

Deepening Through History

April 3, 2004

The past twenty or so years of travel and the tour business have been mostly focused on how to run a tour, the business of tourism, learning languages so I could better survive and run a tour, learning geography, places names, etc.

But strangely, part of me always wants to “forget” my tour, forget my experience, even forget where I went and what I did. Part of this was so I could focus on the next tour, on the future. I didn’t want to get too involved in what I was doing; rather I was more focused on where I was going. I looked straight into the future as I tried to avoid and even deny the present and certainly the past.

This was, no doubt, a survival technique.

Well, I survived. I even thrived and succeeded.

Now I stand at the point of “Now what?”

Since I love what I have been doing, and the geographical and historical areas I am in, namely, the Balkans, Eastern Europe, part of Western Europe, the Middle East, the only answer I come with is to somehow deepen my understanding and vision of those areas.

Perhaps it is now time to study, learn about, and focus on the history of the areas I love and over which I have traveled. I’ve been there. (“Been there, done that.”) Now I want to see and understand where I’ve been.

I am ready for the study of history, and contemplation of my travels through history.

This may even reawaken my interest in travel on a new, different, and historical level.

Bills come in reminding me I still have to figure out how to make money. Survival comes first.

Nevertheless, history is a beautiful, relaxing, perspective creating, contemplative “sideline.”

Is the ability to self-motivate, to put in effort, a skill?

Why am I asking myself these questions? Because I would (secretly) like it to be a worthy skill, a creative act. Brute work of any kind, especially brute “sales work,” says this former communist, is for peasants, not for artists and members of the intellectual aristocracy like me. Brute work is demeaning. Let the proletariat do it. I will merely study it, learn about “work theory,” and perhaps criticize the bosses.

How could I have grown up with such hogwash shit? But I did.

Folk Dance Franchise

I need a big idea. I need it to inspire me, drive me on, raise me up. Whether it succeeds or not is even besides the point.

I had a big tour idea once: It’s mission is accomplished.

I had a big writing idea: That too has largely been accomplished.

I had a big Alhambra idea (although I thought it was a small one, and would take a short time. Instead it took twenty years.) But it too, has finally been accomplished. Mission completed.

I need a new big idea.

How about folk dancing? I once thought about a creating folk dance franchise.

Is it time to think about folk dancing? Is it time to create, sponsor, and promote a folk dance franchise?

What is a folk dance franchise? How does (would) it work?

Naturally, it would promote, sponsor, and sell all the products of JGI: Tours, weekends, boutique, other. That is a given. All these products are “easy;” nothing “new” there.

What is a franchise?

Is it merely “brute” work?

What is creative about a franchise? If it is not, if it has, until now, been “mere brute work,” can I then make my construction of it creative? In essence and soul I am an artist. Can I make a franchise a living work of art, an artistic creation floating down the river of business?

Would I ever do such a thing? Is this a pipe dream? Am I using it to “turn myself on?”

I am certainly at the end of a road, at the end of my road. I need something new. But is this it? Or am I simply passing the time, airing my mind, waving it, nay blowing it in the wind?

Is this merely JGI in a new form? Well, yes, partly. But since I’ve completed all the other steps, maybe I am ready for this one.

Well, I have the idea. I might as well ride high with it for as long as it rides. The test of a good idea is to forget it. This happens “naturally” if it is the wrong idea. But if it is the right one, every time I “forget” it, it keeps coming back to haunt me.

A haunting idea is the right idea. Only time will tell if the Folk Dance Franchise idea is a haunting one.

Nevertheless, how would it be done?

Performing Poorly and Stiffly

Dare I step in front of an audience playing so stiff and poorly? But what other choice is there? Sales performance begins at the beginning. Embarrassment, stiffness, playing poorly is no excuse. It all must be made manifest in the immediacy of the performing moment. The ability to give in to the moment, go with the moment, requires courage. Also the idea that I’ve done everything else. One thing I have never tried or given into is a stiff, poor, embarrassed performance. Time to go with it, give in to the sales performance moment. There is nothing else left to try.

Besides playing stiffly, poorly, and in embarrassed manner, may well inspire

others to try. Other will say, "My God, if he dares to get up in front of others and play so poorly, why even I can play better than that. Thus my poor, stiff performance inspires them in ways no excellence ever can.

I can even say that by performing poorly and stiffly. . . but with confidence, I am doing a public service.

My First Sales Performance

I just gave my first Sales Performance in the kitchen. I followed my natural instincts. Here's how it went:

First I played St. Louie Tickle. Very slowly in warm up mode. Verdict on my playing: Passable but slow.

Second came Alhambra. Mostly the bass came out. Treble stiff and almost non-existent. Verdict: passable but with demonstrably weak, "unwarmed up" tremolo.

Then I felt so tired, I gave up playing, put down my guitar, lay down in bed and went to sleep.

Idea: Suppose I gave a sales performance, and, after playing St. Louie Tickle and Alhambra, instead of putting down my guitar, laying down in bed, and going to sleep, I told the audience I felt tired, put down my guitar, and went to sleep right on stage! Wouldn't that be a reality sales performance? Wouldn't that be a manifestation of the real me, living the real me life, in the reality of the moment?

Well, why not give it a try? What do I have to lose but my dignity and business?

Would anybody, namely, my audience, be interested in such a real me? If I demonstrated such a real me, would it be good for business? Would it be a sales performance or a sales close out?

Does it matter?

How long would I sleep, anyway? Maybe just a few moments. Besides, the reality drama of lying down on stage might be quite memorable. It might even increase sales! It might, of course, diminish them or have no effect whatsoever.

Saturday, April 10, 2004

I desire a worthy goal.

But I resist every one that comes up.

During the past few weeks countless goals have come up only to see them crumble before the onslaught of time and consideration.

Thus do I stand and the Nowhere point.

Yesterday I finally gave up in frustration. "Try something radical," I thought. "Do "nothing" for a year – or at least six- months. "Dedicate" myself to doing nothing. This means no trying, no pushing, sliding with the show. Try it. See what happens; see where it leads.

Then, a few hours later, I thought: "Become a writer. . . and sell my books. That would be a real challenge. And I've never done it before. Such marketing would become a full-time 'hobby.'"

And I asked "Could marketing ever become an adventure?"

This morning I began by reading Byzantine seventh-century history, then moved into Mary Eddy Baker's Science and Health.

Indeed, I am so lost. I need somebody, someone, to help me find the way. Or maybe there is no way. Maybe that's the place I am now coming to in my life: I am there. The Lord is within me. Thus, I am already the way. (Of course, today I do not see this.) And through Him, I am the Way.

Well, this is all very nice talk. Whether it will affect me during the next few hours, I do not know.

My "place" during this period is probably to dribble, stumble, tread water, and wait until something comes along.

I am in a deep pit. It is called Why Bother Bottom.

Although I have been in this pit before, so what? Although the name of the pit is the same, each time I enter it feels so different that previous experience is no guide at all. I must handle each Why Bother bottom as an individual and unique event.

It's nice to help others. But I can't do it unless I help myself first.

I am experiencing a sixth-century Byzantine breakdown of my Empire. I just went through my faux-Justinian period of false organization. It didn't work. My Empire collapsed anyway. This is the end of the old Diocletian and Constantine administrative period. The Slavs and Avars are attacking to my West; the Persians are attacking from my East. My Empire is threatened and on the verge of collapse. Emperor Heraclius has just arrived at my imperial scene. "A new order is here, a new way of doing things," he says. "Time to reorganize the JGI Empire into Byzantine 'themes.'"

Indeed, I have a (mini) empire. I run the JGI empire. That's why focusing on one particular aspect, one particular "province," does not work. The whole empire must be addressed; must "move." The whole empire must be redirected on a new path. The whole empire is the direction.

Marketing is only one aspect. How to administer the entire empire is the question.

Would this be a practical application of my study of history? Is this a case of putting my Byzantine knowledge to use?

Who are the enemies of my Empire?

Why Bother? is certainly one.

Every miracle schedule province is a (Byzantine) "theme."

Although individual part, provinces may and do move on their own, the whole Empire moves as one.

The marketing must be of the whole empire, the whole organization. How would this be done?

Use the Byzantine Empire as a model.

Disparate parts weld into one.

Playing guitar is an expression, extension, and expansion of the Byzantine JGI

empire. So are all the other "themes."

