

Again

Monday, December 4, 2006

I am traveling on old, dead pathways. No wonder I keep falling asleep when I play guitar, or do any of my other so-called "miracle" schedule activities. Indeed, there are no miracles when I keep falling asleep.

Is this somnambulant, catatonic state a dried down form of the heaviness and fatigue I've been feeling over the past month? Probably.

Evidently, I've got to go through a complete death before I get reborn. Perhaps I should just go with my fatigue and sleep. Finish my dying process. Give in to it. Clean out the attic.

Constructive Use of my Anger and Frustration:

Pour it into Determination!

The difference in website attitude, uploading through FileZilla, Lunarpages non-functioning, e-mail 5 second delay, and more, is that I'm going to figure it out myself and not be terrified by it.

Of course, I'll ask for help as well. But that doesn't effect my bottom-line shift in attitude.

Now there's a constructive use of my anger and frustration: I'm determined to learn this stuff!

I'll pour it into determination!

I'm sick of being pushed around by computer, web, and internet fear and ignorance. I'm going to learn the fucker!

The Blessings of Protection

or Saga of the Absurd

I have been blessed by God with a great sense of humor. He has given me an appreciation of the absurd. This talent, skill, vision of the insanity and madness of life, this ability to eventually see miserable events as theater of the absurd with its dark and light humor, saves me from many of life's perilous attitudes.

The defensive visions put up by this madcap sense of humor protect me, especially on tours. In fact, I would say, preserving a sense of humor, in many miserable situations, enables me to run a tour.

Most "normal" people, many of my friends included, want and expect me to get mad at the idiots who often participate in and make trouble for me on my tours and in my life. Since I partly want to make them happy (and parenthetically, also show how manly I am), I try to get mad. I go for the rage, infuriation, and urge to kick the shit out of the miserable bastards! But deep down, after this initial blast of fury, I slide quickly into the ridiculous. I can't quite believe my rage. And this, even though I know I have it. The humor of it quickly rides up my spine. I step slightly back, giggle, make a joke, and move on.

I have to recognize this ability to take a mental leap into craziness as a hidden talent. I'm lucky to have such a pipeline to the higher forces. It protects my most important hidden treasure: my imagination.

True Jump

"Villa-Lobos Prelude Number 1:" Treble for intellectual cotton, meaty mental gymnastics, and necessary background.

But bass, bass, bass, to find the soul.

There is broad jump, high jump, and the True Jump into the Land of Bass.

It is a qualitative difference, a qualitative breakthrough. I am actually thinking differently.

Must my shoulders hurt so much to find this? Is there another reason they do?

Somehow I doubt it. I sense that shoulder pain is related to True Jump breakthrough pain.

(If this is true, then shoulder pain will disappear once my transition to the True Jump Land of Bass is completed.)

Also for the first time in my guitar life, I am afraid my fingers will stiffen up and not function – an arthritic, old age, muscle-pulling fear.

A few months ago, I never had these fears. I am not much older or more arthritic than I was a few months ago; and my muscles haven't changed that much. So why this sudden "new" fear?

Is it my mind-body fighting the qualitative leap into a new way of thinking, its resistance to change, the body's attempt to avoid metaphysical life in True Jump Land?

I'd like to think these fears are unfounded. My history of body pains tell me they are. But every change is accompanied by doubts. Could this be the one time my body pains are real, lasting, and permanently debilitating? Are they finally "true?"

Or is it more of the same, the same old fears but in a new form?

I'm waiting for God's hand, some call or vision from beyond, to dispel my doubts. (Of course, I know that beyond is within.)

However, this is the qualitative change I've been looking for and always wanted. It is the essence of guitar playing. Will its metaphysical presence bleed into others things I do?

I stand at the gate of heaven. Are shoulder pains portals I must pass through in order to enter?

Even More Strangely

Even more strangely, as I was taking my writing break sitting on the toilet, I read the following lines from Gabrielle Roth's great book Maps to Ecstasy: "To undertake this phase of the (shamanic) dancing path, we must be willing to let go of everything including our images, ideas, and beliefs about who we are. We must be willing to

die—the death of our egos, which we resist and find as painful as the physical death we fear so much.”

Maybe I should expand my dumping; maybe I should expand throw-out day to include my old ego and ideas of self. These would certainly include my tour self, guitar self, business self, and many others I don't feel like enumerating now.

A general rebirth is in order. It starts with the blistering and dynamic wump of Dump Day.

Meta-Relaxation

A Personal Discovery in Classic Guitar Technique

I am discovering something new in classic guitar technique: The relaxation connection between the right thumb and fingers.

First of all, the (right) thumb and fingers exist in two separate worlds; each was its own separate structure of muscle sets. Thus, living in two separate worlds, the question is: How to bring them together? How to connect the thumb to the fingers? Ultimately, how to play arpeggios?

Right thumb and fingers can be connected through a deep, trans-relaxation process I call meta-relaxation.

This is a mysterious, ineffable relaxation spot, a place high in the brain, where the opposites of thumb and fingers merge. In Marxian or Hegelian terms, it is a place where thesis and antithesis synthesize.

In the classical guitar land of meta-relaxation, Marx's utopian world comes to life. Hegel, too, would be proud.

Compassion is the Key to a Healthy and Happy Business

Fear, anger, sadness, joy, compassion: The first four are very self-oriented. They necessarily lead you inward, and in doing so, distance you from others. Only the fifth, compassion, involves business; only compassion breaks out of ego to involve others.

But you must go through gateways of the first four to reach the fifth.

Thus, although other tools may be used, compassion is the key to a healthy and happy business.

As I move towards the meta-relaxed guitar state, I confront many little stinging resistances. First, legato playing: a small pain in my left index finger. Then comes a slight shoulder stab.

Suddenly, I wonder: Is the pain in my left index finger (which I interpret as resistance to the meta-relaxation state) similar to the pain in my right hammer toe? Are the both caused by, and symbols of, resistance? Are they blocks at the gateway of meta-relaxation? Are they my mind's protective, but illusory and unhelpful attempt, to keep me out of The Place?

My little pains are gateways to something. But to what?

Old Photographs, Old Selves

In looking over old photographs, it's mostly sadness, nostalgia, and melancholy that I feel. But I'm getting used to seeing them, and am slowly accepting, and even feeling indifferent to pictures of my old self. It is slow, good, and freeing.

Passion and Ecstasy

The day is totally free.

I'm starting it at 5:00 a.m. playing the guitar.

With first-time pains appearing in my left hand and my left shoulder also slightly incapacitate, how will I play? What do these pains signify?

What is my new goal in guitar playing? Passion and ecstasy. Passion leads to ecstasy; ecstasy is the result of passion. If I play with passion, ecstasy will arrive by itself. Passion is the means; ecstasy is the end.

Are these “new pains” in left hand and shoulder a block of that direction?

If, through the release of endorphins, ecstasy is created, then playing guitar with passion should heal my left hand and shoulder.

Passion begins with a rumble of fear in my stomach. Can I sit down with the guitar, in the total safety of my kitchen or living room, and, in this secure environment, conjure up the stomach-churning fear that stimulates the passion endorphins?

This simulates the same pre-performance anxiety state of mind. And it’s true: After (and during) these performances, all pain is forgotten. “Forgotten” means the pain has disappeared. Thus performance anxiety has cured my pain.

Fascinating, indeed.

My pains could be self-invented, personal blocks to passion. Can I look at my pains this way? Left hand, left shoulder, knees, other. . . most pains. . . Even all pains?

Passion releases the knots, unblocks the flow.

Pain teaches and helps me grow even though it is a pain in the ass.

I don’t want betrayal to bully me into giving up my glorious visions of helping myself by helping others, of running wild over grass, and dancing on the lawn. I’m not going to let this terrible betrayal trample on me, push me into the corner, take away my beautiful, wide-eyed, humorous, laughable, naive, open, shining vision of the world. Never, never! I’ll never give it up! It’s just too good. I refuse to lose. And I can’t lose, unless I decide I’ve lost. I won’t be defeated.

