

RF: THE ART OF GUITAR

I

The art of guitar and the art of living are very much the same. The art of the guitar is specific; the art of living a life, wide-ranging and all-inclusive.

Taking up the guitar is immediately do-able, taking up and taking on our life is a major undertaking, perhaps overwhelming.

Feedback and acknowledgement are more easily available for our guitar-playing than reliable judgements on the trajectory of our life.

Where do we go? What do we do? Which criteria do we apply?

We begin where we are. So, in the way of guitar, we begin with the guitar.

II

We pick up the guitar, each time, for the first time.

Every day, we get out of bed and enter a new day. We have memories, rememberings, expectations and anticipations. But I have never been here before.

We pick up the guitar. We have exercises, repertoire, pieces to play and new music to create. But I have never been here before, in this moment.

How do I know I am here, in this moment?

The first sense of this being-present is that I am asking the question. The second sense of this is that I feel the need to ask the question. Then, the substantial experience of knowing I am here, feeling the need to be here, and actually being here, in this moment, is the direct experience of life within the body: the electricity of life.

Presence is the moment we realize we weren't present.

III

A beginning is intentional.

A start is a reaction, that is, automatic.

So, a beginning may take us somewhere new.

A start likely to return us to where we have already been.

A beginning comes from the inside.

A start is an impact upon us from the outside.

A beginning engages aim, purpose, direction.

A start just happens.

Acquiring a practice, a discipline, only becomes available when we have an aim.

A practice provides us with a foundation; both in our inner lives (whatever we understand by that) and our outer lives, our activities in life.

So, a personal practice enables us to go out into these strange and uncertain times in relative safety.

IV

Tuning the guitar is a major undertaking: we are tuning ourselves. Do we use a tuner? Or a tuning fork?

Tuning an instrument is tuning a life

V

In a line of craft, a work of quality is expressed within and imbued in the artwork: ie the material is transformed.

In a way of artfulness, the transformation that takes place is within the artist.

VI

In both ways of craft and art, (almost) 66% of what we need to know is available through reading. The remaining (almost) 33% is transmitted in person, conventionally in the person of an instructor, teacher or guide. To know what our teacher is making available, we need to know the (almost) 66% of what we need to know through reading. To understand the (almost) 66% of what we need to know through reading, we need the (almost) 33% transmitted in person.

The small fraction in between the (almost) 66% and (almost) 33% is what we, ourselves, bring to bear. No-one else can provide this: it is unique within the universe. If we are unable / unwilling to provide this, one possible element of the Creation has died.

VII

There are three primary stages in the process of becoming artful:

the undertaking;

the undertaking comes to life;

the undertaking takes on a life of its own.

VIII

The craft of the musician is in transforming sound.

In this sense, part of the musician (conventionally expressed, perhaps their soul) may be said to have entered the music: the music comes to life.

If, and when, the music takes on a life of its own, equally the music may be said to have entered the musician.

The musician transforms sound, music transforms the musician.

This is artistry.

When music takes on a life of its own, it flies free, escaping the mechanics of its construction and composition, even the hold of its composer.

When we become who we are, we step free from the conditions of our background, education and training: we leave behind our personal history. It no longer has a hold on us: we are present in a new moment.

But, there are repercussions from our past. If we have acted rightly in life, these repercussions will settle, they will release their demands and consequences. Debts have been paid, responsibilities met. We walk free.

IX

A human being is a created universe within which the "I" is its God.