Is proper administration of my empire the next challenge?

Maybe sales is not brute work. It is only when I see it in the narrow sense of selling one particular product, one particular aspect of the miracle schedule, on particular member of the JGI empire, that it becomes so oppressive. In other words, it is not sales itself that bother me. Rather it is the narrowness of my vision that such a concept of sales (marketing) forces upon me.

If I see sales as an expression, extension, and expansion of the whole JGI Miracle Schedule Empire, and an important part of its administration, then it might take on an entirely different meaning.

Administration is a new word in my New Leaf vocabulary. I am also introducing history and the idea of politics as my entertainment.

I am at the edge of bringing administration, history, and politics together in a new and personal JGI Empire web. A coalition, a coalescing.

The search for direction continues.

A president "sells" his administration to the public by explaining it. Thus he promotes his agenda.

Sell my JGI administration to the public by explaining its purpose, goal, and even its meaning.

In a sense then, I would be selling, presenting, displaying the whole person rather than only its parts.

Would this change my feeling about sales? It certainly is a brand new view.

I am pecking away at Direction Mountain.

What enemies threaten me?

Discouragement is my main enemy. Why Bother? is his chief subordinate.

The fields of my miracle schedule are threatened but remain untouched by the enemy. This must be first line protected by organizing it into themes. Actually, it is already organized into themes.

As I read and meditate upon history, I think that maybe everything I do is, ultimately, meaningless. The only meaning is found in the spark created while doing it, a spark of divinity putting me momentarily in touch with something meaningful, worthwhile, and everlasting.

Panic, Fear, Pain, and Self-Confidence:

Self-Cure through Focused Warm-up and Self-Confidence

My left hand hurts in a new way. Maybe I injured it barring too early (insufficient warm-up) in the "St. Louie Tickle."

Is it hubris and false pride to believe I will fix this injury quite quickly since I know how to sent hot, healing blood into my left hand through my guitar warm-ups?

Is it hubris to believe I will therefore not suddenly panic over it? Or is it "better" to be afraid, even border myself on panic? Do panic and fear create their own energy-creating healing device? Can it be, is it, a complement to self-confidence? On a higher energy level, do they, can they, work together?

Are panic and self-confidence related?

Should the sudden aches and pains that mysteriously rise (and disappear) in my body create panic or more self-confidence.

Or do they together to create a new, dynamic entity vital to both?

The left hand pain "suddenly" went away. I worked it out with my guitar warm-ups. Will this sudden disappearance last? Maybe. Probably.

It means I can work out my pains. This is, no doubt, true in other areas of my body. I hesitate to have such confidence. But I do.

I wonder why I hesitate? Is hesitation part of self-confidence creation, of confidence building? Could be.

Leyenda: Just a Few Notes!

Behind the screen of raining Leyenda arpeggios are "just a few notes:" Three

gongs! Three bongs! E, B, B bars, short-lived “rest” periods of B bars coupled with C bars, B and B bars again.

In essence, Leyenda is only two notes: E and B.

The trees have disappeared. I see the forest.

How do I tie this Leyenda vision to the rest of my life?

A History Study (MS) Direction

My Next “Project

The study of history: Perhaps the next two or three years will be spent filling in the historical structures behind my tours. Read all the books on the history, geography, and background of all the countries I have toured. First the experience, then a slow and deep synopsis and synthesis, a deepening of the tour/historical experience.

Reincarnation of the Mad Shoe!

Mad! Maybe I’m just mad!

Mad: That’s an emotion I haven’t felt for a long time.

Ready to break loose! What’s holding me back?

Maybe I’ve solved my problem.

Maybe I’ve (finally) found my new direction, my search is over, and it’s time to move on.

Maybe this anger I feel is the formation of a new, forward movement, energy surge! Onwards! Go for it! Dive right in!

Maybe I don’t need my sickness, cold, shoulder aches, neck pains, and other ailments anymore. Maybe they have all “served their purpose” and it is time to move on.

On to where?

In the Mad World ahead!

This is a reincarnation (on the next and new level) of the running wild on the

lawn, Mad Shoe!

How to connect singing to my audience:

When singing, look straight into their eyes, but do not focus on them. Rather as you “look” directly at them, see the notes (tones) you are singing

Focus on the audience with and through the notes you are singing.

In this process, you will connect them to you.

Singing, in its incredible simplicity and physical power, allows me to express emotions of majesty and magnificence. I wonder if that is one reason I have been “avoiding” it so long.

I’m afraid that up to now in my life, I’ve only touched the surface. As I break down under the magnificence of my song, I realize the descent into deepening has just begun.

Guitar and Song as “Sidelines”

This means that guitar and song are no longer my “career.” They are a “sideline.” I wonder what this new feeling means.

Paradoxically, it may relax me and allow me to play and sing ever better!

The above “sideline” idea may become true of writing as well. But, of course, writing was never my profession.

But writing was a sideline that I always wanted to turn into a profession. . . on my own terms. If I give up and lose this desire, won’t it, paradoxically, relax my attitude towards writing, too? Could be.

Writing as not to be and never to be a profession. Hmm, the give up and loss of a dream. But perhaps freeing as well.

Changing attitudes towards the pyramid.

The Hero

I want to do something heroic with my life.

What is heroic? Working, sacrificing for a higher cause.

I cannot see the stock market as heroic or a higher cause. Fun when up, frightening when down, the money I make (and lose) there is always a means to an end.

What is heroic to me?

Struggling to stay alive as an artist is heroic. Building JGI is heroic. Promoting and marketing my artistic creations, guitar, singing, folk dancing, writing, and study through world travel by building JGI is heroic.

Getting my soul out there to serve the public, standing up for my art and the arts is my form of heroism. Sure it's a business; but it's also heroic.

In fact, being in business, fighting to stay in business especially your own business, is heroic.

Most people discourage heroism. It's stupid, unsophisticated, and often frightening, they say. Why take a chance? Make it easy on yourself; take the easy way out. Why stand above the crowd? You'll only get shot down. Plus your attempts to stand out may fail. You'll feel bad.

Well, I feel great when I'm a hero, especially my own hero. I can pound my chest with pride: I dared! I'm in the struggle; grabbed the horns, bucked the trend, pounded on the gate.

Fighting for worth makes me worthy.

Was I on the right path? Did I fight the good fight?

Or did I waste my life dwelling among lesser things, afraid to make the effort, turning aside my courage to grab the golden ring?

Not everybody dares or wants to be a hero.

But I do.

Loving the Dream World of History

. . . Especially Ancient History

As I read about Marcus Porcius Cato, the second century B.C. orator and first great writer of Latin prose, I broke down crying. Crying for love, magnificence, and relief. Once again I touched the spiritual awakening and realization, the Godly oneness and magnificence of Beethoven's symphonic breakdown majestic Love: I love the dream world of history, especially ancient history.

Monday, April 19, 2004

GIGANTIC SPRING 2004 BREAKTHROUGH THOUGHTS!

The Artistic Oneness and Unity of Sales

Money is people spelt differently.

I need money; I am dependent upon getting it. But I need people even more; and I am totally dependent upon them.

Knowing the pain – and beauty – of this spiritual truth is my key to the wholeness of sales.

The Oneness of Dependency

In order to live, I need food and water. I could live alone on a desert island, but my ability to find and develop supplies of food and water would have been learned once from living with people (in my former, pre-desert life). Therefore, even this basic knowledge for survival comes from (a memory of) my experiences with people.

What I am saying is: Even at the most primitive, fundamental, alone-on-a-desert-island level, I am dependent upon people.

I want to understand this so I can accept, handle, face, admire, even love this dependency. I want to move experience and knowledge of this fundamental truth beyond my personal humiliation at this dependency.

Such humiliation, over such a basic truth, must come from some kind of childhood trauma, perhaps the trauma of mother non-recognition over infant

dependencies.

I would cry out my need. . . and receive no answer, no feedback, no response. I learned these needs were “non-recognizable,” meaning they were evidently “not good.” They were unworthy and “worthless.” So I slowly pulled back into defensive feeling of humiliation.

Better to feel humiliated than face that traumatic pain of non-recognition and worthlessness.

Thus humiliation can be seen as a step up: better humiliated than worthless.

These are feelings from the old world. I am recognizing them. By becoming aware of them, I hope to free myself from their domination.

