

Play Pen Expansion

Thursday, July 10, 2008

Mrs. Sciatica and Mr. Right Shoulder have made my body their play pen. Presently, they are the only ones having a great time. My mind, with its accompanying brain, has been distracted, lost in the “seriousness of responsibility.” Organizing and running present and future tours has placed it in an iron vise. Not much fun in this. Now, plunging further into this morass, I’m even having less fun. The Grand Finale finally came with an attack of “Stop!” As I limped along taking a miserable, post-supper walk, I decided to stop everything. I needed a rest from my mind and its noxious, sciatica-producing thoughts.

Once upon a time I had fun. But that has dribbled away in a swarm of obligations: Two years of tours, money, organization, routines, and more. On June 11,th 2008 while choreographing Sirba de Isak Louie, my gas ran out.

Somehow I knew I had to get back to my fun and play center. My “artistic” fun center. Stick close to it, no matter what!

I know folk dance classes are my play pen. Time to expand! Make tours my next playpen!

Vital Importance of Fun Mode

A mini-return of a strange and twisted form of sciatica. The new signal for fun blockage.

What did I do yesterday to deserve this?

Basically, I returned to a full day of tours and tour work but I forgot the fun element. Happy that my sciatica had totally disappeared and I was healthy, had returned to work, I came to work with a “business as usual” approach. I slipped, fell back into my old habits, and forgot about sciatica learning: The vital importance of

remembering wahoo pleasure, blustiferous enjoyment, and the fundamental and curative importance of functioning in fun mode. And it's not just "fun." This mode is good for my health. Bad for my health when I do not pursue it. Pay attention to my visceral fun need, give it its due.

Return to fun mode. Start practice today.

What's happening today? I've got two upcoming folk dance classes. Tomorrow: I've got the Pelham Aging Concert. Dedicate myself to this two-day project: Put them both in fun mode.

Wednesday, July 16, 2008

Performance and the Return of Mrs. S

Yesterday sciatica returned. . . with a vengeance (but not too large.) I went from feeling free and great, back to zero. . . or almost zero. Thus the first question is: Have I made any progress? Was this sciatica "better" than last time? Did it hurt as much? Did I handle it better?

I have to say yes to both. It didn't hurt as much, and I did handle it better. The big surprise was that it came back at all. I thought I had lost it.

What to do? More important, what to think? First thought was: This is very discouraging. I thought I got rid of sciatica. Good riddance once and for all, and for good!

But no. What a surprise. A return of the gremlin.

The return of Mrs. S has nothing to do with the kids, but something to do with performing. (Well, the first visit came through performing, first in Raleigh, then on June 11 as a post-performance finale)

Maybe my pre-performance mode is more one of anger than love, or love of fun. Maybe the feelings of love and fun come either during the show, or after it is over and I can think about, meditate upon it. And this makes sense. After all, putting myself in front of people in any mode is mostly a threat to my existence. In fact, with this thought

in mind, fear and concomitant anger are the only modes to be in! A sensible person approaches the edge of a cliff with trepidation. Only an idiot looks into the abyss and thinks of love and fun.

Performing means going to the edge of the cliff, looking straight down into the abyss, trembling in awe, and finally, as the hero he or she is, deciding to jump anyway. Take your chances on a good fall, and that on the way down you be caught and lifted up by passing angels.

That's what a performance, any performance, is all about. Teaching folk dancing, giving a concert, running a tour, leading dancing at a bar or bat mitzvah, wedding, or any other public event, whatever and on and on, let's face it: In every performance I go into battle, face the enemy, and fight for my life. Every time, over and over again, a different setting but always the same fight.

Thus the pre-performance rule is fear, trembling, rage at the enemy. Of course, courage and heroism is also part of it since with them, one would never go through with any performance itself.

Check out my New Leaf on recent days. Last Friday I had sciatica beat. By Friday night's Goldens Bridge folk dance teaching, it had returned. But lightly. Saturday was totally free! Sunday, too. And I took a long run. Sunday night good. Monday totally good. Free day. No performances or teaching anywhere. Tuesday morning: sciatica returns with my a.m. Senior Center teaching. Continues with a vengeance Tuesday night for folk dance teaching. Kids come in, but mainly thoughts of Wednesday a.m. performance at Center for the Aging in the Bronx. I have to rise at 5:00 a.m., drive into New York City, find the Center, then do a concert followed by folk dancing. Very nervous about it. That was Tuesday, and Mrs. S returned with a vengeance!

Why do I use the term "vengeance?" Anger and rage mode! And, of course, fear beneath it all. Fear, anger, rage, they all go together. . . and must be recognized as coming in various forms of intensity for every performance I do!

That and they are the meaning of the return of Mrs. S. She is warning me: Pay attention! Pay attention to fear, anger, and rage. They are life-giving and life-saving emotions; they are your performance survival tools.

Thursday, July 17, 2008

Find a New Direction Every Day

A nice morning start. Ever peaceful and a pleasure to sit down at the morning computer. Easy as the words pour out. That, in itself, is a pleasant task. Perhaps the writing process, not what I write about, is the good-in-itself.

Through all the pre-performance torture of yesterday, I did end up giving a great show. What does this tell me? I don't know. I keep repeating myself, my questions, and even the answers. Once written, they are forgotten.

So where does that leave me this morning?

