

## A quick review of the 7 Strings to help you work on your final project.

- 1) **IMPULSE is the desire to do, to be, to reach, to touch.** We all have it - it's the fundamental creative impulse. Wonder, curiosity, desire ... to reach, to make, to do it ourselves. "I want to do it! Let ME do it."
- 2) **STRUCTURE is the foundation of freedom.** A flexible internal structure *supports* creative impulse. Structure is the thing at the heart that makes things the SAME. You can change the *style, character* or *medium* of what you create and still use the same structure - so it can sound *very* different and still be the same at the heart. For example, if you jazz up the harmonies or change the rhythm of a piece, you're not changing the underlying structure.

**To impose structure from the *outside* can constrain.** For example, saying "it has to be done *correctly*" tends to impose a feeling of constraint - but a flexible *internal* structure creates freedom, for example, when you ask: "What *IS* this fundamentally? What are the *basics* of it. What is *at the heart*? How does it *work*?" rather than "How do you *DO* this?"

An externally imposed structure like a *deadline* can also create stress ... but it has another advantage: that it can insure things actually get *DONE*. So it's not that internal structure is good and externally imposed structure is bad - they just give you different things - and flexible internal structure gives support and freedom.

**Your spine is an example.** It supports your physical freedom - literally. It's a fundamental creative structure at the center of the human body. It doesn't inhibit how each human grows or develops, it doesn't inhibit what you do or how you look - it *supports you*.

**A uniform or dress code is an example of an externally imposed structure** (although it gives a different freedom - the freedom from having to decide what to wear every day!). Stylistic constraints: "You have to do it *this way*" or "It has to *look* this specific way" are other examples of externally-imposed structure. Whereas "How can you make it clearer what this actually *IS*?" is more likely to show you the internal structure.

In art we often miss the fundamental structure because we observe the final product, and we engage with the *details* and *style* of *that* artist, and that particular piece of art. We observe what's *different*, not what's the same. But it's exciting to think how any artistic expression (or anything!) is *like* other things, even things in completely different mediums.

- 3) **CHARACTER is what infuses your expression with richness and flavor.** A baby or child doesn't need *skills* to exude *character*. A cat doesn't need skills to exude character. Character is what gives things, experience, expression its richness. It's what makes things *DIFFERENT*.

When you look at a piece of written music, look at all the things that are *NOT* notes: slurs, dynamics, expression markings - they're all to help you enrich the *character* of the piece.

When you play within a certain style of music like jazz, or Celtic, or Blues, or even something like 'Baroque' music - a lot of that character is 'understood' as part of the *style*, so you won't see it written in the music. But look at Debussy or Mahler and you'll see it all over the music. **And when you enrich character you enrich experience.**

- 4) **ROLES** - help you separate and collaborate. Knowing whether we're currently in leadership or followship mode, knowing what 'positions' we're playing (like on a sports team), and knowing what archetypal roles we're taking on and whether they're empowering or inhibiting us -- all that can help us connect, engage and express ourselves.

The more aware we are of the roles we're choosing, the more we can **break down what we're doing and collaborate in our work or art with others**. For example, understanding the basic musical roles - of melody, accompaniment and bass - can literally help your right hand know what your left hand is doing - and that helps you play and improvise solo, as well as with others.

*Understanding* the roles we play - in life - with ourselves, with others - gives us flexibility in *changing* those roles. When we don't understand *that* we're playing a role we can get stuck. So *playing* with roles gives you flexibility and freedom both within yourself and in connecting and *collaborating* with others.

- 5) **PRACTICE**: There are two facets:

- **PracticING** is about breaking down what we're trying to 'accomplish' and playing the parts of it over and over in order to 'get' it.
- **Having a PRACTICE** is doing something over and over again in order to let *it* get to *us*.

Any kind of practice gives us an opportunity to embrace the beauty of being *how and where we are right now*, while connecting to something else - either outside or inside us.

In practicing or practices we commit to physically connecting with something outside or inside ourselves. To do that we have to *embody where and how we are right now* - which is the only way we can evolve, the only way we can expand, refine, enrich or deepen what we're doing. It's at the heart of embracing the truth "you have to be bad to be good."

If you resist being 'bad' at something, you're resisting being where and what you *are* right now, so you're resisting getting 'better' at it - 'better' meaning more comfortable, flexible, fluent, expansive, responsive -- and more able to bring the richness of your true creative voice.

*Having* a practice is about getting *deeper*. It gives us a reason, a way and a time to spend quality time with ourselves and our own artistry and invest more deeply in our own experience. Having an artistic practice is about committing to an ever-evolving *relationship* with ourSELVES and our work.

- 6) **DECONSTRUCTION** is what lets us find the SEED, to put aside the details and connect to the *fundamental* truth of what we're doing so we can engage with the *heart* of it. Finding the simplest, most fundamental seed lets us bloom over and over again with infinite possibilities.

Another aspect of deconstruction is finding 'takeaways' or 'ahas' that let you take the fundamental idea of one thing and apply it to many other things.

- 7) **LIFT-OFF** is the moment we let go of trying, let go of everything we *can't* do, *haven't* done - everything we're *not* -- and speak from who and where we ARE right now, exactly as we are - and by 'speak' I mean express ourSELVES heart to heart, damn the details, soul to soul - expressing both our unique and our deeply common humanity. In lift-off we stop thinking about the individual strings, and just play.

**HAVE FUN!**