Mad shoe vision forever! Let it ride!

Mr. Overwhelmed

Mr. Overwhelmed is a subtle, repressive figure I conjure up in order to suppress my feelings. He’s a poster child for paralysis. How does he work? I have so many things to do, I can’t chose one, so I stand under Mr. Overwhelmed’s umbrella and chose

to do nothing.

How can I escape?

His umbrella keeps me in the shade; it protects me from the sun of passion.

Yes, now I know who he is, and why he does what he does. Knowing him will help me escape from his clutches.

Posthumous Tours

I'm in the final stage, and I know it. I may be around ten, twenty, thirty, or more years. . . or less. But long or short, it will end with the end.

How do I play guitar from now on?

I-Ego-Individual blends into the cosmos; I enter the dynamic stillness of spirit center. Former directions seem empty and vapid.

I'm in the saying-goodbye stage. But I could also say hello.

"Hello, Death. Nice to meet you. I know your finale delicatessen will also offer me some kind of freedom. Let's work together. Let's work something out."

One positive thing about dealing with death, and facing the transience of mortality is the fact that it is freeing.

So perhaps I should spend some time thinking about it, meditating upon it. After all, I like freedom.

Why would I regret my death? Why would I fear, or even worry about it? After all, I've fulfilled the dictates of my life. There's nothing I can think of that I should have done, would have done, or must do.

Sure, I'd like a few more days, months, or years. On the other hand, if it's over, it's over.

Oh, I'd be sad. I'd go through the stages of mourning, saying goodbye to everyone and everything I love. That would be sad. And I'd miss my morning coffee. And other things, too.

But who knows what kind of coffee they serve in the after life? I'd be heading on

another adventure, another tour. I've visited many earthly lands. Am I not ready for something different? How about a tour to a celestial one? Haven't done that before. Packing would be easy. In fact, there is none. Now there's an immediate plus. Yes, on this tour you unpack before you go!

I visualize saying goodbye to friends, things, life style, my body, and my mind, as tough. I'll miss those. How about my physical and mental pains? Well, I'll miss them, too. Although they are a pain in the ass, nevertheless, they are still my terrestrial acquaintances.

I'll miss my wife, my kids, my family; I'll miss all my close and distant friends, the ones who made life so fulfilling, meaningful, and fun. Yes, I'd miss people. . .and some things as well.

But I can't find any regrets.

What about fear of dying? Can't find any of that either this morning. Perhaps it will pop up in the future. But if I have no regrets, why would I be afraid? And especially if I see dying as leading another tour, a different kind of trip with only myself on it. Plus, who knows who I'll meet along the way, or when I get to my "final" destination?

Maybe dying is simply an extension of tourism. Why not? Who knows if I am wrong? And I could be right!

But will I be able to advertise these trips? I know I have a huge audience. Eventually, all people will take it. But will they go on my tour? Aha, that is the question. I just said I would run these celestial tours alone. My death and the trip it engenders would only be for me. Well, maybe I've seen these trips too narrowly. Maybe I should take others; Maybe I should expand.

These would be Posthumous Tours at their best! I'd better grab the audience of travelers before my competition gets them!

Tuesday, December 12, 2006

Carol is reading New Leaf and loving it. She calls New Leaf 4 a gem. Her enthusiasm is causing me to reread it. I'm reading it partly through her eyes. And, even though I'm still very close to it, I nevertheless, love it too.

What does this mean in terms of sales, and in terms of myself and my own future development? I'm enjoying my writing; I'm learning from my writing; I'm remembering old, former, and important thoughts and ideas that I have either forgotten or pushed to the side so long, they've become hazy.

Here are some inspiring comments from her E-mails:

First letter: "You'll have to re-read the whole book! Enthusiasm is Adventure. Jealousy and Envy. Taking My First Political Steps. Soaring. I Am My Only Guide. Fun Is Your Birthright. Money and Running Wild on the Lawn. Gaida Enthusiasm. My Inner Audience of Eternal Mothers. Reaping the Harvest (There's a Bob Dylan exhibit at the Morgan Museum all month). I think Book 4 is the best introduction to Jim Gold."

Second letter: "More gems from Book 4: Beauty Must Be Top Priority. Birthday Thoughts. Dare to Be Positive. Motivating Others--Motivating Myself. "If you're not full of God, who cares what you're full of?" This entire book is a gem!"

Extra comment: "When writing about your tours, make sure you use the phrase 'a touch of divine madness.'"

A New Calling? St. Paul Phase Come to Life

Maybe it is a calling to publish, publicize, advertise, and promote my books.

Maybe it is a crime not to work to get them out there.

I said it partly as a joke: I am now in the St. Paul part of my life. Spread the gospel, spread the word. What gospel is that? The gospel according to Jim.

Do I have the hubris, the gall, to ally myself with St. Paul and proclaim this as my next calling? Yes, I do. The only question is: am I right? (Well, deep in my heart, I

know I am.)

So, once I get past the “I can’t believe it” phase, what is stopping me?

Basically, nothing.

Now I wonder if that is why I have been depressed. My second calling has not yet crystallized, not yet come fully to life. I am wandering in the Land of Lost, walking with vague, dizzy, slow, and careful steps through fields of self-doubt.

Remember, this would be a full and total embrace of the advertising, promotional, publicity, and “out-there” world. Quite to totally different from the inner, in-room creative chamber, the artistic world of my imagination.

A calling? Should I reread St. Paul? Is Carol (feminine form of the Germanic “Kerl”: peasant or even servant) my directional angel in disguise?

My God connection is found in ecstasy; formerly I found it creating my art. Can I find ecstasy in promotion, sales, and advertising? Suppose it is connected, not necessarily to tours (or bookings) which make money, but to promoting the creative love of my life, namely my writings, namely my books?

This is a great and pivotal directional question. It would signal a deep psychological change. No question, my old life died a few months (or even years) ago. I’ve been in transition ever since. If this new, St. Paul, advertising level is true, and I can accept it and dive in, it might put enthusiasm and the spark of inspiration back into my life.

Such publicity might also include bookings, my World of Jim Gold Guitar and Song program. Why have I not considered this before? Namely because promoting tours can make the most money. Promoting my books, and even concert bookings has much more limited potential. (Of course, the books could take off, and it could develop into an international following with translations etc. Then I could make money. But this is a risk, a chance, a long shot, if it is a shot at all, it is a long way off.

But remember: I love long shots! I love taking risks and chances. It curls and boils my blood. It churns my stomach, wakes up my mind and spirit. Perhaps it will

create the fear and energy I need. Not dealing with this hidden new challenge might even be the deep down reason for the inexplicable feeling of nausea and disgust, and even fatigue, that I have been experiencing over the past few months.

Jumping into the low-to-no paying field of book sales is certainly part of jumping off the cliff into the abyss. But such a jump would certainly wake me up!

Am I onto something deep and profound here? Could be.

Of course, I'll continue running tours. But now I could see them as fun breaks from my writing work. Shift in priorities.

Sarnoian question: What, if anything, does this shift in priorities have to do with my left shoulder pain?

Wednesday, December 13, 2006

Manure in the Morning:

Putting Depression to Good Use

Woke up again this morning feeling lost and miserable. I'm going around in circles, getting nowhere with these strange, new, down, moods of meaninglessness. Then I answered E-mail, and forgot about it.

What is the new place? It's saturated with the "Been there, done that." Nothing feels fresh, new, and vital. I don't understand why I am here, but I am. I don't know what to do about it but feel it, go into it, go through it, and hopefully, come out wiser in the end.

I have everything I want; I've done everything I want. There is no reason for me not be in the Joy Place. But, for some reason, I am not there. Is this foggy valley of meaninglessness where I am now traveling, Cosmic Depression at its best?

I know from past experience that depression always precedes creation, that downs are followed by ups. A creative period should lie up ahead.

I am putting a value judgement on these moods: depression and sadness are bad, joy and happiness are good.

Is this really true?