Then I can sell, market, promote my products and myself with a unity of spirit, the oneness of dependency.

Nevertheless, the aches, pains, joys, and sufferings in my body/ mind are my own. Can they be alleviated by others? What about “sharing” them?

Yes, they can be diminished or increased through others. Since this is true, then even personal feelings are (somewhat or totally?) dependent upon others, upon people.

Pain and pleasure, aches and pains, joy and suffering and (somewhat) dependent upon other people. Hmmmm. This requires a rethinking of the origin and meaning of these entire concepts.

Let's begin:

Can thinking of others relieve physical and mental pain?

Yes.

Look how I “rise above my pain” when I teach a folk dance class or give a concert.

These thoughts heal by unifying and focusing the mind.

Thus thinking of my audience and customers can have a powerful healing and salubrious effect. And probably, the more I do it, the better I will feel!

In this sense, sales, marketing, promoting, and the arts all mix together as one. (Even my miracle schedule may be included in this. We'll see. . .)

Tuesday, April 20, 2004

The Next Guitar Stage

The next stage (may be) getting emotion into my playing.

Emotion into my Alhambra, emotion into my Leyenda, emotion in my St. Louise Tickle, emotion into all my pieces.

This is not so much fuck the technique as going beyond technique. This means that technically, I've mastered it—or at least gone as far as I need to go.

I've mastered Alhambra and Leyenda (and the other pieces) technically—or at least gone as far as I need to go.

So far emotion means a mixture of fear and awe. Not bad as a start.

I have to find "adequate" ways to scare myself. I have to find the energy of fear.

I have to return to the energy of fear and awe. Sure, in terms of activities, I'll stick to my miracle schedule. But, in this sense, it really doesn't matter what I do; it matter more how I do it.

At this point, I need to put myself at the edge, almost over the emotional cliff, hovering over the abyss of fear and awe.

What chances can I take?

The first could be: playing guitar with emotion.

Where would that lead me? What does it mean?

Hovering Wrist

For a clear (Alhambra and other) bass line, you need the hovering (right) wrist.

The above (hovering wrist) is a whole different level of relaxation. Just what I need for the Renaissance.

Tuesday, April 27, 2004

Ploughing Full Speed Ahead Growing JGI

I'm giving up the stock market. I have a huge debt. Is there any place for hope? If I don't have the market, and my tours don't work out, or at least, if my hopes for making any money in tours are at a low, then where can I find hope?

How can I, "alone," pay off this huge debt?

Of course, truth is, I have always been "alone." Only I "hoped" I would get help, first from my tours, then the market, then both.

If I give up the market (and with it my hopes), and if tours do not pan out, it will take me years to pay this thing off. Years! Maybe until the rest of my life.

And I only have me to rely on.

Strangely, part of me feels relieved to be getting out of the market. But this morning, part of me also feels a slight panic about the deep hole I am in.

Well, even as I stand now at the bottom of the pit, part of me tries to find something positive in this mess. There must be some pluses to such a minus situation. Would I call this a basic and fundamental optimism in my personality? Maybe. Plus, I can't stand living without hope. Does that make my "hopes" realistic? Can I really put total "faith" and hope in myself? Of course, I have no other choice.

Well, moving beyond this philosophical rambling, what exactly could be positive?

1. I'll be fully concentrating on making money in my business, on promoting every and all products of JGI. I'll not spend a moment of mental energy hoping that the

market will go up and subtly, in Mommy and Daddy fashion, save me from bankruptcy and debt. Yes, I said it: bankruptcy. At the moment, I'm not choosing that option. (But I did say the word.) Instead, I'm choosing to keep my credit (and good name) and pay everything off. Slowly. How slowly? Maybe years slowly. But time is not the question here; hope is.

2. By fully concentrating on my business, on building up JGI in all its aspects, I could, eventually, actually make money! And in the process, I would be bringing public all the products and services I have worked so hard over the years to perfect. Even folk dancing and folk dance classes might make money. If I put the right kind of time and effort into them. And from this folk dance base, again I could promote, once again, my weekends, tours, and even more.

Plus there is the other aspect of my business: bookings. These could also be promoted in class and beyond.

3. During the past few months I have been looking for a new challenge. Well, I have found it! But my bottom line challenge has been to face my greatest nemesis: my resistance to sales and marketing. Well, now I have no choice but to face it. Plus, part of me wants to face it. Or to put it another way, I am very frustrated: after having worked all these years to finally believe in myself as an artist, now I want to get the word out. My excellent books sit in my basement, my excellent tours have small to no attendance, my dance classes are small, my concert bookings are rare (klezmer bookings are not bad, but that is because of Michele's efforts). Thus all my talents remain out of public reach, and "in the closet." This has always been a major, maybe the major frustration for me. But the rejection and annoyance of sales, of pushing and marketing all my service and products, has always kept from doing the necessary sales work. I have always had that deep communistic resistance to, ugh, marketing my products. Plus, I also needed time to develop them. But now, all that is over. The products and services are fully developed. I have, artistically, done everything I wanted to do in life. The development phase is at an end. I am ready for something new.

Well, I now have it!

Part of me feels a touch of panic. But part of me may, nay will be, energized. On the one hand, I have no choice but to do this. On the other hand, part of me will eventually be glad I have finally been forced, or am ready, to face my biggest monster: the sales and marketing nemesis.

Is this why God wanted me to lose my money and go into debt? Was this His miserable, painful way of teaching me? Of course, without pain, I probably wouldn't listen. And I haven't listened for at least twenty-five years.

But I am listening now. I am ready.

And ironically, I am choosing to listen. Truth is, I could still decide to stay in the market. I could also decide that somehow, magically, my tours and JGI business could and will succeed without supreme sales efforts from me. I could decide to remain in the floaty world of magic and supernatural hope.

But I have decided not to. Why now? Evidently, I am in a new place: I am ready.

Cheerful Versus Happy

There is a difference between cheerful and happy. It is good to be cheerful before the onslaught of life's miseries. Happiness is another matter.

This is a great line in the Wall Street Journal by Joseph Epstein (who is he?).
"The defense of tradition, decency, and liberty is the conservative's job, and without the dear barbarians (at the gate) he would be looking for work."

Saturday, May 1, 2004

I have a concert tomorrow at the Teaneck Library. I see that children will be present as well as adults. Therefore, it would be good for me to resurrect my some of my children's repertoire. I haven't played it for years.

I absolutely hate and resist “going back to it.” Oh no, not a return to the grave to drag in and bring back the old. The old is totally and utterly dead.

True. But I could bring back to old as new! As the new.

In other words, return to Animals in the Zoo, Vowels Song, etc, but do them differently! Add, subtract, or embellish them in some new and “up to date” way.

That would work. And be part of the Renaissance.

I don’t want to return to the past.

I can’t return to the past.

But I can “return to the future.” I can approach and play the old repertoire in the “new me” mode.

Friday, May 7, 2004

Politics, Mastery, Guitar, and Power

Politics is about power.

Does being in touch with God increase one’s power? Does it help one to recognize the limits of one’s power?

Doesn’t recognizing the limits of your power increase it?

Isn’t desire to master the guitar, or anything else, an attempt to increase one’s power?

Yes.

Does staying in touch with God help in this pursuit?

It can’t hurt.

Fighting the Four D’s

Certainly taking a fresh look at each moment, is the only way to fight the four D’s: depression, discouragement, disillusionment, and death.

It is the New Leaf philosophy. Now learn to live it!

It is a daily practice.

Practice it daily.

Start with guitar. Use my guitar practice as a model. Then add everything else.

Talking to Others as Entertainment

Walking down the street and talking to strangers, or just about anyone, is a great source of touring entertainment.

In general, talking to people is social entertainment.

As I travel, I walk down the street, stop strangers, store keepers, whoever and wherever; and ask them whatever questions come to mind. I want to start them talking and see what happens. This adventure, speaking to others, to just about anyone, is a great source of travel entertainment and stimulation.

