

Music ThEARy class

In the pursuit of learning, everyday something is acquired.
In the pursuit of Tao, everyday something is dropped.
Less and less is done until non-action is achieved.
When nothing is done, nothing is left undone.
The world is ruled by letting things take their course. It cannot be ruled by interfering.
from the Tao Te Ching

If nothing is done, nothing remains undone. It's easy to say, don't practice, just play. But play what? The simple answer is the song. Many students get hung up on theory, or technique and "what does playing mean?" Playing seems to have become a place where you continue practicing, trying to use the stuff you've been working on. That's more like working; you have an agenda. How can you be spontaneous, in the NOW, with an agenda? Displaying what you already know, how can you be open to other possibilities? It's the antithesis of improvisation.

You don't have to search far for inspiration or clever ways to mix and match the techniques you've acquired. There's always the song. If you know the song in your head ('by heart') and you can play it from any note, then you are in tune with your instrument. If you can feel your way through "Happy Birthday", still better, if you CAN'T hear your way through "Happy Birthday", start there before you tackle some other challenging song by ear. You need to make the normal small steps and keep moving forward from there. There is no hurry because the path has no end. There is only NOW.

How can you describe the color red, blue, or yellow? They are simply terms that describe a phenomenon of light. I once asked a class rhetorically, how would you describe the color purple to a blind person. One student blurted out "Kind of like black, but lighter."

In music education explanations serve to complicate understanding by forcing you to understand, when the idea is *to recognize*. We recognize colors and shapes as we recognize sounds, cadences and rhythms. We may or may not have the words to describe them but they are within our experience. When a musical concept is learned it needs to be recognized, and interiorized either as a sound or an event. It is direct; it is simple. You trust your recognition. When you recognize a sound and know how to make it, you begin to rely on your intuition. You don't just believe the theory; you *know* it.

Described simply, music is organized sound. The aesthetics of organizing sounds have given birth to many unique musical approaches, techniques and consequently, theories. To be expressive with any approach can take a lifetime. Some are organic; some are synthetic; acoustic, electric, tonal, atonal, symmetrical, rhythmic, arrhythmic, odd meter, Latin, Greek, Modal and Swing, World Music and out-of-this-world music, Mikrokosmos,

the Planets, the Four Seasons and the Rite of Spring. Which theory is at work in the world after Bach, after Bird and Bartok?

Every musician has a distinct relationship to the art of organizing sound. Can you discriminate without comparing?

Those who know don't talk. Those who talk don't know. Masters can't say *because* they know. You know masters by their work. They don't have to try to be who they are. Neither do you. You discover who you are, your true nature; you don't learn it. Truth is beyond description; its nature is indefinable. Music can't be learned or taught in the same sense that truth or beauty can't be learned or taught. In learning and teaching all you can do is describe and observe things. In discovery you find what is already there. In realization you find out who you already are.

Artistry remains once artfulness is dropped. Cleverness and craft are replaced with sincerity and simplicity. One delusion is that you don't have enough time. The truth is time is the only thing you have.