Depression is the manure that helps the flowers grow. It stinks. . . but look at the blossoms!

The above flower would not have growth without depression.

Wallowing in Self-Pity Mud

A Brief Visit to the Old Neighborhood

In fact, I am in a pretty miserable state of morning mind, and I am beginning to get pissed off at myself for having it. I'm getting sick of my midget mind betraying me.

I need to give myself a good swift kick in the ass. Get off this self-pity and melancholy. Jump into the fight.

What fight is that? Any fight.

Why am I even bothering to wallow?

There is nothing to feel sorry about. Why would I want to feel sorry for myself? Maybe I just miss the feeling. Thus I want to re-create it even though there is no reason to.

Where does the feeling sorry for myself feeling come from? Mother is stroking me, loving me, as I sleep peacefully in my crib. Maybe that's what I miss. But as I look at it, truth is, I don't even want or need it. Perhaps it is simply an unconscious desire to visit the old neighborhood one last time, to say a bittersweet goodbye before I move on.

Move on to what? That may well be the next question. But first I must finish my farewells.

I got up from this writing and felt a sudden pain in my right shoulder. Now it's left and right.

Are the pains related to my visit to the old neighborhood? I've really been making partial visits since I returned from Greece. Perhaps I've "gone back" to take a breather and relax a bit. Old neighborhood as a temporary vacation spot.

Will moving on and moving out make these pains (slowly, gradually) disappear?

It's been six weeks since I returned from Greece. My cyclic period time.

Could my pains be a subtle form of soothing? Wow, what a thought. What a new way of looking at pains.

Pains force me to stop, to "rest." Thus they could be seen as messages from my mother, the voice of Ma, telling me to lie down, don't get sick, rest, relax, don't hurt yourself, take it easy. Within these "messages" she is saying, "I love you. I will protect and care for you."

I've internalized this self-soothing voice. But this voice also enrages me, often hinders my quest to do what I want, or perform some difficult task. It is thus a paradoxical, divided, two-sided, two-way street voice. My mother's voice. Both soothing and enraging. A visit to the old neighborhood is a visit to her home.

I just wrote five pages without a blink. And I started out with nothing to say. This depression stuff really works! Of course, I don't feel any better. But I certainly have created a lot!

Positives in Neighborhood

Could it be that I don't see running or yoga as an "art form" and thus it is not as "worthy" as writing or guitar practice?

The above doubtful idea popped into my mind because I'll do or think almost

anything to get back to dealing with and curing my body. It has been so neglected over the past month. I don't even know why. But I am furious about my lack of discipline, my letting it slide, putting my exercise discipline last, and then, if there is no time, dropping it completely.

Why am I doing this, and what is the matter with me? Even these questions are subtle means of goading me back into my once-beautiful exercise program.

This is an old-neighborhood practice I should never give up!

Is it an old neighborhood practice? Finally, something good about the old neighborhood!

Were there other goodies in the old neighborhood that I liked? Well, yes. Studies, for one, especially language and bible studies.

Is part of my turning towards and return to roots and depth a partial return to revisit the old neighborhood? To see it with a different eye. Less jaundiced and more positive.

Guitar practice definitely no good in the old neighborhood. Filled with put downs, lack of confidence, no flying arpeggios.

Also tour leadership: Lack of confidence, many put downs.

But for now, I'm only interested in looking at and seeing the positives.

Friday, December 15, 2006

Opposition

Playing the game is so much fun!

You can't play the game without opposition. Thus, love the opposition. How dull life would be without it.

And look how much fun I have with opposition. Republicans and Democrats, right and left, pro-war or anti-war in Iraq, and more. Let's take the anti-war people. What idiots they are! They are totally insane, off-the-wall, sick, naive, blind, living an illusion. Idiots, indeed!

Look how much fun I have calling them idiots! I love it! Stupid! Idiot! Duncehead! Moron! What fun to demean and thunder against their stupidity! My raging energy boils in grandiose splendor. I love to call them names; and if I can't to their face, at least love thinking about their idiocy. Like hurling a rock at an ant. It's such fun when I hit it; it's even fun when I miss. The totally hostile and self-righteous activity alone creates entertainment, and makes it all worthwhile.

Yes, although the game can be dangerous, scary, and frustrating at time, playing it is, nevertheless, so much fun!

So, love your enemies, appreciate your opposition. Life would be awfully dull without them.

The Land of Permanent Inspiration

This is dive-right-in land, "Just do it and shut up!" land.

Great lines by Rainer Maria Rilke about Auguste Rodin. "(Rodin)... repudiates the imputation of inspiration and expresses the opinion that there is no such thing-no inspiration, but only work, one suddenly comprehends that for this creative artist inspiration has become permanent, that he no longer feels its approach because it is never absent, and one guesses the reason for his uninterrupted fertility."

Monday, December 18, 2006

Possible Birth of a New Tour Direction

Am I getting tired of controversy, even bored? What a question!

It seems controversies go around in circles; nothing ever gets solved. And if, by chance, it does, then the mind along with public politics move on to or invents another controversy. The string never ends.

So why bother getting involved with in the frustrating and endless circle? Or better, why believe in this transient illusion? Why not simply look at it, observe it, as a partial outsider, note its existence, and move on?

A part of me loves controversy, and is thus attracted to it. It feeds the spirit of aggression, violence, and hatred; it releases the spleen. But another part of me wants resolution, and to move on. Controversies may slowly lose their steam and eventually be forgotten, but, bottom line, they don't really end or get resolved.

So why should I waste my mental energies on them? If I decide not to, where will my mental energies go? What will I do with my non-engaged mind?

Study English and America literature? Read the English classics from Shakespeare and Milton to the present? Add even Middle English classics of Chaucer, or Old English Beowulf? I've never read English literature.

Plus, for some sad, strange reason, my ability and desire to learn foreign languages seems to have lost its energy. My original purpose in learning them was to gain more control over my tours, to make myself safer in foreign lands, to help me both communicate with local people, and thus improve and focus myself more strongly on my tours, tourists, and tour business.

But now I am more confident in my leadership abilities; I also see that knowing the languages, although interesting, is not at all necessary to run a tour, or to get customers. The original role and purpose of language study has thus evaporated. This has left my touring mind and study discipline in a vague vacuum.

Can I actually admit that, after all those years of language effort, I have come to their end? It seems my mind cannot absorb another foreign word; I read the language books and the words glance off my brain; nothing gets absorbed. And in back of this strange, new reaction, are the words "Why bother?" and "To what purpose?" And behind these is the vague, vacuum-creating, and frightening realization that there is no longer a purpose; I have accomplished my task; I am finished. Time to move on.

How sad. Losing and dropping my foreign language interest, my once-beautiful study of languages. But I am transitioning to another land. What else can I do? First you drop it, then you see where the dropping leads.

Some thoughts: If I study and move into British (and American) literature,

should I now think about running tours to England, Scotland, and even through America? Well, I doubt America would sell. But the foreign English speaking lands? To visit the home of the great writers?

I've always avoided the English speaking countries the idea being foreign languages are a challenge. But I've gone as far as I can go with that challenge. Perhaps it is time to run a tour to England! Scotland, too, and even Wales. Throw in Ireland, too? I've done Ireland. But I have not done the Irish writers. This is a happy but sad, sad but happy, bittersweet ending and beginning, possible birth of a new tour direction.

And, of course, I'll look into Albania, northern Greece, Serbia, Portugal, and even consider the Ukraine.

Bereshit: A New Beginning in the World of Ease

English Literature and Folk Dance Tour I doubt such a tour it would be commercial successes, although, hopefully, I am wrong. Nevertheless, it would come from my heart and inspire me! In that sense, it is similar to my first Hungarian tour in 1984, and first tours to other countries. An adventure and exploration of a new direction.

Guitar playing has also become easy.

Clients are trickling in to my tours. I wonder if selling them may have become easier. After all, I started new directions such as working with Lee and other teachers; I'm creating an advanced web site; I also have a larger client base.

Has performing also become easier?