Wednesday, May 12, 2004

A real down, an inner collapse after I finished sending out the tour bills, made my "final" calls, and got no Zagreb air flight response from Tomi. The latter raises the usual pain in the as concerns about the competence of working with Tomi, a residue of our 2002 Slovenia/Croatia tour, of which I am wary and won't let happen again. I'll go straight to Paul at the first signs of trouble. But moving beyond that annoyance, I'd rather now look straight into the tremendous inner hit, the emotional down, I experienced yesterday. It felt, and feels, like a down of completion. I have finished ninety per cent of my tour work. Most calls are made, bills have been sent out, there's not much left to do. Oh sure, I can and will do a few mop up calls. But nevertheless, the two month sales project I envisioned in April has just about come to an end.

So I believe I am experiencing an ending down. Familiar, indeed. I've done this one many times before. But although this is true, nevertheless, the down from every ending always feels slightly different.

How is this one different? And what should I do about it?

Well, never mind the first question. As for the second, probably best is to simply

stay aware of it, ride it out, and see where it leads. Just as I cannot force an ending, I cannot force a new beginning.

I have my miracle schedule; I have my deepening. I'm not changing horses. Best to wait: Let the natural cyclic process do its work.

Enjoy?

A Radical Wow Shift

One new question I might ask myself after this down: Did I really, actually, enjoy this tour promotion, marketing, and sales phase? Did I actually enjoy the promotion and expansion of JGI? Am I down because I see that this promotion is over, that somehow, this marketing and sales added excitement, vigor, and drive to my life?

Sales did that? Promotion and expansion of JGI did that? And I liked it?

Indeed, this attitude and vision is new. . . brand new!

I may have to face the "fact" that I enjoy diving into sales! Wow, what a concept. I could apply this to Full Court Press and sales of my books, too.

But sales, marketing, promotion, expansion, growth of JGI and all its products. . . as exciting? Wow! What a radical wow shift!

Reflections on Leg Pain

This radical shift in marketing attitude is totally incomprehensible, baffling, and unbelievable to me. Yet it is happening.

I wonder how and if this radical change is being reflected in my folk dance body. Especially my legs. . . the foundation not only of folk dancing, but symbolically, of my attitudes in general. Legs symbolize support of the foundation. My foundation first crumbled, then went through (and is still in) the renaissance and restoration phase. This phase represented a rebirth of the old.

But there is also a new here: it is the marketing-and-promotional enjoyment-and-excitement attitude.

Is the transition to this attitude reflected in my leg pains? In order to create a new foundation, the old must first be destroyed. Do the pains reflect and symbolize destruction of the old? Is this also reflected in my almost constant "fatigue," and subtle feeling that I am somehow "holding back," not only in my dancing, but in other physical pursuits such as running and yoga as well?

Probably.

Another question (relating to leg pain and folk dancing): How will this new promotion attitude affect my folk dance classes, their attendance, and the growth of the folk dance movement and JGI folk dance business in general?

Thursday, May 13, 2004

Visits of the Transients

I could use a good shot of endorphin healing.

Where did my endorphins go? They have leaked out of folk dancing, running, yoga, and callisthenics. All I am left with is strange new pains in my feet, knees, and hips. True, shoulder, wrist, and elbow pains have vanished. So have "folk dance ankle" pains. Didn't I once have all of them? Now I can hardly remember. This is a good sign. It "proves" that these pains are transient; they come and go. They appear very real while I have them; but if they can disappear (over time), that means they are not that "real" after all. Time, endorphins, and shifting perspectives seem to take care of and dissolve them.

If this is all true, and it is, then why should I pay so much attention to present pains? They too shall pass. Try seeing them in this perspective. Handle these transients by shooting endorphins into their essence while simultaneously trying to see the bigger, long-range, perspective picture.

Source of the Why Bother Illusion

The godless, transient “Why bother?” illusion is also attacking me this morning; on its wings ride a vision of short-sightedness, meaninglessness, existential despair, and death.

Why do these illusions come to me? Why do they appear so real? Why do I bother looking at or playing around with them?

Periodically, they descend upon my happy being, rip out all purpose and meaning, and, with their secret powers, take over my mind.

What is their purpose? What in my heart attracts me to them?

Could they be, as psychoanalysis taught me, a secret form of my childhood mother’s return? “Why bother? Relax, Jimmy boy. Take it easy. Don’t work hard. Don’t try. Don’t make the effort. It’s bad for you. You’ll get sick.”

All answers in life are found in the search to understand yourself.

Fixing Things as a Way of Life?

“Fix-It” as a Spiritual Exercise. . . and Part of JGI

The spruce top of my Rubio guitar is separating from its body. It has to be reglued. This has never happened before! Now I must fix it, have it fixed. That means bringing it to Jim at DeBella’s Music. Can I trust him with this valuable guitar? Isn’t it time to insure it?

No question all things fall apart. . . and keep falling apart. They must then be fixed. It is a fact of life.

Can fixing things, putting things in order, be called a way of life? Can the spark of infinity be found in organizing and reorganizing things?

I must also buy a dehumidifier for the basement. I’ll go to Sears. More fixing. Refixing the basement problem.

I have to insure my guitar and take care of our will.

More fixing.

What does this have to do with tours, organizing events, creating, selling them,

and making a living?

Can a unifying spark of divinity be found in both?

I'm sure it can. But it's up to me to see it.

It is I who have put the meaninglessness into "fix it," only I who can give it meaning.

Wouldn't this be a good spiritual exercise.

First would be to see fix-it as a creative effort, a creation in-itself. Then it would join the category of tours, itinerary organization, and eventually, all the other JGI events.

It would help create mental unity.

Saturday, May 15, 2004

"An inability and unwillingness to accept reality." Yes, I had the ability but I certainly was unwilling. I had to finish my life project of becoming an artist and gaining confidence in myself as an artist. The money was really a sideline annoyance. "Don't bother me with those details." The stock market was a (dream) way of hoping to lift those annoyances. It failed. But, although the market failed, my quest for artistic confidence succeeded.

One good, one bad. . . or certainly less good. But the latter was absolutely necessary. . . for that stage of my life. Now that stage is over. Time to move on.

And I am absolutely ready!

That's why I sold my stocks. I am ready to spread to JGI gospel. True, transition time may take a few weeks, more likely a few months. I am now nearing the end of transition mode.

But my path, my direction is clear.

Does it really matter if I understand why I went through the twisted and torturous routes of my past? Does it really matter if I know why the apple or the leaf

fell from the tree? Maybe. Or maybe not.

It's interesting.

But the fallen leaf or apple fruit will shed no light on future leaves or apples.

On to the next leaf! On to the next apple!

It will be the JGI apple!

Sales Are Just Plain Fun!

Sales are just plain fun!

(What a statement for me to make!)

Organizing. . .and reorganizing tours, too: just plain fun! Even working with Tomi's pain-in-the-ass fuck organizational and financial fuck-ups, trying to deal with them and figure things out, is fun.

(What a statement for me to make!)

Therefore, I am approaching, coming to, a new level of fun. This one, this new level, is based on dealing with material, earthly reality! There is no separation between business and art. Somehow I am welding spiritual, mental, and material realities together in one growth-and-excitement, energy-filled, God-inspired, loving moment.

The fruit has fallen off the tree. Amazing, indeed.

Monday, May 17, 2004

I Could Be Wrong

This is rather devastating for my personality. Who am I, after all? If I could have been so wrong on money matters, what else could I be wrong on?

Yes, I have learned to love myself (by having confidence in my artistic vision), but can I trust myself?

And I must also ask: Is there an arrogance in that confidence? I doubt it. . .but again, I could be wrong.

Is it naivete, denial, lack of vision, all three, or more? I also screwed up in my

vision of the tour business. A big money maker, so I thought. Like the stock market, I thought it would make me rich; instead it helped drive me into debt and financial destruction. A pre-cursor to the stock market. Well, they went in tandem.

Well, perhaps the tour business and stock market are not in themselves bad. But my vision of them certainly was: Naivete and denial; impaired vision filled both of them. Should I call it stupidity? Maybe, and why not? How about illness, sickness, a disease? I hate those words. They say somehow I was not responsible for my decisions. I believe I was. So those words are out, at least for now. But you never know. I could be wrong.

Creation, creative personality, have a light and dark side.

In exploring my creative mind, I have entered both.

This means I can love myself but certainly shouldn't trust myself. (And I don't). I'm learning not to.

Arrogance equals hubris.

Perhaps the naive belief, the thought that I could conquer the external world by making lots of money (through the market and tour business) is a form of hubris.

Or was it a mere hope, a dream?