Once again, I have a vague urge to find an new direction. How many times have I said that? Truly, this search is an almost daily occurrence. That's what A New Leaf is all about. Every day turn over a new leaf. Start fresh every day. Another way of saying it: Daily finding a new direction!

That's where I am this morning. As sciatica drives its tingling into my right leg, as dull lower back pain, left leg, back-of-the-knee morning limping, and right shoulder drifts into the morning background, as, to my great surprise, suddenly in the middle of last night's sleep, left shoulder kicks in-mimicking right shoulder (demonstrating again the Sarnoian twists of mind to create pain distractions) – I woke in the morning vaguely sick of the entire process. When is this fucker ever going to end? Will it move at its own pace, simply and slowly metamorphosing into something else?

What can I do?

Watch and go with it.

I never tire of the question: What will be my new direction? I love it. Maybe this question is fated for my entire life. It is my call, my way.

So be it: Find a new direction, and this every day!

It can be found within old forms: guitar, yoga, running, study, writing, whatever.

Moving Toward Mitzvah

Suppose my new direction is mitzvah work, and my mitzvah work is performing. Mitzvah now combines with direction.

A Fun Crusader. Is that the mitzvah of my direction? Scary, but I can't escape. Nor would I want to.

Fun. Joy. Simcha. Worship of God through joy-ful, fun-filled union. Not a bad direction.

What do tours have to do with this? Little to nothing? Maybe I'm moving back (or forward) to performances, concerts, personal appearances. Maybe I'm putting tours on the back burner.

I shift, drift, move away from my great focus on money-making to a smaller, low-paying focus on mitzvah and fun-giving work.

The Birth of Mitzvah Miracle Schedule!

Turn my miracle schedule toward helping others. Now there is a dramatic shift!

Heretofore, I was divided between the schedule and business. Formerly, my miracle schedule activities were inward, personal, for my own creative growth and development. Business activities, on the other hand, were outward, somewhat impersonal, creative only in the word entrepreneurial, and strictly "for others." No question there was a strict divide between inner and outer, between the in-room (teenage violin-practicing) chamber of my imagination, and the outside, post-marriage, go-get-'em cruel world with its imagination-crushing material forms.

Well, in this new mitzvotic world, the division has ended. The divide between miracle schedule activities and the outer world of business has ended. Unity and oneness prevail.

Indeed, this is a giant leap! Body-crushing and mind-blowing! No wonder my body has fallen apart!

Was Raleigh mitzvotic work or ego-enhancing? Truth is, it was both. But focus on its ego-enhancing aspect broke my back, created sciatica, and more, whereas focus on mitzvah flows easy and relaxed. Sailing down Sciatica River is filled with ego bumps and back-breaking bends, whereas sailing down Mitzvah River, with its Helping-Others branches, is smooth and easy.

Thus my next quest, question, and direction is: How to turn my former miracle schedule into the new and improved Mitzvah Miracle Schedule?

As a start, this means thinking differently about each activity. Thus arm rotations, push-ups, whatever are now focused not so much on my body, but on how these movements can help others.

What is help? By help, I mean encourage and inspire others. Encouragement and inspiration are the highest forms of help.

Guitar. . . others, sing. . . others, yoga. . . others, run. . . others, write. . . others, study. . . others.

Creating and Beaming Mitzvahs

Tours as mitzvah. Mitzvah Tours. Bulgaria: Practice as a mitzvah tour.

Can one get the cosmic meltdown high through mitzvah? Yes.

Can one think, create and “do” mitzvahs in solitary confinement, sitting alone in a suburban living room, a prison cell, alone in a distant cave, or on a mountain top? Yes. Through thought vibrations. While solitary, a mitzvah-creating thinker can send healing, mitzvotic thought vibrations to the world at large.

Alone or among others, one can create good deeds, do mitzvahs.

When practicing guitar in my room, think mitzvah. Then I beam brain waves of mitzvotic thoughts outward and across the world, creating (doing) mitzvahs.

Saturday, July 19, 2008

Insatiable Desire for Recognition as Motivating Power

Pain Walls:

Protecting Myself Against my New Friend Hercules

What would I want a doctor to tell me? That I'm on the right track, that I should keep up my exercises – no matter what! And this means all the yoga postures including and especially the head stand and scorpion and the difficult others. That I should put more time into my exercises, not less. That my exercises, especially running, yoga, and my own developed form of calliyoga, and the best and even only things I can do for myself!

That's what I want from a doctor: confirmation! Confirmation of my way, my own method that I have developed over the years. I want deep confirmation from these medical figures of authority.

But what am I saying? I'm saying that with deep confidence, I don't even need a doctor. I just need faith in my own internal vision, and my own method. It has cured me in the past. But often the "go ahead" word of confidence from a medical doctor helped me, nay, "saved" me. Witness Dr. Garcia with my knee, Dr. Levy with my neck and collapsed cervical vertebrae. Actually, those are the only two doctors I can think of. And of course, Dr. Sarno. . . but I never met or consulted with him. I "only" read his books. But, in my opinion, they "saved my life." His is the method I want to believe in and do believe in. But during times of trial and pain, especially in so-called "new" areas, my confidence needs tweaking. Sciatica and even partially right shoulder are new areas.

But are they really? Sciatica is a variation and extension of back pain; right shoulder is a variation and extension of collapsed cervical vertebrae pain. So maybe they aren't really so new after all.

What about this "new" fatigue in my quadriceps? It is very recent, starting yesterday, in fact. It slows down my dancing and running.