I stand at the border of Bereshit: A new beginning in the World of Ease.

Since I cleaned out the basement I feel stunned.

Stunned about what?

Symbolically, I went through my past and threw out the old. This cleared my mind as well; My brain clicked on "refresh."

Am I now ready to embrace the new attitude of ease?

It seems that "Dive right in!" is also easier.

The bang of change, the growth of hope – all this will make an incredible New Year!

Tuesday, December 19, 2006

The State of Not-Success

Why do I waste my time and mind thinking and feeling I am successful? What is the difference between success and confidence?

Perhaps confidence and success have nothing to do with one another. Yes, confidence can breed success, and success can breed confidence. Perhaps they chain to one another like bridges to different states. But each has its own rules of government; each is different.

In any case, although I have developed self-confidence over the past year, and it feel good, healthy, and right; I have, "unfortunately," also developed the illusion of success. Why do I call it an illusion? Certainly, I have had successes, accomplished many things in my life, reached many of my goals. But post-transitionally, I put myself in total success mode, completed all my goals, married myself to a 'been there, done that' state. Since this total success belief has entered my life, I have not only lost most of the reason for my motivation, but I am also pursued, haunted by a vague and constant depression. And no matter how I twist and turn, how I try finding goodness and vitality in this self-success notion, I only find more meaninglessness, purposeless, low vitality, lack of motivation, and whenever I reflect on my success and successes, a subsequent depression.

Thus, this morning I come to the conclusion that total success notion, the "been there, done that" success mode, is bad for me. I am much happier, more motivated, filled with hungry vitality when I am in not success mode. Evidently, for me, no

success mean hunger, drive, motivation, dynamism, pushing forward to meet my goal. And what is my goal? Why, success, of course! But achieving it is paradoxically, not my goal. Evidently, I must constantly aim at success, but never achieve it.

Achieving success creates depression.

Aiming for it creates dynamism and happiness!

What a paradox! But true, nevertheless.

What to do about it?

Begin seeing myself as constantly and forever not successful. Evidently, that is my "divine state."

The not-success state would immediately create specific goals of achievement.

What a reversal! Part of me always thought that success was good. Yet another part resisted and feared it. Therapy "taught" me to loosen and eventually "give up" my fears. I soon "became successful," or at least let myself believe I was. Now I see my original instincts, my so-called fear of success, was right. I secretly always knew its danger, that belief in it would sap my strength and eventually kill me.

Yes, folks, success is not for me! Its plateau state is evil and bad for my psyche. It sucks my brain, depletes my energy, crushes my strength, annihilates my motivation.

From now on I will give up this hapless state of listlessness and vague misery. I'm moving out.

The state of Not-Success is neither a state of failure, or a failed state. Rather, it is dynamic and forward looking; it drives forever into the future. It's nice to be a citizen of What-Will-Be.

Maybe there has been a subtle confusion all along. Maybe my search has never really been for success itself (although its usually nice when it comes) but rather for self-confidence. Well, I found it, that's a plus. But believing in it is a real downer.

So my new question is: How can I begin my new life as a Not-Success? In what

have I not succeeded?

Ah, looking at it that way, thank God the list is long!

I tremble with anticipation. Suddenly, I see the Land of One Hundred Goals before me!

Did I ever finish my 50s? Did I ever run the marathon? Did I ever master of my languages? How could I have been so naive and dumb? Perhaps this sad, depressing, listless "success state" I manufactured was, in reality, a subtle form of return to the old neighborhood, a visit with Ma, a resurrection of her constant reminders to "rest, take it easy, don't work so hard, be happy, enjoy life, we'll do the hard stuff for you, just play your violin and shut up."

Perhaps the Old Neighborhood, with its subtle destructive call, will never go away. "Come home to me, your beautiful and eternal Mother. I am the Ma of your dreams. Give up the troubles and cares of this world; rest your weary head upon my breast. Ah, it is so peaceful and wonderful here, my son. You've come home at last. I will hold you secure and happy in my arms forever."

This siren call is so hard to resist; it comes in so many alluring disguises. And yet, to fall into its arms is to accept the embrace of death itself. Evidently, the secure, peaceful, sleep of death is always an attractive alternative to the dynamism, pain, and struggle of life.

Wednesday, December 20, 2006

Temple Sinai Renaissance Club Performance

I'm playing classical guitar, giving a show (singing, etc.), then teaching folk dancing for the Renaissance Club at Temple Sinai in Tenafly tonight.

I haven't practiced a thing; I've hardly thought about it. I've never "given" a show with so little forethought. I'm a bit nervous today because I've given it so little effort. And I haven't sung songs for over a month, maybe more. I'm going in almost

totally cold.

During the past month or so, my interest in performing has dropped to practically zero.

Is this a permanent mental shift, or a temporary state of mind?

Of course, such an “approach” is totally new.

Can such a casual, non-thinking, low-to-no preparation, off-the-cuff strategy actually work?

As for the future, this seems like the amount of effort I’ll put in. Of course, I’ve been practicing and playing guitar all along, so on that level all is okay. And, of course, leading folk dancing is no problem. Ad libbing my intros, stories, and more is no problem either. Only singing has been vacant.

So what problems could there be? As I see it, only in singing. What, if anything, can or will I do about this? At the moment, nothing. How about the future? Somehow, if at all, just as with the habit of daily guitar practice and playing, I would have to make daily singing part of my life. Would I even want to sing daily? Why don’t I?

My motivation to practice and play guitar is to grow, expand, and improve. Improvement seems to be my motivation in most things I do.

But, so far, I care not a whit about improving my singing. Result: I never sing. What a shame. It is such an enjoyable and healthy activity. But shame itself is not enough to motivate me. It would be a “good” thing to sing. I’d like to be motivated. What, if anything, will get me to open my mouth?

If I kept my throat lubricated all along, just as I keep my guitar-playing fingers lubricated, loose, and practiced all along, performing itself would be both easy and no problem, a total exercise and experience in ad-lib performing spontaneity. Indeed, it would be its own art form.

Isn’t developing such a spontaneous art form worthwhile in itself? Wouldn’t that be a good reason to keep my throat lubricated and my repertoire at my lip tip?

In order to facilitate this, I would have to add the practice of daily singing to my life.

I certainly believe in this, and consider it a worthy pursuit. Could the development of such an art form be my next artistic direction?

"I've Got Nothing Better To Do"

I am the spontaneous art form. Leading my daily life, performing, either on or off stage, in this daily life is itself the spontaneous art form.

So what? Why is the above meaningful or even important? How will it increase my motivation beyond "I've got nothing better to do"? Well, perhaps it won't. Maybe I really have nothing better to do. That itself may be the reason. Not very high sounding or inspirational, but for now, it may be the best I've got.

Nausea, Vomit, Self-Disgust. . . or Serving Others

I wonder if I am sick to my stomach, nauseous, (even disgusting) because I am avoiding my calling, not facing it. Whenever I focus on what I am doing, my nausea, pain in my stomach, desire to vomit, along with an overall feeling of (self?) disgust goes away.

If I am right, and if the cause of my sickness is avoidance of my calling, I must ask: What is my calling?

Does it have to do with helping, service to, others?

In the past, financial fears forced me to work for others; without their payments, I would starve. Subtly or smack-over-the-head hard, my desire for money, my worry over not having any, and, paradoxically, even my debt which went on for years, forced me to help and serve others.

By remaining in debt, I subtly and unconsciously forced myself to work for them; unconsciously, I must have realized such work was good for me. But I could not rationalize all the problems, pains, and annoyances I went through, to face the fact that

such work was a healthy activity, one which focused my mind and spirit, and was thus good for me. I only acknowledged half of what was good for me: my creative, alone, artistic, in-room, chamber-of-my-imagination side. The out going, serving others side was anathema, according to my communist and artistic elite upbringing.

Getting married, and the subsequent forcing of myself to make money, both saved me from insanity and put my career on the map. What is my career? Serving others, of course.

