

Trash v. Treasure

Acceptance is a common coping strategy. It is usually a resignation to circumstance, and we have addressed it before in these essays. Its expression commonly manifests in the annoying and dismissive phrase “It is what it is.” The societal brainwashing is so complete that it is even available for purchase on a refrigerator magnet. One of these magnets managed to make its way into my household, and I promptly defaced it with a Sharpie: “It is WHAT EVER YOU THINK it is.”



Everything is what you make it. No scenario, encounter, or experience has any intrinsic meaning or value. The ancient school of thought known as Stoicism provides a model for how to embody this philosophy. Most people hear the term “stoic” and think about someone who is non-reactive or devoid of emotion. While a disciplined mind is certainly part of it, author Ryan Holiday has brought Stoicism back to its roots in the contemporary mind through his book “The Obstacle is The Way”. Almost any pull-quote could be taken from this book and put on a poster in a practice room, and they would serve us immeasurably better than “it is what it is.” The title itself is a good start, but here are a couple more:

“There is no good or bad without us, there is only perception. There is the event itself and the story we tell ourselves about what it means.”

“Think progress, not perfection.”

This approach is a valuable life skill, but it is something that we can also practice while we Practice. When you find something that you are unsatisfied with in your playing do you recoil, or does it inspire you? Does the idea of confronting challenges make you want to pick up your instrument or avoid it for the day out of fear of disappointment or frustration. In his book “Good to Great”, author James C. Collins notes that one of the qualities of a successful company is an almost pathological desire to confront perceived inadequacies, i.e. their ability to grow was directly tied to their desire to “smell their own sh*t.” They looked at the discovery of shortcomings as an opportunity rather than an obstacle. In a musical or instrumental context this could be boiled down to “if you can’t hear it, you can’t fix it.”

Mistakes

Miles Davis is quoted as saying, “If you’re not making a mistake, it’s a mistake.” Take it from Jazz legend Ornette Coleman: “It was when I noticed that I was making mistakes, that I realized, that I was on the right track, or something”. Notice how your attitude is transformed by this subtle perspective shift. We have less flexibility in a context in which the notes are already composed, but what if rather than viewing your mistakes as evidence of inadequacy you started to perceive them as a valued natural resource to be mined for its riches?

Practice paralysis is commonly “overwhelm” masquerading as apathy or procrastination. There is only one strategy that I know that can break the icy grip of this feeling that we all dread:

Pick. One. Thing.

I’m not referring to a single phrase or passage. We need to look for the smallest possible issue to address in order to reclaim momentum with little successes. One shift. One string crossing. One bow change.

One. Note.

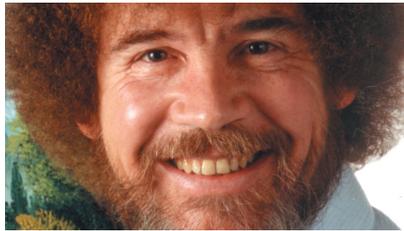
Holiday even has a quote that specifically addresses this mindset:

“Focus on the moment, not the monsters that may or may not be up ahead.”

Mindfulness doesn't have to be an abstraction of philosophers and the wellness community. We have the unique opportunity to foster and experience it daily in our practice sessions. Realize that this attitude adjustment is as much of a process of practicing as any other behavior that you are trying to adapt and adopt.

Or as another noted American Philosopher opined:

“We don't make mistakes, we just have happy accidents.”



FRACTAL FRIDAY TOPICS!

Please submit comments or suggestions for future topics to davidallenmoore@fractalbassist.com

FRACTAL FORUM: Friday Forums are on “pause” for the moment

SPECIAL GUEST Robin Kesselman on “Bow Speed Geometry”

1/31 10 AM PT

NEXT FORUM:

1/17 10 AM PT

Continuing our multi-week “deep dive” into Fractal Fingering that started on January 3rd.

Every SUNDAY on Zoom at 10AM PT!

Visit www.fractalbassist.com to get the invite(s). Everyone is welcome.

FRACTAL BASSIST Channel on YouTube (Coming Soon!)

This invite-only YouTube channel will be a continuation, development and place to share these ideas and principles. Although the entire Fractal Fingering course and samples are available online and at DiscoverDoubleBass.com, this channel will provide a forum for more in-depth content and to address questions on a more individual basis.

If you have any questions, comments, ideas you’d like explored, or inspiration you’d like to share please email: davidallenmoore@fractalbassist.com.

With Love,

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