Well, even that, I've had hints of it every since I began my 50 Folk Dances book and preparation for the Raleigh workshop. In fact, I can attribute most of my leg problems to preparation for that workshop. I was lurching, leaning, searching for, and vaguely considering a new self-definition: folk dance choreographer. I was experimenting with the idea of competing with the Lees, Richards, and other folk dance teachers and choreographers. And the truth is, I have been choreographing dances for years. So, I thought, why not go for it. And I did.

But voila, look at all the physical problems that came out of this choreographic and professional folk dance teacher voyage! Although I did end up with some glory and large feelings of accomplishment, nevertheless, I also broke one of my cardinal rules: Never the become a professional folk dance teacher or take such a "profession" seriously because it doesn't pay any money! This has always been my beef against the folk dance industry. Yet, in spite of my deeply held belief, and certain knowledge that there is no money in this fucker, I did it anyway. I wanted to prove myself, get recognition for my dances, and vicariously have some of the fun leading dances that Lee did on my Greek trip.

So I spend about five months of the 2008 year trying and fulfilling these fantasy folk dance desires, but also working against my business instincts. Thus, I spent five months in conflict.

Truth is (and I hate to admit it), I absolutely hate putting in so much time and effort for no money! True, I do it for writing. And did (and partially still do) it for guitar. But in the back of my mind for both is the future dream of recognition. (Well, isn't that why I did the folk dance work? Yes. Well, isn't it then all the same, all related, all based on the desire for recognition? Yes. Isn't it then, not a business desire, but a recognition desire? Yes. Then really, money has nothing (or very little) to do with it? Yes.)

So perhaps this all boils down to the realization that my desire for recognition is insatiable! Money is part of that recognition, but only a small part.

Thinking in this desire-for-recognition way, preparing for the Raleigh workshop with my 50 Folk Dances was perfectly right and reasonable.

It's all about recognition, and my insatiable need for recognition!

Am I really that shallow? Yes. Is my need really so deep and insatiable? Yes.

What, if anything, can I do about this? Nothing. Recognize it as a hidden motivational power (not really so hidden), and use it! Go for it! Go for the recognition!

Can I live with myself, realizing I am so shallow? What else can I do? That's the way I am.

On the other hand, as I say, the insatiable desire for recognition is an incredible motivating power! A real positive here.

Maybe the pains I am creating for my body are really inner walls, cellular dams, protecting me from the ravages, wild flow, savage divinity, windswept brush fires, lightening madness strikes, and herculean possibilities of my own power!

Dreams

I have a recurring image of Glenn Gould sitting alone in his Canadian Laurentian Mountain cabin, practicing and playing piano all day long!

Is that one of my dreams? Could be. Now that I have "given up playing professional guitar," "given up playing classical guitar professionally," I am free to simply relish in the sensuality of playing classical guitar all day long! No more inner pressure to play classical guitar in public, no more so-called "outside pressure," no more working, sweating, worrying, competing, trying, fighting to prove myself as a classical guitarist, Over and done. Classic (and maybe even folk) guitar playing now resides totally in the inner landscape, on the sensual plains, and beautiful rolling hills, gentle mountains, deep valleys, and dramatic peaks of Miracle Schedule Land.

Beyond Recognition

Maybe a "goal" of mine, the next goal, the only worthy goal, is to get beyond, go

beyond recognition.

I aimed for (folk dance choreography) recognition all year. I worked hard for it. Aside from the ostentatious, public accomplishments, 50 Folk Dances and its accompanying CDS, and even a little bit of recognition by my dancers, one of the big side effect, even results was sciatica (and its sister, right shoulder pain.)

This meant I was partially on the wrong track. I believe it also meant that searching, yearning, working for recognition alone is not a worthy goal. In fact, I could say that working for such a goal alone makes me literally sick. Look at sciatica.

Happily, I played guitar this morning with no recognition in mind. I thought not about the audience, but rather about the only recognition that counts: recognition by God.

How does one get recognized by God? Easy. By recognizing Him! Period. It's a "simple" as that. His is the only recognition that counts. One does not need any public, outside, or audience recognition to accomplish it. Such recognition is totally health and healing. Since it is the source of all creation, it creates health and healing, too. (Note: etymologically "healthy" and "healing" come from the same root as "whole.")

I could say my year was based on a split goal: Desire for public recognition (a future sickness-creating goal, and desire for Divine recognition.

Yoga, Running, Calliyoga: Play and Fun

I've lost – or forgotten about – the fun aspect of what I once called yoga, running, and calliyoga. The exhilaration and "I just love it!" aspects have slowly drained away over the months, dribbled into exercises, cures, conditioning, routines, ways of staying in shape, means to an end, duties, and thus, basically boring.

I am bored with my "exercises."

Yet I once loved them!

The glorious past.

But since I can never return to the past, how about returning to a glorious future?

Return to fun, relaxed, focused, blazing in their own quiet, exhilarating inner way.