Dreams are good for the artist. However, their application to material reality is much more difficult.

Is it possible for the artist to impose his vision upon reality? Maybe. But it is extremely difficult.

Columbus did it. Was he an artist? Or just lucky? Did he even know what he was doing? The answer to the latter is no. Plus he died in jail.

On Leaders and Leadership

Much of the Byzantine history I am reading is about politics, kings, emperors, etc. Why would I be interested in politics, kings, emperors, etc.? How does the reading and study of such histories affect me?

How do people lead? What qualities must they possess? Their position of authority creates many challenges for them. Since I am a leader, I ask, "How can I become a better one?" It is another reason why I study history.

How does religion and mysticism play into leadership? What is the relationship between the leader, his (or her: witness the Byzantine Empress Irene) leadership, and God, the ultimate Leader?

I also want to lead on a worldly plane, to create an organization in material reality that is made out of people.

What is the relationship of creating to leading?

Why do people need leaders? It improves their focus.

Can a concert performer be called a leader? When I give a concert, am I a leader?
Yes.

When I teach folk dancing, or anything else, can it be called leadership? Is a teacher a leader? Yes.

Thus leadership has many forms. Political leadership is only one of them. Yet it is important that I read about it and the diplomatic skills it entails.

Mad Shoe Salesman!

Hasn't repression of excitement been my lifetime, lifelong problem? Yes, I always wanted to run wild on the lawn with my mad shoes. Years of therapy ensued to become aware of such energy self-censorship, such self-repression in the outside world.

Could I have always, secretly been, a running-wild-on-the-lawn, mad shoe salesman?

Is that shoe salesman the biggest secret I have kept, not only from others, but from myself?

Is stage fright (also called performance anxiety) a form of sales fright? Is it (partially) caused by fear of mad shoe sales energy?

It is very difficult to contain this mad energy. Therefore, I sit on it by denying sales pleasure, by repressing sales – a form of appreciation, acceptance, even love. A successful sale for the performer is the audience clapping.

New Place Playing

I'm in a New (Guitar) Place: Alhambra, Leyenda, and the arpeggio “problem” pieces: never to be played in public again.

This takes all the pressure off. . .and enables me to play them slowly, at my pace, and “enjoy” them.

This “new place playing” even includes Alard, Bach Fugue in E minor, and even Soleares and Recuerdos de Seville. All the “hard” pieces. I don't need to play them in public, never have played them in public, have gotten along fine without playing them in public.

So why should I keep beating myself over the head trying to play them in public?

The answer is: I shouldn't. Give up their public display and performance. Keep them for private, personal and slow-playing pleasures.

This will be the new-place-playing approach to most of my repertoire. I don't need many pieces for public performance. Like folk songs, I don't even need to practice them. I can now perform them with ease. I always could. Certain pieces are easy, simple, to play in public. These include the Pavanese, Villa-Lobos Prelude Number 1, and Granados Spanish Dance Number 5. There are many such pieces I can play with ease in public; I hardly need any practice to do it.

If this is true, and it is, how does the non-public, private, slow, practicing, and playing of Alhambra types fit in to this desire?

Perhaps there is a new “non-public/public” way of playing that I must yet develop.

How this will or can be done, what will this new approach and attitude be, I do

not yet know.

How can public and private playing merge, slow and fast merge?

It means accepting my very slow (and thoughtful) Alhambra approach in public. Going public with this approach. But isn't it humiliating to play so slowly? Segovia and the others never did. How can I appear before others and play so slowly? Won't they think I'm stupid, unskilled, technically incompetent, flawed?

Dare I perform in public as my true self? Isn't that the ultimate question?

Is my true self slow? Maybe.

But it is slow. . . and thoughtful!

Dare I think in public? Care I perform "thoughtfully?"

What questions!

Of course, once facing these questions, their answers become "obvious:" I must perform thoughtfully in public. There is really no choice, no other way. I must face the humiliation and go with it.

Isn't potential performing humiliation always present? Isn't it the biggest performing fear?

Indeed.

Thus private becomes public.

How will this happen?

Through courage and awareness.

Dare I present my way, my deepest thoughts, my approach in public? Won't I be knocked down, blown away, washed away in humiliation, destroyed? Will the audience patiently wait for me while I figure it out? Will they stick around as I explore how to play the note, interpret it, and, in the spontaneous moment, create something brand new?

Dare I be unique in public?

Dare I be so creating and spontaneous before others? Dare I drop all defenses and dive into the sizzling focus of the moment?

What questions! This is where courage and heroism comes in.

The hero would have the courage; the hero would dare to do it.

By playing Alhambra, Leyenda, or whatever, slowly. . .and thoughtfully, I am really playing an entirely different piece. Although it may be nominally called Alhambra, Leyenda, or whatever, it is no longer (the pre-conceived version of) Alhambra, Leyenda, or whatever. It is a totally new, in-the-moment creation. Only a limited vision makes you think you have heard it before.

Dare I be so radical and new in public?

Saturday, May 22, 2004

On Finding and Reading About Ayn Rand

Why did I find and pick up the Ayn Rand book in the library? Was it because it is time, a period in my life, where I must question my mystical, "unifying," and philosophic foundations?

Where does my conflict between reason and emotion lead me? I think, or thought, the mysticism unifies both. Well, it may. And perhaps it was a good philosophical foundation for the last twenty-five-year, artistic confidence building, stage of my life.

But now I am moving on to the St. Paul, building JGI phase. To build such a radical capitalist organization in the real world may require a different philosophy, or rather, and perhaps, a different stage of philosophy: one more based on working of the outside world, the so-called objective world of business.

In order to organize and run a business, wouldn't it be better if my focus was on reason rather than mysticism?

Mysticism gives me the vibrational connection through the arts to the world and finally, to God Himself.

Well, I understand and believe in this connection. I've "got it."

But I am moving on. Naturally, God is included in this moving on. But in order to deal more forcefully and fully in the outside, “objective,” real, material, business world, I may be ready to look at other mental tools.

Perhaps I should consider reason.

What is reason? How does it apply to the business world and to building up JGI? What about the vibrational joy and its mystical connection to sales? Isn't that my motivating force as I enter this business world of “reason?”

What do I mean by the search itself? Why do I even bother questioning my philosophical foundation? It is because I am moving on. I have found my artistic confidence, and “solved” my psychological, artistic problems. Now I am now focusing my energies on building a radical capitalist JGI organization in the outside business world.

I may need to develop, explain, and rationalize a new mind set, set out and walk on a new philosophical path, in order to create such a JGI accomplishment.

That may be why I went to the library. . . and why I found and am now reading about Ayn Rand.

Also I like the term: radical capitalism.

The Next Level, “See What Happens” Approach

The next level, “See What Happens” approach: Following the schedule, put in the hours, the time, and see what happens.

Wednesday, May 26, 2004

Next Level Guitar and Language

Next level: Dive right into guitar just as I dive right into languages. I'm starting with Bulgarian: The Life of Ivan Rilsky written in Bulgarian.

I assume I know them; I assume the basics; so I dive right past the grammar into the meat of the text. Sure I'll look up the words I don't know; but basically, I feel

comfortable in the language itself. It's foundations, after so many years of staying with it, are part of me.

Same for guitar.

Next level guitar and language: dive right into them!

Push the Limit

Pushing the limit is very frustrating. It is like breaking my head on a concrete wall.

Of course, the concrete wall is the limit and my head is the instrument.

Knocking my head against the concrete barrier: Is that why I get sleepy? Out of the frustration? Is it my "acceptable form" of giving up?

How to handle frustration?

1. Throw a tantrum
2. Give up on it. Walk away and/or go to sleep.
3. Fight it. Keep fighting.

The only acceptable way is number three.

If I accept number three then the next question is: How?

Character Defects and the Bass

I wonder if focusing for so many years on the treble instead of the bass was due to a character defect.

It is now, so obviously, the wrong way, the wrong focus. Whenever I focus on the bass, it gets better; whenever I focus on the treble, improving it, clarifying it, etc., my playing gets worse. This has been going on for years.

And yet I insisted on doing it that way.

Was it due to a character defect? Did I have to work out something in personality first?

Was it the same situation with money?

Character defects?

What was the relationship between viewing money and how I saw the bass?

How come I can see the bass now? How come I am accepting it more easily?

How come I am beginning to incorporate it into myself as a “truth?”