But now that I am “successful,” and money and my financial base is more secure, I no longer feel the constant financial panic with its constant motivational power to go out there and find work.

Instead I get nauseous, sick to my stomach, and disgusted.

Something is wrong. I’m missing a link.

The link is: Since work is healthy and my salvation, I have to find a new reason to go back to it! It will no longer be only financial. I will have to see it as a religious, apocalyptic calling.

How do I serve others? My concerts serve others. So do my folk dance classes, tours, and weekends. So do my Klezmer and other bookings. Even my books and CDs serve others. . . only less.

Repeat, Repeat, Repeat

By repeating, repeating, repeating, you go down, down, down, into the passionate core. You scream, cry, stand in tears, boil in lava, and are consumed in a molten fire of cosmic meltdown.

But in this ecstatic meltdown, all fringe, minor, annoying, banal aches, and pipsqueak pains have disappeared.

At this point in my guitar playing career, the only approach to use for practice and playing guitar is the passion approach.

Can passion be practiced? Can it only be released through spontaneity? Must it always and ever be spontaneous, and live in the moment? I think the answer is: Yes.

Friday, December 22, 2006

Passion, Duty, and Rote

Passion moves from high to low, from passion-filled inspiration and wahoo enthusiasm, stirred up by a sense of duty, to the tired, sunset – blind repetition in the land of rote.

Rote is death.

Duty is the razor's edge: walking the difficult, dangerous road of the Middle Ground, ever asking the question: How to stay centered between passion and its dynamic vibrations of ecstasy, or falling over the cliff into the sluggish, clock-watching, obsessive-fulfillment, stagnant watered doldrums.

Saturday, December 23, 2006

Next Alhambra Challenge

Next "Alhambra" challenge: Total clarity, singing, whole, round, mellow, and untruncated bass notes. This especially (and only) on the third string; that is where the truncating occurs, where the problem lies.

"Leyenda" trebles: beautifully clear this morning!

Coming Home!

A Fun and Self-Fulfillment Thing

Of course, my vocal challenges include "Je Crois Entendre Encore" and "Cu cu rru cu cu Paloma," and even "Kalinka," "Stenka Razin," and "Mikor Rosza Sandor," and "J'ai Mauvais Reputation, and J'ai Rendez-vous Avec Vous," "Mi Barechev," "Va Yiven," and "Ba Midbar."

Truth is, I never felt I could sing these songs comfortably. They were "real"

songs, that took a “real” singer, one with a “serious” voice. And this especially with songs like “Je Crois Entendre Encore,” “Cu cu rru cu cu Paloma,” “Ba Midbar,” (and even, believe it or not, “Mule Skinner Blues.”)

Well, I am not a “real” singer yet. But I could certainly practice to become one! (Just like I was not a “real” guitarist until I could play Alhambra, and other arpeggio pieces.)

Perhaps the idea is not necessarily to perform these songs (although that would be nice, and I eventually expect to) but rather to make their practice and singing part of my daily life style. Then, like classical guitar, all else will follow naturally.

I wonder if I will now have a desire to perform “naturally,” and will even pursue bookings, concerts, and performances “naturally.” (Notice the separation between bookings, concerts, and performances. I’ll deal with that later.)

Ultimately, I won’t be satisfied to practice and sing all these songs only in my room. Ultimately, to fulfill God-given talents and my purpose in life, I will have to, and want to, bring them to the public. That means, I may, will, have to, must, and should, for my own satisfaction, pleasure, and fulfillment of duty, pursue public performances.

Sunday, December 24, 2006

Back to the Bible

Could reading the bible give me protection? Strange and interesting question. One always needs protection. But protection from what?

I want to find a deep, powerful reason to keep reading it; I want to make it important, to effect and affect my life.

There are Jews in Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, and many of the other countries I visit. Another rationalization to study Hebrew along with these other languages.

Why do I need a rationalization? I don’t know.

Intense Love

The kids are in and they are lovely.

This morning I have a sudden cold, sniffles, sneezes, and borderline chills. I believe it's a psycho-physical manifestation of resentments and desires, and my mind's way of side-stepping and escaping from these unpleasant feelings.

But, although I love them dearly, and believe they are wonderful, nevertheless, in order to handle my psychosomatic disorders, I'd better also remember my resentment and anger (mostly unconscious, but moving into greater consciousness) that their presence is upsetting my daily routines, disordering my normal universe.

Plus and minus, positive and negative, move together. Optimal mental and physical health is achieved when I recognize and remember this contradictory truth.

The idea that my morning cold has a psychosomatic origin, and is due to some kind of fear and/or resentment, is my own discover. My approach, method, and way of thinking is based on Sarno's teachings; but the relationship between my sneezing mania and snot production is not in his books.

I also feel an intense and overwhelming love for them which is annoying and confusing me, gnawing at my brain, befuddling and diverting my thought processes, distracting me, and getting in the way of my routines. I should be happy about this intense love (ah, I hear my wife's voice of should). . . and I am. But I am also distracted and annoyed by it.

I think the "new" and overwhelming feeling I am feeling is this intense love. This feeling emerges often when I am with my family; it even happens among friends, and even customers, and strangers. I usually try to avoid it. It is just too hot, too intense to deal with. I'm afraid it will distract and destroy me. Certainly, it will crush my ego and all the brilliant and important things it wants to accomplish. Yes, I hate to face my passion, my intense love of these fucking family members! Part of me doesn't want to deal with it, part of me loves it, and part of me stands apart and is amazed by it.

Intense love: Maybe dealing with it (mostly denying its existence, strength, and power) is why I have a cold this morning.

Truth

Unless you're talking about gnostic, mystical Truth, the ecstatic experience of the union with God, all truth has its opposite within it. This, of course, includes the smaller, earthly, transient "truths" of politics, organized religion, personal relationships, and all the others.

Here's an interesting psycho-physical event: I was practicing guitar, moving along on my warm-up scales quite well. Suddenly, I thought about Judas Iscariot and betrayal. . . and immediately my left hand started to hurt! Sarnoian truths. Betrayal by my hand, by my hands, betrayal at my hand, betrayal by others.

What is the psychological truth behind betrayals? Can there be, is there, a positive aspect to them as portrayed in the Judas Gospels?

Tuesday, December 26, 2006

Family Christmas

Overwhelmed by love. That's the basic feeling. The sides are learning some Hapkido from Zane, sitting at the Christmas dinner table with Jonny, Christie, our whole family, their whole family, and, like a king surveying his realm, simply glowing in simple amazement and pride at the growth, development, and existence of these beautiful beings. It is a "new grand papa" feeling; I've heard about it, read about it, and partially experienced it. But now much more fully as the kids' development expands.

What about "overwhelmed by love?"

Although I know what I'm feeling, and I'm letting myself feel it, I don't quite know what to "do" with it, how to react. Should I react? Does one react? It is both uncomfortable and beautiful. Uncomfortable: I don't like being overwhelmed.

Beautiful: Love is beautiful.

Of course, part of me wants to be overwhelmed, and part of me loves the beauty. Perhaps personally, I love being overwhelmed by beauty; and generally, beauty, by its

very nature, is overwhelming. Thus in order to truly appreciate beauty, you have to be overwhelmed by it. The overwhelmed feeling is the ego being carried downstream; as you wave it goodbye, the overwhelmed feeling creeps up on you. But once the ego disappears, is carried over the distant waterfall, and out of sight, then the overwhelmed feeling disappears with it. You then simply glow in the oneness of love, the union with beauty.

But now, instead of through music, I am experiencing these feelings of Magnificence through love of family, beauty of children and grandchildren, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives. It is our family Seder around the Christmas tree, our First Supper with its warm glow of celestial light, the fire place of past and future spreading Joy.

Diving into Fear

Why do the martial arts terrify me so?

For maximum growth and self-knowledge, find your biggest fear, then dive into it.

If martial arts create such a fear, should I not learn more about them, study them, dive into them?

Tremendous fear is tremendous attraction in reverse.