Monday, July 28, 2008

Tours

It has usually happened a few days into my tour when everything is together, the group has finally coalesced, changed from a group of individual travelers, into a group with a unified feeling to it. Oneness and unity prevail. People finally feel comfortable all together. And as a result, I feel comfortable. I look around me, and say to myself: "Look what I have wrought! What a thrill this is! Imagine, we are all traveling together in a foreign country, doing things no one would ever dream possible. This feeling also often overcomes me when we meet with a local dance group. The beauty feeling. It's so beautiful that we are all doing this together. Bulgarian, Tunisian, Egyptian, Slovak, Hungarian, Greek, Russian, Estonian, all and more come to mind. Together with the Americans. All united in one endeavor. Truly it is a thing of beauty, a beautiful thing. And this is happening because of me! I put it all together! How did God give me these gifts? Why did He make me so lucky? I fall down crying, overwhelmed with gratitude and Magnificence. Those are my travel, tour organization, and tour leadership "I just love it!" moments.

So, if (and when) sciatica and right shoulder visit me on tours, face and remember, with tours, too: "I just love it!"

Salesman!

By visiting other folk dance groups – Israeli, International, Scottish, Swedish, any other – I am going there not as a folk dancer, but as a salesman!

By visiting Israeli groups, I expect to sell my other tours. Personally, I will be amazed if people register for Israel. Yet I would love to be amazed. Historically, Israeli dancers may well register for the other tours, namely, Turkey, Greece, Balkan Journey, even Hungary (and Poland?). Yet, I repeat, I would love to be amazed.

Looking into my future, I see than my new self and self-definition has metamorphosed into Salesman!

A one to two year period of lack-of-motivation-due-to-success has come to a close. Somehow, along with my “do it for love” attitude changes in guitar, Bulgarian, exercise, (even folk dancing?), I have made peace with it.

Along with learning Bulgarian, can I also manifest this new salesman self on my Bulgarian tour? Of course!

Note the exclamation points! It’s dynamic, new, go-out-and-get-’em, vital, alive! Totally frothed in gone-gone and gong-gong public. Indeed, its dynamism is saturated, dipped in, and covered with Wow! A shot of nifty adrenalin shoots through me a I write this!

I wonder how salesman self vision will effect my sciatica. In fact, is part of this largely what sciatica was all about? What a question! Big deal here!

Thursday, July 31, 2008

Post-Lyne

My session with Lyne Marotta was new, strange, and fascinating. I came out feeling rather shocked, dazed, not knowing what to make of it. But my right shoulder pain was gone, and my legs felt better! At least for the moment. Would these better feelings last? I hoped so. But part of me also doubted they would. It was, and would all be, “too good to be true.”

Late last night, and this morning, too, I feel vaguely weak, strange, and unconfident, that my body is somehow frail. If I am not careful, it will fall apart at any moment.

I wonder why I feel this way.

She said hold back on the Wow! feelings while I exercise for ten days. She says when I do yoga, calliyoga, or run in that way, pushing myself beyond the mild comfort zone, aiming for the endorphin break-through high, I re-injure myself and set myself

back. Sounds vaguely sensible, and worth a try.

I'll no doubt go back for a few more sessions, especially since she says she can straighten my hammer toes. Again, this would be "too good to be true." I can't believe she can, but it's certainly worth a try.

The whole thing is very interesting. But it's more physical than mental, more chiropractor and physical therapy like. Not mental like Sarno. That's probably partly why I feel vaguely weak, frail, and unconfident. The cure somehow now feels out of my hands. I've given up control.

But we'll see. As I say, it's certainly different, interesting, and worth some further exploration.

My right shoulder pain returned during the night. (Could it have something to do with my sleep position?) However, the shoulder pain feels a bit different. . . I think.

The key here is: I think.

Of course, straightening my hammer toe could become my symbol of hope, of never giving up, of "Believe it!" To me, straightening it without surgery seems like an impossible task. But perhaps I am wrong. In any case, whether wrong or right, the constant mental and physical attempt to straighten it is well within my grasp. I could certainly try. That alone and in itself is the key. In so doing, trying to straighten it becomes a symbol of hope, belief, and faith.

Risk, Paying Attention, and the Stock Market

Maybe if I go back into the stock market it will make me care, pay attention, and become more interested in my money. It will get me to look at my accounts. Right now, I never look.

This would be a totally new reason to enter the stock market. Not necessarily to make money (although that would be nice), but rather, to pay attention.

The slight gamble and risk might force me, push me (inspire me?), to pay

attention.

I am in a new place in every other way. Maybe it's something to consider.

I wouldn't be doing this to gain interest or dividends, or even to make more money in my account (although again, that would be nice). No, my purpose is simply, merely, and mostly, to stay awake!

As in folk dance teaching, I must create new dances, improvise, invent the class "on the spot," make it up as I go along, tell stories and make joke while I teach and dance, constantly try to think of something new, all in order to stay awake, perhaps the same approach is needed for my money. Improvisation, taking a chance, making it up as I go along, this may be not only my approach to folk dancing, (and the stock market), but approach to life in general. The "make it up as I go along" approach.

No question, it keeps me awake, and creative.

Rewards

I could take 20 G's and put them into my kind of stocks.

Risk and play money. For fun and paying attention, too.

Do this instead of buying a new car, or with a new car purchase? Actually, the two have nothing to do with each other. Well, that's not quite true. Actually, they are both presents, rewards, for doing well in the tours business, and business in general.

Physical Fears Rising to Replace Financial

My fears have gone from money into my body, from financial fears into physical fears. Will my body make it? Will it hold up? Can it do it physically? Or will it fall apart, and collapse.

Financial fears used to distract me from these physical fears, fears of aches, pains, and body breakdown. Now that my financial distraction curtain has been raised through a more stable financial position, my fears are free, and have been freed to roam throughout my body, attacking and attaching themselves to various and whatever body

parts.

