Easier for my brain to focus on sneezing and a stuffy nose rather than the trembles that my upcoming teaching creates.

But now that I know my emotions, I can approach them with a different attitude. After all, I'm in a new post-corona mental place.

For example, I can see my outdoor folk dance class as an experiment and

approach it with an attitude of curiosity. See if it works. This is a good approach and attitude toward everything I do I have pre-performance chills over the upcoming opening of Outdoor Folk Dancing.

But so far, knowing this does not make them disappear. Plus, after almost a lifetime of performances, I am still nervous when a new one comes up. Pre-performance anxiety is still the poison weed in my garden. No matter how much I try to “cure” myself, I never do. This bugger has never left me.

Maybe the simple fact is: I will always be nervous before giving a show. It will never go away. I'll always be tense, on edge, or worse before any performance, whether it is a concert, leading a tour, or teaching a folk dance class. That's just my personality, the way I was made, the way I am. Such is life.

Isn't it time I finally accepted this?

Maybe my resistance, cowardice, lack of manliness, and resistance to facing my weakness of pre-performance anxiety are what made me sick in the first place.

On the other hand, maybe there's another way of looking at it. Maybe my weakness is my strength. Maybe, instead of weakening me, my anxiety wakes me up, gives me strength, energy, and power.

After all, look at what I accomplish. Plus, I never give in to my fears, I just tremble in place and move on to do the job. And it's usually an excellent job! After it's over people are happy, and I am happy. What could be bad about that? Only my unpleasant pre-action feelings. Otherwise, all is good. So what's the big deal?

Wednesday, September 23, 2020

### On Dealing With And Accepting Pre-Performance Anxiety

I'm nervous about my upcoming first Outdoor Folk Dance class. But knowing this does not calm my nerves. I still have a bad cold with lots of sniffles and wheezing, too.

It amazes me that after almost a lifetime of performances, I'm still nervous when a new one comes up. Nerves, or lack of them, is still the poison weed in my garden. No matter how much I try to cure myself, I never do.

Maybe I'll always be nervous before a show, but that's just my personality, the way I am.

Isn't it time I finally accepted this?

Maybe my hesitation, cowardice, lack of manliness, and resistance to facing my anxiety is what made me sick in the first place.

On the other hand, is there another way of looking at it?

Could it be that my weakness is my strength? That instead of weakening me, my anxiety wakes me up, energizes me, gives me power.

After all, I never give in to my fears, I just tremble in place and move on to do the job. And I usually do an excellent job. When it's over, my audience is happy and I am happy. What could be bad about that? Only my unpleasant feelings before the show. So what's the big deal?

Saturday, September 26, 2020

### New Guitar Warm-up

When I play guitar I warm up immediately.

I sit down with it, cradle it in classical guitar position, with my foot on the footstool and my mind focused on the upcoming feel of the strings. Then I place my fingers in the C chord position for the opening note/chord of Milan's "Pavane in C." I touch the strings, feel them underneath each finger, focusing on that. Then, once focused in this cluster, soft and relaxed as I can be, I pluck the strings. Then I listen to the tone I create. Thus the four process: Touch, feel, pluck, listen. And voila, after that process, I am warmed up.

I then continue to play the rest of the "Pavane," the same way. By the tenth or so measure, I am warmed and ready to roll.

Sunday, September 27, 2020

### The Wild Illumination of Fiction Writing

I need to jump-start my brain with my own kind of fiction.

My short-pieces writing style, with its outlandish humor, inheritance passed

down to me from my father, lifts my spirits.

Creating my off-the-wall stories raises me up, brings me on another planet, flies me to a crazy, beyond-boundaries world of wild illuminations. As the protective shield against noxious incursions from the outside world, it frees my soul by placing me high above this sad, problematic life.

### Leave a Room Unfinished

The Bulgarians have a saying, "When building a house, leave a room unfinished."

Saturday, February 13, 2021

### Strength Stock Trading

How could strength show up in my stock market day trading?

Rather than worrying I'll lose money, be wiped out, become a pauper, go to zero, give up my habitual doomsday scenario, instead try: "I'll make money today!"

Blow the clouds away. Clear the sky. Let the sun shine. Replace my "I'll lose money" black cloud with the clear skies of "I'll make money."

And see what happens,

Saturday, October 3, 2020

### Blessings of Uncertainty

Uncertainty is uncomfortable. It creates bad dreams, sometimes nightmares.

But uncertainty has a plus side. It forces you to pay attention, make greater effort. It increases your energy.

Where will we folk dance? In which parking lot?

This uncertainty, along with the uncertainty over when the police will shut us down, forces me to think creatively.

My jumbled and confused state is a perfect symbol of life. It builds intimate survival knowledge, opening the door to bending, twisting, and other techniques of flexibility.

I'm now ready to hold classes anywhere, in any available parking lot, field, or street. The wandering bandit (wandering Jew) approach to folk dancing.

Path Of Connection

Even in the solitary confinement of corona virus shut-down, the connection between outer and inner never ceases.

Separation is an illusion.

What does this mean to me personally?

Daily remember that All-Is-One.

Live in riotous glory under the sun.

Fun is the ultimate rebellion.

Wednesday, October 7, 2020

Strength and Victory

Last Wednesday the Fairleigh Dickinson University police said we had to get permission from the university to folk dance in their parking lot. I emailed the provost.

Thursday I got an email: No rentals due to corona virus. Permission denied.

Friday morning I went to the FDU security department, where I called the head of security to beg to dance in their parking lot at least only for this Sunday. He said no.

I came home, spent the rest of the morning looking for parking lots around Teaneck, and found a few public ones that might be free.

Then I called Lowell School, and asked the assistant principal if we could dance in their parking lot. She said no problem, but soon called back to say she had done more research and that I needed to get permission from the Teaneck Board of Education.

So I called them. They said no. Permission denied again due to corona virus.

That's when I decided: No more asking. I'll just do it. From now on, we'll just dance in whatever parking lot we like. If the police come to throw us out, we'll just apologize, say we didn't know you had to ask for permission, and move on to the next parking lot. Just do it. If caught and stopped, apologize and move on to the next lot. We have now become the bandit folk dancers, breaking the rules, even laws, all for a good cause. Robin Hood would be proud.

Result: We had a wonderful illegal folk dance last Sunday in the Lowell School parking lot. A final technical problem occurred when my computer ran out of battery power and the music stopped in the middle of a dance.

Battery power is a recurring problem in parking lot folk dancing. But I solved it with the help of my computer guru, Frank who told me how to get electrical power by connecting to my car battery through the cigarette lighter! I bought an extension cord at Home Depot, and am now totally ready to roll. Parking Lot Folk Dancing, here we come!

Tuesday, October 20, 2020

### Power of Attitude

Attitude is created in the imagination.

My attitude. At least, is created in mine.

Why not imagine I'll live forever?

Not only does this thought feel good, it could even be true.

All religions agree eternal life exists.

Why not believe it.

It can only do me good.

### The Covid-Induced Coma Of Freedom

When I play for myself with the Lord listening, looking on, understanding each note, there's no pressure. Playing in complete freedom, luxuriating in each note, riding each tone through the universe.

I've lost my rusty anchors and old boundaries. Perhaps I'm ready for the monastery. Just sit there in my Teaneck cell, or high up on a distant Syrian stylite monastic pillar, and talk to God.

This covid-induced coma of freedom feels so strange, different, new. Somewhat sad, listless, weighed down, but also rich, heavy with transcendent purpose, welded to the earth, anchored in heaven, flying in freedom.

Perhaps the months of Covid lock-downs, social distancing, masks, and solitude have been a preparation.