Am I attracted to the martial arts? Am I attracted to their terror, violence, and destructive power? Probably. (Similar to my attraction to the stock market, only worse.)

What is the root of this fear?

Am I afraid of my own violent and destructive power?

Probably.

Is that fear projected onto the martial arts?

Probably.

And does this relate to emotional fears of my own anger and rage, violent anger and killing rage?

Probably.

This has been constantly smothered and repressed by the mothers of this world; I have been made calm, peaceful, pacified, and quite, and these have been seen as “higher” virtues. But the cauldron, the volcano bubbles beneath, and is “expressed” through the cold blanket of fear I throw over myself.

A self-created fear to deny and suppress my physical, mental, emotional, and even spiritual powers.

Motivations

First my struggle was for self-improvement.

My next struggle was to deepen what I had improved.

My present struggle may be against the decay of what I have and had once improved. I'll move from im-prove to prove: Like Jack Lalanne, I'll want to prove (to myself) I can still do it. The fight against self-decay, of body and mind, could, in itself, become my next form of self-motivation.

Certainly, this is a legitimate fear. I like fears; I need fears. Fears can create good old panic, which jolts my sleeping, sluggish, confused, and sapped mind. Fear and panic, working in harness, can, might, and hopefully, will, motivate me.

What would be some good fears to work on and develop?

Is it hubris to fight the inevitable decay of body and brain? Is it better to accept inevitable decay, to lie down, in peace, humility, and acceptance, and learn to love the juggernaut of destruction as it rolls over you?

Can one fight and accept? Can one do both?

It seems that a wise person can, and must, do both.

I can't stand the not knowing and confusion. My only alternative is to learn the computer cold!

Thursday, December 28, 2006

Looking for a New Energy Source

Where will my new energy source come from?

It seems it is no longer located in the room of my imagination. Now I am moving in a more outward direction; I might even say I'm looking for and into the public square of my imagination, the outer artistic chamber of creativity. This is where, what I would call the "business self" lies.

Of course, on the highest of levels, there is no division: Energy lies both within and without; beyond opposites is the unifying source of the One. But I'm dealing in the here-and-now, material, lower plane, earthly existence.

There has been, and is still going beyond my transition, a subtle shift in energy centers. The inner center feels as if it is slowly dying, disappearing in the "been there, done that" world. The outer "public square" center, the world of gone-public is stepping into prominence. It is expressed in helping and serving others.

Can looking outward ever be the center of artistic existence? Is my "artistic" development and even existence, dead on arrival, destroyed and totally killed by "been there, done that?"

Has this old, long self-sustaining world died, speckled with frantic artistic and business creations, pulsating with powerful fears of financial ruin, driven by ever-present fears of no money, died? I hate to admit, think, or look at it. . . but I believe it is teetering on the brink. Perhaps it has even fallen over the cliff and disappeared.

This leaves me with a feeling of emptiness.

Is it possible the direction of my thought is shifting? How so? Now, I would look outward with the businessman's question: What is needed? Then I would try,

work, to fulfill that need. This is the opposite of the artist's quest, which is, I believe, to look inward and ask "What do I need to fulfill my dreams?" In my own terms, I have already fulfilled my dreams. Thus, my next question is: Where do I go from here? It could be to ask: "Anyone around here have dreams to fulfill? Can I help?"

Indeed, this could be my next energy and energizing direction. If yes, and I am right, it nevertheless feels so strange. Well, not really. The past self had this mode hidden within it; it lay sleeping in the corner of my mind disguised as Potential. It was partially blocked by my need to fulfill the demands of my artistic self. Now that those demands have been fulfilled, the doorway to the serve others self has now been fully revealed; it is opening, and may, in totally mono-maniacal manner be seen as the "only" way to energize and wake myself up. To enter the world as a charging bull roaring, "Who needs help around here? Anyone want my horns? Need lifting? Anything I can do?"

Am I kidding myself with the above? Is this really true? Am I really coming to this from a position of weakness?

"Can you help me?"

"Sure, I've got nothing better to do."

Or am I in the process of finding some kind of "new" artistic center? I hope so. The "for others" mode feels unnatural and vaguely false. But again, I've "done it all," "got nothing better to do," and can't figure anything else out.

Why Practice?

Why practice guitar? Why sing, run, practice yoga, write, or even study? Why do anything?

Ultimately, it is to perform for others; performing for others is giving to others. This is the subtle purpose behind all I do.

Why do it?

First, it helps me fill up and thus forget time. Forgetting time places you in no-time, beyond time, or in eternity.

Second, it distracts me from the sad transience of life, the ultimate fact that all I love in this material world will, one day, disappear. Although it is true that after death I will enter a world filled with Eternity and Infinity, one that exists beyond sadness and loss, I am not in that world today. Plus, it does not answer the question "What to do with my spare time (which is all my time) here on earth?"

How do I touch eternity, grab a piece of the Truth while living down here on earth in the transient present? Answer: By practicing, preparing, and performing for others. This action places me in the Present. By living there, in the exact here-and-now, I paradoxically "forget" up-coming passage to eternity, even as I become part of it.

Eternity can be experienced by focusing on the present.

Thus the importance of daily involvement and hard focus on practice. Self-improvement through daily practice, and improvement of the world, which takes place automatically with your practice, is the motivating carrot dangling before you.

Practice is for self; performance is for others. Taken together, they improve both you and the world. And (in doing so), they cradle you in the constant arms of eternity.

Practice also creates self-knowledge which is another plus.

The creative mind, left idle, can destroy you; the evil inclination easily steps into a vacuum.

Fill your days with constant practice.

For optimal health, fix your eyes on a positive purpose.

Sleep with your purpose.

Keep tomorrow morning in mind. It gives you a positive reason to get up early.

Plans

I have to embrace something hard, a difficult task, a tough road, in order to occupy my empty and errant mind. Otherwise it will “eat me up.”

What of death? What of fears of old age, collapsing body, withering brains. More distractions.

I need to walk the straight, narrow, and disciplined path of betterment, improvement, the positive; I need difficult tasks, hardy challenges to keep my mind from wandering towards the cliff.

History and Headache

The Role of Gratitude in Freedom

I have a blinding headache this morning. It's mostly in my right eye, which is mucho blurred. I'm furious about the “fact” that I had to work last night. . . and this without pay. Leading my family in music and song is an honor, a respect, a sharing, a mitzvah, a beautiful event; it puts me at the top of the granddaddy heap. All positives. I did a good and noble thing. Yet I end up with a headache.

Gnostics say salvation comes through knowledge. I need some self-knowledge.

I gave music to my family; all my children and grandchildren play instruments; they all played together last night. It was a beautiful thing. Music is a binding force. My wife said they all play instruments because of me, that last night's event could not have happened without me, that I am responsible. On and on these good comments came.

How can I understand this numbing mental labyrinth? How can I get out of wriggle out of this idea where “working” with my family, using my leadership and artistic skills to help them grow and expand, in such a free and lovely manner, ends up giving me in a blinding headache?

Part of me is very uncomfortable being thanked, appreciated, and loved for “sharing” of my music and directing skills. Yet, another part of me loves and lives for

this kind of appreciation.

I want to make a mark on the world. What better and long-lasting way than to make it through my family?

My discovery harkens back to the awesome feeling of responsibility that leadership imposes upon me. Also, in some unknown way, I think it harkens back to Ma.

I see a long family chain. First link is Ma and Pa.

What did they give me?

I wouldn't have started the violin without their desire and encouragement. Ma said yes to violin lessons; Pa agreed. He paid, and often did the outside work; Ma pushed from within.

They loved music and the arts.

My parents were first in the chain. Before them came Grandy, a skilled jeweler and artisan. His Russian family worshiped Karl Marx and communism, but also admired artists. They did so with tremendous gusto. They were passionate communists. It mostly came out in politics when they fought each other around the dining room table. They word whipped my father with their fanatical and narrow-minded love of Stalin and the "communist paradise" he had created in the USSR. They had no problem with facts. No matter what my father said, they were always right, and that was that. They constantly attacked his liberal (in the old sense of the word), and humanitarian views for their "naive" open-mindedness.