Sunday, August 3, 2008

Fear, Terror, Tourism, and Body Pains

Off to Bulgaria today.

Fear. How disappointing. I deeply and really thought that if I made money, that I would no longer have to fear performances, whether they be concerts, leading tours, or whatever. And the more money I made, the less I would fear.

While I had no money, I didn't have to face this illusion. The very fact I had no money created fear, which I could deal with (some might say avoid) by trying to make money.

But now that I've made some money, I can see the illusion fade before my eyes. Last night, it collapsed forever. Even though I have a good cushion of savings now, a good cushion of money, I nevertheless have the same fears of running my tour as I always did. Nothing has changed! Money, and even the tour-leading and organizing skills I have developed over the years, make absolutely not difference! I am still the same. Pre-performance, pre-tour anxiety is as high as ever. The only difference (if it is even a difference), is that this year, instead of facing it, I have removed it from my mind and put in into my body. Thus body pains are and have sprung up right and left. Ever are they distractions from the unending fact, that my performance fears have never, and no doubt, will never leave me.

How disappointing and sad. But nevertheless, so true! Yes, it takes courage to face fears, and it is heroic to face and deal with them. I can call myself courageous and heroic. But nevertheless, these words and self concepts will not make my fears go away. In fact, fears are forever, and so are mine. My only choice is to either recognize them, face and deal with them, or deny them, and try pushing them aside, where they then go into my body creating ache-and-pain distractions.

I can almost call every ache, a fear distraction. Sarno says anger. Maybe that is

in there, too. But no question that all my stomach rumbles have moved out of my stomach and into my knees, shoulders, sciatica, lower back, feet, and, if and when these distractions are dealt with and go away, more distractions appear in other parts of my body.

So, today my pre-tour anxiety parts are expressing in right knee. Sciatica, strangely, seems to have subsided. Perhaps right knee is its replacement. But whatever, when these pains come up, wherever and whenever they do, try to see these pains for what they are: Fears in disguise. Nothing new here. But nevertheless, every day is new!

The hardest thing to face is fear; the hardest thing to face is terror. And I've got them both!

BULGARIA

Spontaneous Road Show is Born

Something new has and is happening to me on this tour. I'm different. I sit in front of the bus and periodically ask Stefan to hand me the microphone. Then I start performing! I'm speaking about many of the things on my mind. I'm sharing my spontaneous ideas on history and dance, thoughts on language and sound changes, my absurd humor is leaking out all over the place, I'm telling a joke or two. I sang "The Elements" by Tom Lehrer, and my own "Art of Gargling." Yes, I'm even singing songs!

I'm creating a spontaneous road show. And best of all, I'm having so much fun!

New Leaf in Action

Do I dare dominate my tour? Do I dare go public with almost every spontaneous thought I have? Evidently, I do. I'm ready.

This is a gone-public form of A New Leaf in action. Instead of writing down my spontaneous thoughts, I simply say (most) of them.

Why would I not want to dominate my tour? Why should I hold back my

thoughts, ideas, and talents? After all, that is partly why people chose to go with me.

Isn't it better to give them my mind, my hear, my all?

Of course, the obvious answer is Yes! It just feels a bit strange, as does the birth of every new self.

Wonderful State!

Perhaps deep down, performance and leading are the same thing! They elevate and expand the self, and involve others. And I love both of them.

Even physical exercise can belong to this new Wonderful State land. They too, in their own quiet and distant way, belong to performance and leadership.

Coming Home

On the plane home, I had a vision where I suddenly "decided" I have no more pain in my right shoulder. A la Zane. It's over. It has run its course and now has no purpose anymore.

Can I decide the same thing with sciatica? Why not?

Thus right shoulder and sciatica are simply over!

End of tour.

Fun!

Spoke to Michele yesterday. During the conversation I realized that this Bulgarian tour was qualitatively different because it was the first tour on which I actually had fun! I enjoyed, nay loved it. And it was because my mind, soul, body, cells, etc. have somehow developed to the point where a metamorphosis, a dialectical, qualitative change has taken place with me. Within the total focus and attention I gave it, I was somehow able to relax and let loose. I learned, transitioned, metamorphosed in the Robert Frost "moving easy in harness mode." But I bettered it. I moved funnily,

joyously, spontaneously, humorously, sparlingly, and many other upbeat “inglys” in harness.

Evidently, tourism-wise, I have stepped into a wonderful new space where true relaxed and elevated personality fulfillment rides high.

I can also see tours as an inspiration, motivation, and the driving force for linguistic fulfillment. Study the language of the country before, during, and even after: I like it!

Along with organizational skill, and the artistic leadership skill of spontaneously seizing the moment, I also have financial and linguistic tour goals.

Observations

I had all kinds of pains, aches and pains, last year in my legs, arms, shoulders, right thumb, etc. It all culminated in a terrible new “disease,” sciatica. Crippling, enervating, and totally discouraging.

This year, although those pains have not necessarily disappeared, somehow they do not seem so “important.” I am not as focused on them as I was. It’s almost a “been there, done that” situation. I’m almost ready to accept them as part of my being and move on.

On to what? Something new, different, never before experienced on a long-term basis: Fun Mode.

I don’t want to jump the gun, but what is there left? “Been there, done that” creates “What else is there left to do?” Into this vacuum flows Fun.

Is this the year of Fun? Why not?