Bass (base) and financial stability: How do they relate to one another?

Good questions, indeed.

Bass, financial stability, foundation, strength, self-confidence: all related.

Perhaps “character defect” was lack of these.

By giving up the treble, I am giving up so many dreams. But I can't even think of or remember what they were.

Maybe it takes three months (ninety days) to give up the noxious habit “treble thinking.” just as it takes a minimum of three months (combined with daily practice) to start developing a new habit. After all, it is a process.

Amazing how the mind effects the body.

I saw it as I played the first arpeggios in Soleares.

There is a qualitative, physical change created in my right hand (finger muscles) when I concentrate on my thumb and focus on playing the bass.

I moved into Recuerdos de Sevilla and even Zambra. Using the new “lighting bass” approach, they are now completely different pieces. (So is Soleares.)

Turiya and Guitar

Is the collapsing deep sleep that suddenly hits me when I am practicing guitar an

initiation and entrance to turiya? Should I go with the sleep, thinking of it in that way?

A turiya sleep.

Turiya is the cosmic state beyond both consciousness and unconsciouness. It is the ultimate Oneness. One "finds" it during during deep sleep, but very few are aware of its "unthinkable" existence during that (sleeping) period.

In deep sleep one is beyond ego, id, consciousness, unconsciousness, dream-state, and beyond all illusion. One is at one with the universe. This is turiya.

Guitar Lessons

Nestled among the hills of my new guitar teaching, and my new guitar teaching desire, is the idea that now I have something to teach!

Why and what is this?

It is that now "mere" guitar teaching has been expanded to "life teaching." It is now based on (my) miracle schedule. I have managed to combine all of my personal teachings, my personal life and direction, even its attitudes, into one great ball of teaching. . . and teachings.

How is this? What is this?

First, there is the practice of guitar. A discipline, schedule, life-style improvement technique which puts you physically in touch with the beauty and curative effect of celestial vibrations.

Second, in tandem, combined with daily guitar practice, is the daily writing of the Guitar Practice Journal.

Third, physical, yoga-type exercises go along with guitar practice.

Fourth: the study of new material, reading books on the history of guitar (and music), music theory, and more. A general guitar education.

Thus I have managed to combine all aspects of my life style, my attitude, my miracle schedule into guitar lessons. This makes the lessons very personal and meaningful. I am teaching my students not only about an art form, but about my

personal approach to this art form, and with it, my personal approach to all of life. On this subject, I not only have confidence, but I am an expert. All my loves are combined in these lessons. And this is good!

Friday, June 4, 2004

Passionless Plain

I somewhat feel like I've had a passion lobotomy.

Could this be a reaction to the "loss" of the stock market. I am no longer living in constant crises based on its fluctuating prices. Those crisis, although elating and terrifying, were also constantly stimulating. They pumped my adrenalin.

Now everything is calm, clear, and in order. I'm much more in control. But, it seems, that with the calm and control comes a loss of passion.

Terror is gone; elation is gone; adrenalin sits in a quiet pool.

I don't particularly like this state. but I don't know what to do about it. All I can think of is wait and watch. Maybe something will happen, maybe something will come along. Meanwhile I'll just roll along on this "medium" desert, this passionless plain.

Monday, June 7, 2004

Failures Annoy Me But Successes Really Bring Me Down

or Running, Optimism, and Reclaiming my Body. . .at any Age!

Terrible low this morning. Should I even bother talking about it? Why low? Dehumidifier broken, depressing B. vision? Running overuse? As I look at these "reasons," none are enough to make me feel low.

How about facing the work of work this morning after a weekend off? That's a good "old habit" reason. But I like my work and everything I am doing. Therefore, it cannot be the reason I feel low.

Could it be an old, Monday morning habit?

Or a reaction to a successful run? Aha, that's more in line with my past thinking

patterns. Failures annoy me, but successes really bring me down.

What failures annoy me? The failure of the basement dehumidifier to work. I'll have to call up Sears, spend time and effort trying to find out why it's broken, and try to fix it. I could look at this annoyance with a sense of wonder: I wonder what is wrong? I could learn something in the process. Indeed, a more positive view of annoyance.

Let's look at my successes. . . and the possibilities they open up.

I had a successful run. My body hurt afterwards, and I was tired all day. This morning my body's aching less, even "differently." For the first time in days (weeks?) my muscles and bones and I feel better. I attribute it to yesterday's long and successful run. The highlight came when, suddenly, I broke from my pace and started running fast. The spurt of speed and energy came suddenly, and "out of nowhere." As I reflected back on the run, it was indeed my highlight. It released endorphins and created a quiet kind of euphoria for the rest of the day. This "spacy feeling" threw me off. I didn't know what it was. Or rather, I knew what it was but hesitated to admit I felt it.

Reflecting back, I realize the euphoria carried me beyond wonderful; it created a long-range feeling of optimism. The euphoria meant I can reclaim my body. . .and this at any age!

Truth is, I haven't felt this kind of euphoria for a long time. It's a "Thank God I run!" kind of feeling.

Maybe I should aim for more euphorias!

One way of achieving it is through repetitions, constant over-and-over again, mind-numbing repetitions. It is the constant rhythmic pounding of the repetitions that numbs the mind, canceling the conscious thinking process, and allowing the stream of unconscious energy to pass through the gates, and open the door to euphoria.

Repetitions create euphoria.

Alhambra over and over again, push-ups over and over again, running: the legs

turning over and over again. This is also coupled with and creates a constant flow of steady, even breath.

Repetitions, along with steady breathing, create euphoria.

Do I dare make euphoria the aim, the ultimate aim, of my life? Why not?

But what about "reality?"

Can one focus on, deal with reality and be euphoric? Doesn't euphoria space you out of reality?

Is there a middle ground?

Can one "apply euphoria," the principles of euphoria to daily life?

What are the principles of euphoria?

One is: repetition. . . to create the mindless state: "mindless" repetition.

Tuesday, June 8, 2004

Speaking Out on Political Subjects

Should I speak out on political subjects? Would that be a good direction for me? Would it help me understand, concretize, elucidate, and solidify my beliefs? Is it any use at all?

Can I, should I, use what I think to help explain myself to myself and others, and to help the world?

Would it help the world? Would it turn others against me? Probably. But I don't mind that. The real question is: would I even get through? Political discussions are really like frontal attacks. And such attacks often create equal and opposite reactions. The result is (almost always) frustration and deadlock.

Art and folk dance teaching, however, create immediate agreement (how can you dance the hora in the same direction and disagree?) and unity.

Thus art is an indirect means of creating agreement and oneness. And I like oneness.

Politics is about power; its arguments (not the word; it is not "discussions") point

out and often create divisions. It is often intellect fighting intellect. And the intellect is a very shallow surface.

Art however, goes straight to the bottom line substrate, the emotions.

Thus I ask again: Should I bother speaking out on political subjects? Will it end up to be only to hear myself talk to a blank and empty wall? Sure people will listen. But will they hear? And ultimately, will they change their beliefs because of me? Fundamentally, I doubt it.

But, on the other hand, maybe they will. . . even though such a change may take years.

Since I doubt such speech would be effective, that is, would change others, then the only reason I should approach and do it would be to effect and help change myself!

It might be good for me to speak publically about my views. I might learn not to feel so tongue-tied whenever a political subject. . . or even a historical, philosophical, or any other "serious" subject comes up. Notice how many subjects I added to "political." There are many subjects I feel completely to quite tongue-tied about. Again, these subjects, especially history and even philosophy, are ones I have been reading about and studying for years. I have lots of knowledge and even views there. But it is hardly ever verbalized.

So maybe it would be good for me to talk about my politics. And, in so doing, I might be able to buttress my arguments by references to history, philosophy, economic theory, etc. Again, I have a lot of "non-verbalized" knowledge in these areas.

There is a whole sleeping continent beneath my smiling face that is rarely unearthed or exposed. It lies there supporting my surface, but few know why this surface stays up. I know why. But I find it so difficult to verbalize or explain it.

I wonder why.

Probably it has to do with my background, my upbringing, even a feeling of being "stupid" politically. Perhaps it goes back to my bad marks in high school and college. I don't quite know what it goes back to, but it goes back to something. But

maybe I will never find or know its origin. And maybe it doesn't even matter what the origin is. Maybe it is again only a question of being ready.