Both in Russia and the USA, passion for art, intellect, and politics was part of my family. Two of my uncles became professional artists.

In any case, getting back to understanding my headache: it is a question of responsibility. I don't like taking full responsibility for my skills and talents; I hate the weight it places on my head, and the idea that only I am responsible for them. To stand so alone on top Responsibility Mountain makes me angry, and gives me a headache.

Well, here's an idea: Perhaps I am wrong. I am not totally responsible. Instead of egotistically and narcissistically taking this entire burden upon my me-me-me shoulders, I will give credit to my genealogical past. I'll give credit to Ma and Pa, Grandy, and the long backward extending chain of family.

That will lessen my feeling of personal responsibility. I won't feel so alone. Instead I say thank you to my past influences.

I stand in gratitude; I begin by thanking Ma and Pa; I see them in the flesh before me, supporting and teaching me in their own way. True, it was often annoying; but it was powerful nevertheless.

Yes, I need to remember, recognize, and see their role in my growth and development. Seeing it frees me from the narcissistic and egotistic weights, reminds me that I had help in developing my leadership and artistic skills.

So near-sightedness is the cause of my morning headache.

Tuesday, January 2, 2007

New Year's Resolution: Build up to it

It's a New Year. What's new? What New Year's resolution shall I make?

Perhaps I should retire.

The last time (actually the first time) I retired was before I got married. I retired early. . . with no money. But I retired to a life style based on doing what I loved. I've been living in that life style, in retirement mode, ever since.

So why would I retire again? Why is it time for a second retirement?

Well, there is a Second Coming, a Renaissance based on a revisit and rebirth of ancient Greek and Roman times; I've also gone through my transition. But these are all rather vapid attempts at moving directly into the present and new meaning of retirement.

So, in this new, post-transitional mode, what does retirement mean? It means to rethink, or rather, dive more deeply, into my priorities. It means to keep a few new

dreams going.

New dreams? My new dreams are rebirths, replays of old, miracle schedule dreams. Specifically, they border on new commitments, recommitments, New Year's resolutions.

What would they be? What will they be?

First, I would love to keep my physical commitments going. Namely, 2-hour-a-day, one day yoga, one day running. This routine and commitment makes my body sing; I feel absolutely so wonderful when I follow

That is the main and only New Year's resolution I can think of. Even guitar, singing, writing, and studies I can bounce along. How about business? Can I bounce that along too? Probably. It is mostly a question of mental attitude and the personal importance of my commitment.

So, if alternating days of yoga and running at two-hours-a-day is so important to my physical and mental well being, my next question is: How to do it? Here the main impediment is mainly my folk dance teaching work. It is physical work; plus I need to concentrate and focus my mental energies in order to do a good job. If I follow the beloved two-hour/day exercise program I just described, will I not be too tired to work well and with proper focus?

Too tired: Those are the words and feeling I fear.

Too tired: Where have I heard those words, and that fear, before? Why from Ma, of course.

Is "too tired" realistic? Can I build up to it?

Build up to it: That may be the approach and answer I have been looking for.

Next question: How can I build up to it?

First, with the strength and depth of this new New Year's resolution commitment, I could do my running and yoga early in the morning. This "early morning" idea would give me the afternoon for recovery, Since most of my teaching is at night, this scheduling of exercise would cover Monday, Tuesday, and even Friday's

one a month in Darien. And again, I could build up to it.

What about Saturday bookings, bar mitzvahs, weddings, etc.? Well, maybe I could do "the minimum" on those days, see them as my partial "days off," rest days. But perhaps I don't have schedule myself so tightly. We'll see how this develops. Mainly, I have to keep remembering, refocusing, on my commitment. Aw, rationalizations, rationalizations. First, I must develop my habit! In order to do this I must start off with a disciplined and tight schedule, and this until, like daily writing, it becomes an ineradicable habit.

Perhaps I should start my new exercise build up habit today, and, like alcoholics anonymous, take one day at a time.

Wednesday, January 3, 2007

Introducing the Writer Stage of my Life

Very troublesome: A plan what to do for the next ten years. What to do?

Well, maybe slowly, relentlessly, "mindlessly," and unconsciously, I'm in the process of doing it.

One big thing that the "Been there, done that," and "I've done it all" attitude does not include is sales of my books. In this area, I have, (luckily?) totally failed. Yes! A total failure! I love it! Finally, I have found something I love that I have failed in. What an inspiration! In the area of book sales and promotion there is definitely something to do.

It is new; it is different; it has not been done before; it is giving me a headache. That's a good start. (Am I trying to pump myself up, inspire myself artificially? Probably. Nevertheless, I am writing faster as I talk about this. I could indeed be onto something!)

I talked to David yesterday about my upcoming birthday. He said, "I love birthdays. I think a good idea would be to use your birthday to program the future, to program the next ten years."

Wow, now there's a forward looking and positive approach to birthdays!

The idea stunned me. Looking into the future, I couldn't see a thing. Blank. I quickly jumped into the thought of running across America. But I knew I grabbed it merely to fill up the blank space in my mind.

But as the evening progressed, just before I went to sleep an idea popped: Get my books out there! Find a major publisher; continue writing Dr. Zany. . . and other books of its ilk.

I would call this not the writing stage of my life – after all, I've been writing, gerunding at it, for years – but rather the Writer Stage of my life. Writing is the process; writer is the self-definition. Although I always say, and have no trouble saying, I am writing, I never say, I am a writer.

How about becoming a professional writer? What would that mean? Well, it would mean making a commitment to a process, to a lifestyle and process of selling my books, bringing them, with pride and power, to major publishers, getting them into the hands of major agents. . . and more. (I don't know what the "more" is, but still, I am sure there is a more.)

It might (and would) mean a major commitment to writing daily. Well, you say, I do that already. But now I do it only for myself, for self-exploration and fun. As a professional, I would still be doing so but I would add the important and crucial mental component, writing for a market. What does this mean? It means writing for those imaginary people "out there"; it means writing with future sales in mind.

Would this change my writing style? Would it take the joy out of writing? I don't know. But certainly, it would be different.

And the "out there" I write for would be similar to the "in there" people I imagine. In other words, my fan club, those folk out there who think and laugh the way I do, those who need and want what I want. In other words, the mirrors of me. So, following this pattern, I would really still be writing for myself, only my definition of self would have expanded. Writing for self and other is thus really the same thing.

Just like the tour business, the concert and booking business, I am looking for followers, those who want and need my skills and services. Only now it would shift to finding readers whose brains twist in the same off-the-wall patterns as mine.

So I am really expanding my sales program to include my books. That would be (part of) the next ten year plan. With it, however, I have to add a commitment to daily writing. Would I be writing children's books? Many adult books? Many children's books with adults in mind? Other? All? We'll see where this leads.

Work, Money, and Survival

Miracle Schedule and the All-Is-One Experience

Maybe my discipline is my work. This is a new definition of work. Fulfillment of my miracle schedule becomes my work; fulfillment of miracle schedule is my work!

Now that is radical!

What about the idea that "outside" work, money and working for money, the money idea, money in general, defines work.

Does money really define work? Maybe.

Of course, working my miracle schedule disciplines will affect my going-public money-making work, eventually, many of them will go public and make money. But really, on the level I'm talking, the fact they will or might someday make money is besides the point.

I'm in the process of redefining work beyond money. Indeed, such a concept is radical! Un-American, even.

What is the relationship between work, money, and survival? The obvious answer is that work and money equal purchase of the basic material needs of life, house, home, food, clothing, etc. But what about the mental and especially the spiritual needs of life? Spirit sustains life, so spirit must be fed. Spirit resides in my miracle schedule. Thus the discipline of following my miracle schedule, nay, diving into it with a passion, unites work, money, and survival; it fuses outer and inner, creating the All-

Is-One experience.

Follow and fulfill the daily discipline of my miracle schedule: This means seeing it not as important as (that is, equal to) my work, but rather as my work!