Increasing Use of Brain Power:

The Paradox of Slowing Down

Some say the brain has infinite power, others claim people uses only ten percent

of its strength.

Since focus uses the brain's power, increased focus uses even more of the brain's power.

Deepening by slowing down, ultimately brings one greater power.

Paradoxically, it also increases speed.

Slowing down is a technique.

Increased focus and concentration, increased use of brain power, is the goal.

The Power of Memory

Start with Greek Verbs

Power of memory. Practice it memorizing Greek verbs.

I like writing about powers. It brings, gives, substantiates, sustains, and confirms the power of memory.

Memorizing is local and specific. Working with its magic creates both focus and inner peace. With these come extended powers.

Can the memory muscle be developed, strengthened, and grown? I think so.

Live the New Leaf Life

I've been writing New Leaf since 1995.

I've always known writing it I am creating both a business plan and a life plan.

When I performed on tour, A New Leaf went totally public.

In all aspects, this demonstrates I am totally ready to lead and live the New Leaf Life.

Thank you, Bulgarian tour!

Wednesday, August 27, 2008

Left Knee, God Connection, and Fun

Crack! A new space has begun.

Signified by impatience, and shift in Greek language mode.

What's the problem? I've temporarily lost my God connection. I've got to go back to music to find it. Strangely, as I warmed up on guitar and thought this thought, my left knee (on the footstool) started to hurt.

Is left knee (behind the knee) related to God connection?

Left knee, dance, squats, macho power, God connection.

Macho power, God connection, left wrist (above 12th fret), guitar. Macho power, God connection, left knee, dance.

Macho power feels great. Connects to God connection.

Left wrist and left knee inhibit the power, close down and close off the God connection.

Open up the channels.

God connection is most fundamental of all. Without God connection, all is meaningless.

Pain rises as a grand blockage to God connection.

Pain signifies blockage to the God connection. When pain rises, focus on God connection, and pain (should) will go away.

Is this true? Intellectually, I believe it is. The Higher and Highest Energy, the Higher and Highest Vibrations, the Power of God cures all. Reasonably and spiritually, by focusing on such a high, healing, curative Power, the pain should go away.

Try it, and find out.

Plus, plugging into this Highest of Macho Power is so much fun! Watch the Villa Lobos arpeggio fly!

Friday, August 29, 2008

I finished my mailing.

Big step forward, big burden lifted, and done.

A few tour mop-ups left. All tour fliers ready, except for Balkan Journey which still needs pricing; I won't have that until the end of September.

I crossed the line! Ready to move on. To a new chapter.

Strange Test

Spiritual teaching and focus has been dribbling away all year. It has never disappeared completely, but it almost seems like I have been testing it, seeing if it would last even though I tried not to focus on it.

Yes, in thinking more deeply about the past year, I think I did try "taking it for granted." And in this strange new process, I consciously and unconsciously kept "testing it," trying to see if it would work, if it would remain as my base, even if I put no effort into remembering and working with it.

Perhaps even the creation of all my physical pains was a form of testing. My experiment was: If Spiritual Truth was really there, really my foundation, whether I thought about it or not, it should cure my pains, it should dissolve them and make them go away.

Strange test, indeed. Why would I have made such a test? Why create such an experiment? I don't know.

It is as if I spent the year focusing almost totally on earth-bound things, creations in and of the material world. 50 Folk Dances was one of them; my tours were another. Art, music, writing growth, my spiritual connections, somehow faded into the background. Testing and experimenting: I was almost trying to see if I could survive by making my art and its spiritual connections second place.

As resistance to folk dancing, new leg pains rose up.

As resistance to guitar playing, right thumb rose up.

As resistance to writing (or maybe subtle resistance to folk dancing and guitar, too), right shoulder pain rose up.

I replaced much to most of my God-centered, artistic/spiritual connection with a focus on money making through tours and pleasing people, others, my customers.

I don't see the latter as bad. However, no question, it was a distraction from my artistic, spiritual, God-connecting essence. This distraction created much of my physical suffering.

Heal physical pains by focusing on Divine Mind.

When pain comes up, let it act as a reminder to focus on Spirit, which would be its ultimate cure.

Uncle Myron's Lesson

Never Forget Art!

When my sister and I were eight years old, Ma asked my uncle Myron Lechay, an artist, to take us to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The purpose was to teach us kids about art. Myron asked us to sit down in front of a medieval triptych. He said, "Look straight at this painting. Don't take your eyes off it. Let your imagination take you wherever it likes." Then he walked away. We sat staring at the painting for the next forty five minutes. Then Myron returned. He took us home. That was the end of the lesson.

I never forgot that lesson.

What was the lesson?

Never forget art! It is my spiritual connection, my Mother in disguise, my Ultimate Healer. Lose it and I am lost. Forget it and I am forgotten. Deny or distraction myself from its power and strength and I lose my power and strength.

Art is my mother's gift to me. And my father's gift, too. Money, material goods, pleasing others and the world of matter, all are nice to have, pleasant, even "important," but ultimately, secondary. Without my God connection through art, all else becomes, feels, and is purposeless, useless, and meaningless.

This is my ultimate lesson. Never forget uncle Myron's lesson. Never forget art!

Tuesday, September 2, 2008

Folk Dance Resentment

Folk dancing as a "waste of time" since I don't get enough money from it.