I may be ready for this next stage, the political explanation stage, the opening of history and the pouring of historical development knowledge into my writings and public discussions.

What would be a good bottom-line reason to do all this? It would help to better to know myself.

End of Guitar?

Here's a horrible thought: Suppose I've gone as far as I can go on the guitar, or at least as far as I want to go.

At this point, is my practicing becoming retrograde? Am I making myself worse, subtly trying to destroy what I can do, what I have built up over the years?

Does one reach a point where one cannot improve anymore. . . or does not want to improve anymore?

Suppose I've reached an ending, an end. . . the end.

If it's true, now what?

Now what?

I feel like crying, and I'm in a minor panic.

I don't know what my "Alhambra arpeggio" problem is, but maybe it is a wall I cannot climb, a hurdle I cannot jump.

There's also the thought that the problem itself gives me a reason to practice, a guitaristic "goal." Without it, why would I bother practicing? I never practice folk songs and they remain fine. I might not even have to practice guitar pieces (I can play) like Milan Pavanese, Villa-Lobos Prelude Number 1, etc. I leave them alone for months, even years, and they remain just fine. They are, evidently, easy for me, within my abilities.

Somehow I may have "created" the Alhambra problem to motivate myself to

practice.

Have I reached the end of this problem-creating road? Maybe I should accept the “fact” that I will never play the Alhambras and Leyendas and leave it at that. Somehow they are “impossible” goals that a part of me, for some strange reason, never wants to reach.

Suppose I gave them up? Where would I be?

First, in the realm of reality. I would have to give up my “dreams.” My motivating dreams.

How about the fun of working with a live audience? But that is mostly through group singing. (Which is utterly simple for me.)

This makes my path in guitar the work of finding work, getting gigs, not of improving my playing. This is, evidently, unnecessary.

Finding (guitar) work may be my work. Finding bookings, finding house concerts, promoting, selling, and all that it involves. And group leadership. . . through songs, group singing, and everything else.

Areas of learning and growth may now be all in JGI development. Artistic talents and skills sit comfortably on the side. They may have gone as far as they need to go.

If the fun lies in the audience reaction, then I need an audience.

Would I bother teaching folk dancing without an audience, without a class? Does the class itself not “force” me to collect my energies, focus myself, and rise to the teaching occasion?

Isn't this true of a concert as well?

Ultimately, all my Alhambra and arpeggio practice is audience directed. Ultimately, I want to play it for “them.”

I've said much of this before. The problems never seem to change; they just “evolve.”

Maybe it to that “overwhelming fatigue” feeling, resistance to the “dive right in” phenomenon.

I Am Free!

Now I can study Spanish 16th century history, the Hapsburgs, (and even all history) with an eye towards interpreting the guitar pieces I play. Putting intellectual and historical skills into playing. Painting historic pictures with the guitar; using the six-string, five-finger paint brush.

This is truly a brand new way of playing, a brand new approach. Sure, I’ve touched on it before. But I’ve never been ready to pour myself into it. I always had “Alhambra problems” hanging over my head. No more! Now I don’t care. “Alhambras” don’t matter anymore. I am free! I have been released to pursue a full concert path!

I can now feel “at home” playing guitar. Thus what would be more fitting than to give “House Concerts.”

To play a Zambra like a Jew crossing the straits of Gibraltar.

Of course there is always technique. But I am moving beyond the technical. . . into the intellectual, the artistic, the interpretive, the creation of historic pictures on the guitar.

Indeed, it is a beautiful thing. Roads are coming together. Streams from many lives are merging, flowing into one wide Guitar River.

Friday, June 18, 2004

The “Different Piece” Life:

Replacing Falling Asleep with Diving In!

Treble: Down from 20% to 10% or even 5%. Practically nothing, or none. Shocking, indeed. Different piece, indeed!

How about 2%. . . (or even "0"?)

Yes, try it. Even the extreme of 0. Zero, try it.

Think zero. It may be the best way.

Then later maybe add 2%.

I can feel myself falling asleep. Thus I block out reality, the reality of the bass, the reality of "zero."

Is this handling of reality an ancient pattern? Did it develop in the crib and even earlier to block out the heavy handed, repressive patterns of the great M?

I think it is.

Can I live an unblocked life?

Can I not fall asleep in this morning guitar world?

Can I deal with the "bass" world, the base world (and its extensions into tourism, folk dancing, etc.), in dynamic fashion by diving into it?

"Diving in" versus "falling asleep."

The old neighborhood versus the new neighborhood.

Old guitar playing versus new, and "a completely different piece" guitar playing.

Can I replace falling asleep with diving in?

Good question.

What a jump that would be! What a qualitative, different piece of life!

"Falling asleep" is like death. Maybe that's why I grabbed onto fantasy – to stay alive, to avoid death.

But by "diving in" I could avoid the "death," death through falling asleep. I wouldn't need fantasy anymore, or at least, in the same way. I could replace fantasy with "dreams," that is, actual plans for the future! These would be "realistic" plans

with solid base planning, concrete, in-this-world things to do to concretize and realize my dreams. Like promoting and selling JGI.

Diving in would give dynamism to my daily life. It would be, is, my form of combining the old but dynamic fantasy world I lived in with the dynamic, but formerly blocked, material world of reality I also live in.

Why is the study of politics and history, in this case, medieval Balkan history, any use at all? How does it help explain or understand oneself in the present?

It points to the external expression of the splits, factions, competition, and fighting highlighted within the human personality.

Thus I see an aspect of myself reflected in the medieval conflicts of the outside world. A part of myself is there. . . no doubt about it.

I know why the rushing down. I got the Alhambra. Leyenda and Recuerdos de Seville, too. Ninety per cent bass. Or more. What is there to strive for now? It is so simple.

Only scales are left.

Is this an illusion? Or is it slowly fading into a truth?

If the above is true, and I believe it is, then what is left? To play Alhambra, and the others, for fun?

Is for fun enough? Is that what I want?

But is there even a choice? Maybe playing it for fun is my next "challenge."

But I doubt that. Somehow I must now find a new level, a new height to reach for in my playing. Otherwise I'll just get depressed.

Fun is not a level. It is even, a flat surface.

A new height in Alhambra and its types? What could or will it be? But that is certainly the question I must ask this morning. Its answer will dispel my rushing down.

Grammar is the philosophy of language, in attitude.

Wednesday, June 23, 2004

I Am Disgusted

Technical "versus" Expression Problem

I am disgusted that my folk-dance right hip injury terrified me. Suddenly, I feared death. I am disgusted with other things too, this morning, but I can't figure out what they are. Basically, I am disgusted with myself.

Strangely, this is a positive sign, a plus. Self-disgust hints at rising energy. Because my hip feels slightly better this morning, I have moved a bit beyond terror.

How did I get frightened so easily? Immediately, I saw my folk dance career ending, all my dancing fun disappearing down the injury drain. Along with it went my running, yoga, and even the drive to build up JGI. Amazing how quickly my mind moved into negative territory; it made such a fast descent.

Now onto the Grand Alhambra Problem:

Why do I have it? Why does it never seem to go away?

Maybe it is because I want some guitar pieces I can't play, ones I mess up continually; I want some bete noires, some annoyance pieces.

Maybe I even want to annoy myself. It's the little devil in me. Annoying myself by constantly messing up the Alhambra must do something "good" for me; it may well serve a hidden purpose. The annoyance purpose.

The Bulgarians have a saying: "When building a house, always leave a room unfinished." This attitude energizes you by always leaving something more to do. Perhaps Alhambra is my "unfinished room." Its incompleteness symbolizes the More. It protects me from downs and death.

Thus, until I find another area where I can achieve or at least reach for More, I need the Alhambra Problem.

Is there another area where I can find More in guitar?

How about expression. . . a la Milan?

Unless I emphasize expression (sometimes called “interpretation”), unless I find a new More, there is no reason to give up my Alhambra Problem. The Problem serves a vivifying function. Without it, I would “die.”

The Problem manifests itself by aiming for speed in both arpeggios and scales. I constantly try to improve, to achieve technical mastery, by playing faster.

Expression, a la Milan, is another approach. Trying to play with expression creates other “problems:” musical, expressive, interpretive problems.

Evidently, as long as I have problems, I am “happy.”

