



My Teacher, the Cello

After a thirty-five-year “pause,” the urge to pick up the cello became so strong that I purchased one. Thus began a 7-year relationship with my “new teacher.”

Oh, how the lessons flowed.

“This is a ‘c’ note – not that!” (when my finger is a micro-fraction too far forward or backward).

This teacher was relentless. Only when I achieved the goal did it reward me—no ‘namby-pamby’ coddling from this teacher. Only when the goal was precisely reached was the reward given.

Hours and hours of practice ensued, along with finding the perfect instructor and a better instrument. Much ground was gained through effort and persistence.

The metaphorical insights began to mushroom....

- string too tight/tense – then the note is ‘sharp’ (when I am sharp as a result of too much tension in me, I can snap and break things);
- string too loose – then the note is ‘flat’ (my energy has dropped, what I am doing is too loose, and then my vibration has no ability to travel out into the world, isn’t heard, and has no expression or impact);
- when playing together with another – ‘true relationship’ comes not by just reading music and playing the notes in front of me, while ‘being in my disconnected world;’ this relationship comes by paying attention to what the other is doing, connecting with another, pacing and adjusting ourselves to each other;
- being in harmony – harmony is the effect of two (or more) different notes (e.g. personalities) which are sounded at the same time and find perfect resonance. When this occurs, there is a beautiful and immensely satisfying vibration that pleases to the core. When a note is too sharp or too flat there is that cringing sound, like fingernails on a chalk board, that you want to escape as quickly as possible. But when “listening” to another and adapting my note to theirs, the distasteful sound can be avoided, and the richness of effortless resonance comes;
- fear – when the voice in my head gets out of control and creates “performance anxiety,” my ability to focus on the music is lost, and fear reigns;
- desire – craving to ‘make beautiful music’ makes every part of my body churn with anxiety; when I sit and play for the pure joy of holding the wood and feeling the luscious sound vibrate through it ... more becomes possible.

How does this story end? It doesn’t have the perfect ‘Hollywood’ ending. Yet, this teacher made me more aware of who I am. Made me aware that I have choices. Showed me where true progress could be made.

Most importantly, I came to realize there is beautiful music inside of me that has the potential to work its way out into my daily ‘being.’ This music is not that which comes from a cello. It is the music which comes from the soul. Thus, my daily practice now involves bringing this beautiful music into the world.