Resentment rose this morning and hit me square in the face. I cannot admit, fathom, or measure the amount I have against folk dancing, and against all the "useless and wasteful" effort and work I put into creating 50 Folk Dances!

What is and was the future in creating it, and hoping to raise myself up in the folk dance world? Esteem, self-confidence, summarizing my work, all fair and good things. But all for little to no money!

That is the sad and mad and lifetime truth about folk dancing. It may do wonderful things for my ego, be a developing ground for my leadership skills, be creative, inspiring, and beautiful on a choreographic level, but ultimately, for all the work and effort I put in, it pays no money! And, deep in my heart, and not so deep on the surface, I hate and totally resent that!

I want to be paid, and paid well for my efforts! And, I should be. But, in folk dancing, I am not. Period. Those are the facts of life for folk dancing. I can raise my prices, be higher than the rest of the teachers, even be highest of all, and still, ultimately, this high is so low compared to the "real" business world, that it is practically insignificant. Truth is, no folk dance teacher in America makes a living teaching folk dancing. They all have side jobs, side incomes.

But I once made a living giving guitar concerts. But folk dancing and folk dance teaching in America is such an amateur field, that it cannot be done.

So this morning I look into the total resentment and anger I have been carrying within myself since I worked on and completed 50 Folk Dances. It is a long time coming, a long time rising. I denied and danced around it for months, replacing feelings of anger, resentment, and rage with first quadricep "fatigue," then a flaming

case of sciatica, and finally (perhaps) right shoulder tendon inflammation (this could be related to my violin playing. . . but it also might be subtly related to folk dancing. After all, it started the day after I taught my Tuesday night folk dance class in excruciating right leg sciatica pain.

My nine months of new pains thus fit in very well with a Sarnoian analysis. It's just that it's taken me so many months to realize that I was and still am totally enraged by the folk dance field, and what I forced myself to do in and for it.

With this heightened realization of folk dance rage, remember and witness my old folk dance ankle syndrome. In fact, this whole episode feels like a variation, an advanced form of folk dance ankle.

What can I do about it now, today?

Start off simply by witnessing, experiencing, and knowing my deep-seated and formerly hidden feelings of folk dance rage. Even as I say it, it's hard to admit because I also love teaching! Definitely, a mixed bag. See where that leads.

How to handle rage, or even know that I have it, is a big personal question.

Instead of looking at it, and realizing I feel it, I get sick instead.

I haven't gotten sick over tours yet. Why? Well, first of all, I know I resent them! But I also know I can make money from them. This softens my resentment, or at least rationalizes my dealing with it. And money is some kind of reward for the inner turmoil and suffering I go through to create these events. (Never mind the positives: The feelings of accomplishment, becoming my own hero, dealing with and surmounting challenges, etc. I know about the positives. But now I'm dealing with the thinly disguised and barely hidden negatives.)

Let me now look at all the ills, the pains, aches, and physical miseries I have enduring during this year. Let me review and see them in the light of hidden resentment, and fiery rage. How did these energy packets of fury turn themselves into physical pains? Should I now reinterpret all of them as such?

Yes!

Changes

Yes, I resent that I have to “dance for money.” Imagine playing music for money, guitar for money, art for money. This whole concept is a travesty! The beautiful art forms should not be sullied by making them means-to-an-end. They are ends-in-themselves. No wonder I resent twisting their beauty.

How will my knowledge of folk dance resentment be reflected in, and effect my present life?

First, I would put all (or 95-99%) of my business efforts into tours and my travel. Tours and travel are my business! Period. Folk dance teaching and dancing, along with guitar and writing, would remain pivotal loves, central tenets of transcendent being, amato-ed, amat-eured, in true lover form.

Leadership

Part of me wants, even likes, to imagine I am crippled and helpless. Strange notion: The slow, old, cautious moving, broken-down, crippled, ancient athlete that I am, is strangely macho! Somehow, broken down is very masculine!

I remember how, at the University of Rochester, Douglas “Moose” McSomething, the great tower of masculinity, the power-house quarterback of the freshman football team, broke his leg. He walked around on crutches, totally hobbled by his injury. His girl friend took care of him, and seemed to love him more in his vulnerability. Love and vulnerability.

Thus it seems that part of me wants to be broken down, crippled, just like Moose. It is strangely attractive. Moose was sexy crutches! Helpless and crippled McMacho. . . the women loved him!

Thus, the way I partly and subconsciously see it, my helplessness and crippled state, the one fostered by my aches and pains, somehow and strangely, empowers

women!

It gives Ma something to do.

Now let's look at this strange psychology in terms of leadership. Isn't part of my job as a leader to give others something to do, to empower them? In other words, could Ma have been strangely right?

As a leader, isn't the ability to empower others part of my service to others? To show, demonstrate, by example, how to empower themselves.

Thus I ask the question: Am I making myself helpless and crippled, creating my own aches and pains, to subtly teach myself about this important aspect of leadership?

Another development question: Am I slowly giving up my self-definition as artist, trading it in, transforming it into a self-definition as a leader? Yes!

Leadership through helplessness. The states of Crippled and Hurthood are my teachers. They teach me the meaning of leadership: Helping others by empowering them.

What a paradox. The macho of leadership partly lies in its crippled and paralyzed state, in the femininity of its helplessness.

I don't really want to be helpless. But I do want to empower myself, and, by empowering myself, empower others. This is the deepest leadership teaching from the bowels of my Inner Teacher. This is true leadership. And it explains my year of aches and pains! The growing pains of Transformation. I am being transformed from an artist into a leader.