Would it be possible to replace my Alhambra Problem with an Expression problem? This would put my mind and its mental attitude in a different place. It would even obviate the need for an Alhambra Problem.

Something to think about.

Is my “falling asleep” phenomenon, an attempt to escape from emotionality: from the realization of how emotional (and powerful) playing guitar (or other) really is.

One cannot just repeat as if by rote the daily schedule; one cannot really mechanically follow the rules, pursue the discipline. It is truly and deeply a very emotional experience! And this I hesitate, nay actually refuse, to recognize!

There is mucho emotion in my playing, nay, even in my practicing! Really, deep down, there is no such thing as “practicing.” Why? Because “practicing” is the real thing! One is not preparing for a future event. In so-called “practice”, one is actually, always in the here-and-now participating in the emotions of the moment.

One way of denying these emotions, of repressing them, is to deprive oneself of oxygen and thus “fall asleep.”

Friday, June 25, 2004

[Back to Basics](#)

I've never injured myself playing guitar. No left hand pulled muscles, no nothing. Why? Because I always, without fail, warm up properly! Before I even think of playing a piece, I always do legatos, scales, and arpeggio warm-ups.

I used to warm up carefully and extensively before folk dance class teaching. That habit has faded during the years as I experimented with a few-to-no warm-ups. I wanted to test myself, see how much I could do, even how "strong" I could be without warm ups.

This fading warm-up habit has been applied to running, and even a bit to calliyoga.

Well, in any case, the habit is a total loser. My experiment with doing less of them taught me that basics cannot and should not be avoided. They are exactly what they are: basics. They simply, traditionally, and plainly must be done.

Breathing in Alhambra

Exhale on the opening bass note (A). Continue this process.

Exhale on beats one and two; inhale on beat three.

A classical guitarist is what I want to be but a classical guitarist and folk singer is who I am.

"Computer Expert"

Most of my day, most of my time, most of my life, is now spent on and with computers. Therefore, out of necessity, it is necessary for me to become a "computer expert," a welcome shift in my attitude towards computers! It is can-do, will-learn. It is the coalescing of the new road that began last November when I studied the Nero CD creation program; David then said I was good at computers. This threw the first sliver of light across the darkness of an old lack-of-computer-confidence self. The possibility of a new view of self opened.

Nine months later (perfect gestation time), this view metamorphosized into “computer expert.”

How does one become a “computer expert?” It begins and ends with study – of technology in general, of computers, in particular.

Wednesday, June 30, 2004

Slavery “Lite”

Moving from the prison of purpose to lost in the wilderness of free choice. Yes, this wilderness freedom is terrifying. The slavery prison of purpose is, although rigid, straight, and narrow, secure and safe. It focuses the energies. Now, lost in the wilderness, my disparate energies go in all directions. They search for a new focusing purpose. Yes, I like my slavery. But I like it “lite.”

What fundamental, long-range purposes did I lose last Tuesday?

My Alhambra purpose was one. (That may have been enough.)

This may show why it is so important to beat myself over the head trying to reach a higher goal. Such endeavors focus my energies and attention, give me a purpose, and, parenthetically, save me from mucho physical, body/mind creating, pain.

Thus I may have to find some “higher purpose” to beat myself over the head with; I may need to be beaten over the head! Evidently, the fear, terror, and misery it creates is stimulating and forces me to focus.

My Alhambra problems and my desire to improve it, was once such a beat-myself-over-the-head purpose. (Was the stock market, too?)

I miss the higher goals; I miss the self-flagellation.

I prefer the self-flagellation of higher goals to the aches, misery, and pain of my

energies tearing my body in all directions, moving disparate and lost, dribbling and disappearing into the sands of meaninglessness.

In guitar I gave up the goal of higher and improved (Alhambra, etc.) technique for Expression a la Milan. But such Expression, expressing myself, is hardly a challenge at all. In fact, it is easy so easy.

Do I want easy? Do I need easy? Is it enough to focus my attention? Probably not.

Do I want hard? Do I need hard? Maybe I do. Maybe, in spite of what my mother might want or think, for me, hard is better than easy.

It may well be dangerous for me to give up the miseries, pains, and sufferings created in striving to fulfill the dictates of a higher purpose.

This is what so-called "success" does to me: it creates the pain of no purpose.

Evidently, I need a scary challenge; one that scares the shit out of me, might not hurt either.

Evidently, with this philosophy, there is a plus side to missing notes and making mistakes. They give me something to do, something to fix, the next time around.

So-called perfection, on the other hand, leaves me with nothing.

Bodily aches and pains, like missed notes and mistakes, give me something to do, focus on, and fix the next time around. I create them when there is no higher purpose (to concentrate my energies on).

A job, booking, concert, folk dance session, even running a tour or weekend, are examples of such higher purposes. That is why I feel no pain while focusing on and performing them.

(I may feel anxiety, trepidation, fear, etc. but no physical aches and pains.)

Fear replaces the pain.

The Great Practice of Self-Denial

The Different Between Clouds and the Sun

How could I begin a life of self-denial?

This first thing I could denying myself is the luxury of discouragement; I could deny myself the “pleasure” of its delicious down feeling.

This asks another question: How to be ever optimistic? How to face this attitude challenge?

First step is the self-denial of discouragement.

This is a firm belief in progress. And this in spite of wars, conflicts, problems, difficulties, etc. Of course they exist. And they create clouds of pessimism. Clouds, indeed. But behind them is the sun.

Pessimism deals with and sees the transient clouds.

Optimism recognizes the eternal presence of the sun.

Practically, this means my arpeggio still can improve. . . and it just did! How? Through the new, dynamic, and different right hand relaxation in the root of the fingers!

Other things could improve too.

Optimism means an on-going belief in progress and improvement. Self-improvement and world improvement never end.

If I think this way, others might accuse me of naivety or being a pollyanna. Well. . . fuck them! Deep down, it is the way I think. I just have to face it and believe in it. Believe in my own belief. Not a bad thing to do.

I only wanted to get rich, make mucho money in the stock market, etc. in order to support my artistic habit. And yet, all along, I supported myself on, with, and through my artistic habit. But I wanted to eliminate my constant financial fears. And, in the process, by ultimately not having confidence in my artistic habit, manifested by my fears of selling it, I stepped into borrowing, “learning about money,” the market,

and ultimately a large debt.

Should I Teach Guitar?

Why would I want to teach guitar? Are there any interests or advantages to me?

Of course, I am good in it. Of course, I know my stuff cold. Of course, I could help others immensely. Of course, it would be a good deed and a good thing. Of course, I have a lifetime of experience. Of course, there are so many goods and pluses. And of course, I could make money at it. Teaching guitar would be and is a good business.

I know all this. Still, do I want it? Do I want to pursue it "seriously?"

And if I did, how would I go about it?

I could begin by taking only certain kind of students, being particular and selective. What does this mean? Anyone who is interested. Interest is the criteria.

Actually, it has nothing to do with selecting certain types of students. It is more about the question: Do I want to teach?

I always felt so constricted teaching guitar in the past. Would this be true now?

I certainly enjoy teaching Fran. . .and Al. Even working with Myra isn't too bad. . . on a psychological level.

So I like people. I like influencing them "up front and personal."

I don't even have to play well to teach guitar. I only need knowledge, wisdom, and direction (the ability to guide and direct others). . . which I have.

I know and grew up with many people who were in small businesses (entrepreneurs). As a dentist, my uncle Willie was in the small business. My private violin teachers, Vladimir Grafman, Sam Furman, my piano teacher, Mrs. Weissbarth, all were in their own business. Today, private teachers, professionals etc. they are all in their own business. Even my wife is in her own business!

Members of the music profession, for some reason, do not consider or see themselves as businessmen or entrepreneurs. They are, instead, “professionals. . . whatever that means. Maybe it is even a way of snobbishly putting themselves above small business, above the fray, somehow making themselves “better.” But seeing it this way may be a result of my own prejudice. After all, I grew up looking down on the businessman, the capitalist, and money making in general. Mine was the communist, others and/or the government will (or should) take care of you.

The dentist, the private psychiatric practitioner, the private teacher, they all belong in the entrepreneurial category. And this whether they see it that way or not.

The only “advantage” they may have is that selling their skills may be less risky than artists trying to sell their creations. There may simply be more of a ready make market for them.

So ends a New Leaf.