

Virtuoso: Mind, Body and Spirit in Harmony

Dr. Barry Bittman

It began on a note of reticence. Yet it turned out to be an unforgettable experience - one that answered a question I've always wanted to ask.

After no less than a long challenging day, I frankly didn't wish to attend that guitar concert in L.A., but my colleague insisted. Knowing my interest in music, she suggested this would be one of those "life-changing events." "There is someone you just have to meet," she said.

Despite the fact that I'm not what anyone would consider a "night" person, I finally gave in. I'd soon be asleep anyway on a flight back to Pennsylvania early the next morning.

By the time we arrived at the Beverly Wilshire, the concert was well underway, the room was packed and the crowd was immersed in music. Frankly I didn't know what to expect, yet I was pleasantly surprised. Each soloist demonstrated incredible brilliance through personal styles ranging from jazz to classical. Their performances were uniquely extraordinary, revealing technical proficiency that was nothing short of astounding. The concert was far more than I anticipated. I didn't realize that before me were some of the greatest guitarists in the world - individuals who have been

revered by those in the know.

Then the stage dimmed and a young man with a gentle smile sat before us. The crowd immediately settled into eerie silence. They knew what was coming. I didn't.

He closed his eyes and began to caress and stroke an electric guitar that seemed part of him. Gradually his expression built and exploded with such extraordinary depth, dexterity and speed that one could not follow his fingers which danced next to each other as a continuous blur on the neck of his guitar. Each hand seemed to be executing a separate and magnificent theme as the vibrations that emanated from him through his instrument mesmerized everyone. The audience which included many accomplished and well-known musicians were literally dazed by a performance that was inexplicable on many levels - it exceeded all expectations of human capability. The intense applause and standing ovation brought images to mind of Mozart, Tchaikovsky, Bernstein and Perlman screaming "Bravo" beside me.

Soon it was 2:00 a.m., the crowd had dissipated and the three of us sat together in a corner of the hotel lounge. My body was exhausted, yet my mind was racing. This young virtuoso was

delighted to share some heartfelt insights with us. Better yet, he was willing to answer the question I'd always wanted to ask.

Having been brought up with music, I recognize different degrees of proficiency. There are a few individuals who excel to such a degree that music seems to flow from them or actually through them on an ethereal level. This was my chance to speak with one such person.

My question was simple. Given the physical limitations of conscious control and dexterity, how is it possible to make your extraordinary music?

He smiled a boyish grin and began to speak with a radiance and a knowing that seemed to delight in the question itself. He proceeded to explain one essential factor - the successful achievement of a state of mind that would allow the music to flow from a person and an instrument that had to become one.

He explained that his practice sessions begin by finding a comfortable position, closing his eyes and meditating. He then listens to music in his mind's ear, and when it feels right, he draws the guitar toward him into his space. If this happens prematurely, and it doesn't feel right, the guitar is gently moved away. In a similar

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stepwise fashion, he touches it, caresses its form and hears the strings vibrate before they are played. The young man progressively moves back and forth through each successive step until the instrument becomes an extension of his body, mind and spirit. Often 20-30 minutes is spent imagining, listening and feeling before the first actual sound is played.

Once this stage is complete, he visualizes each hand in a different way. One might be playing colors, another notes. Both are under simultaneous, yet separate control. In fact, each finger is playing a separate melody on each string! How does he keep track of the sequences? Frankly, it just happens when his state of mind allows the music to flow.

Actually, his complex execution is not altogether surprising once you get to know him. This Princeton graduate is also an accomplished computer programmer with a fascination for high level logic and mathematics. Music is simply an extension of all that makes sense inside him.

In the wee hours of the morning when I caught a cab back to my hotel, I couldn't stop thinking about the man, his music and his embodiment of harmony in mind, body and spirit. Yet most of all, I was captivated by his gentle manner and his dedication to mankind. It didn't surprise me when he revealed his next musical endeavor. Stanley Jordan is setting his sights on another path. He's becoming a music therapist.

One can only imagine the impact of sharing his gift with children ... inspiring them to allow the Light and the music to be revealed - Mind Over Matter!

For more information about Stanley Jordan and his music, please check:
<http://www.stanleyjordan.com>.

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Barry Bittman, MD is a neurologist, author, international speaker, award-winning producer/director and inventor. As CEO and Medical Director of the Mind-Body Wellness Center, a comprehensive, interdisciplinary outpatient medical facility in Meadville, PA., Dr. Bittman has pioneered a new paradigm for treating the "whole person." Based upon extensive research, he developed Insights for Living Beyond Cancer with Bernie Siegel, MD, a program that integrates the power of mind, body and spirit with conventional medical care. Dr. Bittman has also created similar programs for individuals facing the challenges of asthma, cardiovascular disease, chronic lung disease and diabetes. In 1995 Dr. Bittman began TouchStar Productions, a company dedicated to providing evidence-based resources to help individuals harness their inner healing potential as a complementary approach to traditional healthcare. The company's emphasis is on Psychoneuroimmunology, the medical discipline that studies the interaction between emotions, nervous system, endocrine system and immune system function.