Sure I'll use my artistic skills somewhere and somehow, but in themselves, they will become "secondary." Secondary attributes.

Tuesday, September 9, 2008

Resurrecting my Guitar Dream

Talk about hope.

Was God speaking?

A vision? What else could it be?

Was it a music commandment, a guitar commandment tailor-made just for me? "Look, Jim Gold," He said, "I gave you a talent. I command you: Use it! I gave ten commandments to all you Jews. Now I'm adding a special, an eleventh commandment. It's just for you. The Guitar Commandment. If you do not use this talent I gave you to its fullest, if you do not give it your all, if you use your fears as an excuse, you oppose me! By not fulfilling my wishes, you commit a sin."

"But God," I say, "I thought that doubt, and self-doubting questions, were forms of sophistication."

"No longer true," He says. "And it never was."

Doubting God's commandments, not fulfilling talents He gave me, are these disguised forms of sin? Am I denying God's gifts, and even His wisdom?

Could I ever become an excellent guitarist?

It was once my Glenn Gouldian hope and dream. Tucked away in my mountain cabin, practicing all day, aiming for excellence! What a wonderful, beautiful dream! A sublime purpose ever-glowing in my life!

I gave up this radiant goal. What a loss!

I had a guitar vision in Providence. Talk about a call! Hope and possibility reborn.

I sit here at Cape Cod, contemplating future directions and commitments.

1. Make it a physical therapy year.

2. Learn pre-tour languages.

3. Resurrect my guitar dream.

4. Should I add public performing, concerts? My stomach turns as it returns to old performing fears. But maybe fear is besides the point. My stomach could be right! How about practicing all day. Aim for excellence! What a beautiful dream! Sublime purpose glowing again in my life!

Is that the meaning of my Providence New Land of Guitar vision? After all, it did take place in Providence!

Would I ever have the nerve to give a classical guitar concert? Is my playing unique enough? Do I have my own vision, my own way?

Confidence hinges around the Alhambra, and tributary arpeggio pieces.

But since I broke through in Providence, I have a chance at success. With a new vision, I could make this my New Land of Guitar year. Fast-as-hell and bass will be my flag ship.

"Too Difficult" is a Calling

Are leading tours, folk dancing, leading in general, my calling?

Leading is hard. Weight of responsibility, power, and fear of judgement.

Suppose it is a calling. Suppose I deny it because it is too difficult.

Concerts may be a calling. I deny them too because they are "difficult." Book promotion is difficult. . . .

Before he led the Children of Israel out of Egypt, Moses said to God, "It's hard. It's difficult. I stutter. I'm afraid. I'm weak, old, and imperfect. I can't do it. Choose someone else."

But God chose Moses.

He said, "Moses, this is your calling. I am calling you!" With a little help, Moses succeeded.

A calling is supposed to be hard! That's how you know it is a calling. Hard is how you know. Hard is how you grow.

It's easy sitting home practicing guitar, violin, writing, running, doing yoga, studying, or whatever. It's hard going public, presenting yourself before others to perform, opening yourself up to judgement.

Part of me wants to avoid difficulty, run away from it. That part is trying to avoid my calling.

Friday, September 12, 2008

Ready to Go

Ready to go.

To break the "maybe" habit, I must believe it is negative, useless, distractive.

Is it?

In the material, day-to-day world of business and human relationships, the "maybe" attitude is often helpful, useful, and fruitful. One has to deal with things in their immediacy, seize the moment, make quick judgements, jump from one thought and possibility to another; change, balance, decide, then change, balance, and decide again, until finally a decision is made. Even this "final" decision can be tentative, impermanent, subject to immediate change, if and when new information comes along.

Doubt, maybe, and perhaps are thus proper and useful in the material world.

The spiritual world is different. How to know a calling? When powers of intuition bring the Word close, can you believe and follow the purpose before you? Do you dare exchange ego for faith in your vision, dare be convinced of its Truth, dare leave doubts, perhaps, maybe, and questions behind?

Dare dive in with total trust?

Is there such a thing as a spiritual hero?

I'd like to be one. Does my soul yearn and scream for such conviction? Or does it prefer to play in the lower world of doubt?

What have I done with this Cape Cod vacation?

My body feels like it is in a new place. There is a deep, psychological fatigue in my bones, one reflected in right shoulder and left knee, problems which, no matter how I work them, do not seem to go away. I feel they will last a year. . . or until I find out and work through what, on a higher, purpose and spiritual level, they "mean."

Believe!

Miracle Schedule Reborn

Yesterday, after an intense calliyoga (CY) workout of squats, push-ups, shoulder twists, knee straightening, and more, the pains in both my right shoulder and left knee vanished. "How could this be?" I asked. Focus. A minor focus miracle.

The day went by. A tremendous lethargy hit at around 4:40 p.m. It lasted about an hour. Then came a sudden muscular twitching. I realized this was the Call. My body was screaming: "Stretch, stretch, stretch!"

I did some yoga standing positions on the sidewalk. Ah. It felt better. Then, in front of our supper restaurant, I did squat positions. It felt even better!

My body yearned to stretch, and even (get this), dance! This was the first time in months, or at least since June 11, Sciatica Day, that this has happened. Indeed, I interpreted this as a Call, Vision, even a Miracle!

So ends a New Leaf.