It is my only work. My purpose and survival on earth.

New Year's New Direction

I wonder if my right eye "headache blindness" is caused by partial resistance and confusion to a tremendous new passion and emotion trying to break through.

(It really can't be new; it must be old, difficult, held back, and/or partly repressed.)

Could the release of this emotion, this old self-destroying and wild passion, this be part of my "New" Year, too? Its signal is the blinding headache; it also relates to Zane, the violin, and my teenage music memories.

Perhaps it relates to the tremendous hurt, sadness, and incipient but totally hidden anger at in the slap-in-the-face, daily, and forever repression of my wild nature. (I remember my first headache sitting in the back of our truck on the ride into Hamden. Awful.)

Is the blind of blinding headache, in reality, a blinding rage at this repression? Certainly now I am old enough and mature enough to let the lion out of the cage. The wild mountain lion, the cat from Catskill. (Could this be the return of Catskill Moses? One of my favorite characters.)

Could Catskill Moses meet Dr. Zany? Are they not the same person? If yes, so what? What a strange meeting that would be. Image meets mirror image. Taking a walk along a mountain path and meeting yourself in the woods.

Catskill tells Zany to let out his wild self. Let his lion roll down the mountain. Thus Catskill would, in a sense, become Zany's new "teacher."

Catskill is the shaman; Zany as the shaman in training. Wild passion within

order, freedom flourishing within discipline, is the lesson.

Sunday, January 7, 2007

Goal of Life

Is happiness the goal of life? Or is it creativity?

Does creativity breed happiness? Yes, for a few brief moments. But the experience and memory of those moments can motivate you for a lifetime.

What about depression?

Depression is an important fuel of creativity. It fosters self-understanding, and knowledge about the complexity of life. Although depression is not fun, it can be fructifying and very juicy.

So I don't want to lose or give up my depressions. In fact, I'm not creating or studying much at the moment. Part of me wishes I was down so I could exhilarate myself in the upward spring again. Yes, I miss my depressions; they point out new directions. I wish I had one now.

But this idea of depressing myself in order to inspire myself to work and create simply will not work anymore. It just isn't real. I don't feel it. Maybe I'll have to face the "sad" fact that I'm no longer depressed, that I've conquered it with the discipline of sticking to my "new" form of old miracle schedule.

Maybe that's what's new. I'll now have to walk the path of the "new" direction without depressing myself as a motivating factor. I'll have to start fresh without depression. How "sad." Can I be fruitful and multiply without my downs? Well, there really is no other choice.

Last night's Jennifer Koh's Tchaikovsky playing, bringing back fleeting memories of my violin playing inferiority complex and lack of confidence, no longer touch me. Instead I'm now rolling and flying with daily miracle schedule accomplishments.

Truth his, I feel great! Learn to live with it.

I am a Natural Salesman

I saw it in the parking lot in Newark last night. The appearance of people before my face (in this case, parking lot attendants) totally excites me.

But the adult, business-man, artist-survival, post-marriage idea that I always have to sell them something, dulls and limits this natural excitement. I have been using this false, forced, and frightened sales idea to dampen my natural enthusiasm.

Indeed, I am a natural salesman. It just oozes out of my being. No more shall I lid it with "sales."

Healing Guitar

or Dr. Zany Reaches for the Moon

How about playing guitar for the pure and only purpose of healing myself. Healing my divisions, healing my body and its physical aches and pains, healing my mind with its divisions, healing my spirit by uniting it with and to the Great Above.

As I heal myself, I heal others as well.

This is guitar playing as medicine, music as cure.

Something for Zany and myself to think about and explore. It is, indeed, a new purpose and direction.

This creates a totally different purpose to guitar practice and playing. It is no longer to improve or get better; it is to get cured. It is the "heal thyself" approach.

Well, maybe it gives a new meaning to "get better," a sick person getting better and healing oneself. Taking a step on the road to personal health, rather than improvement (getting better) so others, the audience, will judge you as improved, worthy, and "better."

It creates a slow, measured, and balanced approach to guitar practice, based on the assumption that, due to separation and distance from our source, there is ever-present pain in the world. Thus, there is a constant desire and need for curing, healing, making whole, or "whole-ing".

And it is true. The sparks are flitting around, lost and separated from their source. Tikkun olam. Gather the sparks in a fire. That is the ever-healing guitar practice cure.

Tuesday, January 9, 2007

Dare to Hope?

I never want to be rejected again, never, never, never, never! But no question, my services, products, and self will be rejected. In spite of this, will I feel rejected? The answer to this is yes, too.

Why am I blabbering on about rejection?

Well, last night's folk dancing was fabulous. Thanks to Carol, many new Leonians showed up. We had the largest crowd of new people in years. What a great night!

After about a half an hour of teaching, for no apparent reason, I suddenly developed a pain in my left ankle. I hurt so much I could hardly walk, much less dance. I mentally watched to pain and continued teaching. Soon it subsided.

I tried paying as little attention as possible to the evening's success as I drove home that night. Then, when I stepped out of the car, the left ankle pain suddenly hit again. I limped into the house.

It pursued me the rest of the evening. This morning it still hurt, but slightly less.

In usual Sarnoian analysis fashion, I ask: Why am I having this new pain? It is so suspect. Why am I having it now?

I suspect it is a return of my old "folk dance ankle." The pain reflects my emotional teaching conflicts. I am constantly torn between my love of music, folk dancing, and the dancers themselves, and my anger and fear of their rejection in the form of either not showing up at all, or potential displeasure with my teaching.

This conflict never ends.

It will only end if I stop teaching altogether.

I love this field; it is so inspiring when when a large enthusiastic crowd shows up! Truly, folk dancing in sync with such a group led by me is a thrill of a life time. But in order to face and feel that passion, I must put myself on the line; and in doing so, I set myself up for possible rejection. It is the nature of the game. Constantly vulnerable is my state. "Folk dance ankles" are evidently "easier" to deal with than the incredible pain of emotional blowouts.

Why is my mind creating this strange pain? Really it is asking: Do I dare believe in folk dance success again? Do I dare believe that I could actually create a new and large folk dance class (re-create, really, since it once existed in the folk dance growth period of the 80's, even dribbling into the 90's.)

I loved last nights dance class. Should I just accept and be happy with love? Or should I expand it into hope?

Dare to be motivated? Dare to push for larger dance classes? Suddenly and strangely, my Darien, CT dance class is growing.

Am I at the cusp of a new trend?

No question, in the movement (if it is a movement), I must target the next generation.

Fear of Re-Dreaming

Folk dance ankle signifies not so much that I am afraid to dream, but rather that I am afraid to re-dream. After all, I've dreamed these dreams before (specifically, the one of folk dance expansion). And I've given it up.

Now its possibility rises again.

How about all the other dreams I've given up? What about publishing? What about growing my books and their sales? What about the Mad Shoe, wild, impossible dream of becoming world famous? So "unrealistic" I hate to think about it; I laugh at its arrogance, but love it just the same. Universal love, what a wonderful dream! Everyone loving me. How can I resist? But so crazy, infantile, and unrealistic. How

can I be such a madman? Easily.

My dream is one of a total baby. But, deep in my soul, am I not that?

If dreams are not (big enough to be totally) unrealistic and impossible, they really don't interest me.

My Dream

My dream is to be world famous and loved by everybody! Period. This dream fits all my qualifications: It is totally unrealistic, impossible, and the dream of a complete baby.

Do I really want this?

If I were world famous, everyone would write, call, and ask things from me; I would be subject to an avalanche of bother. It would be "unrealistic" to believe otherwise.

If everyone loved me, how could I stand up against them? How would I energize myself through their negativity? I need opposition to grow. Although opposition is annoying, it is a powerful engine for growth.

Fame and love may be interesting by-products of my life; but they have little or nothing to do with my goals.

I want to ride on the blast and power of the mad shoe vision! That celestial experience is at the core of my being, and something I want. The rest is universal poppycock.

So ends a New Leaf.