

Under the Radar

What I've been thinking is this: let's consider this a toast to *The You Tomorrow*. Happy journey you multi-headed monster; may your travels be all that you seek. Up and away you go, where you land nobody knows.

What I like about *The You Tomorrow* is its unabashed wildness. We let things like paper bags and plastic bottle caps take center stage and then spice it with more traditional sounds. Our previous two CDs did the reverse, and even they were pretty "out there." I love playing traditional instruments. But they are safer. They are a bit like wearing clothes. The naked, less orthodox stuff requires more courage – at least in its release to the public. It more directly confronts/reveals our need to break-with/fail-at the current entertainment paradigm. With that comes both a toughness and a vulnerability, and *The You Tomorrow* successfully embraces that condition.

So let's talk about technique. It's as reasonable a jumping off point as any. It seems to me that the common use of the word technique refers to an ability to create the impression of magick (think of the CK spelling as denoting an older, more occult meaning). However, the use of technique is implicitly blind to the presence or absence of magick. The high resolution of an IMAX camera, for instance, or the hazy out-of-focus look the right lens can bring to a sentimental photo are examples of techniques which, even without imbuing an image with real magick, can elicit responses akin to those elicited by real magick.

The use of such techniques extends beyond art to science as well. Take the swollen red strawberry available for a terrifically cheap price at your local supermarket. Surely an example of the magick of science, right? Unfortunately not. A corporation has simply figured out how to feed strawberries exactly the nutrients required to make them swollen and red. The nutrients needed for nutrition and taste are missing; hence the ability to grow it cheaply. This technique is merely sleight of hand. It may take a dozen such strawberries to equal the taste of a single strawberry grown in rich dirt and lovingly tended.

Accessing magick follows a harmonic paradigm. It is invitational and embracing and chooses collaboration and respect over tricks and an adversarial mindset. It is about trust, about accepting the perfection of every moment and every

circumstance. Alchemy and serendipity are its symptoms, the natural result of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. The greater the whole, the deeper the magick. A friction oriented paradigm, where technical control is used to exploit differences (frictions) between parties, is distrusting and exclusionary – that which cannot be controlled, including magick, is avoided. The harmonic farmer honors the strawberry and its character for what it is and interacts in a complimentary manner, creating abundance even while accessing the abundance of the strawberry. Once we recognize the abundance of magick around us, and reject the efforts by ourselves and others to exploit differences and frictions, we begin to see the beauty of seeking out real magick when choices come our way. With the harmonic approach, magick reveals itself willingly and generously. Here the “technique“ is communicated to us by that which we are interacting with, and these interactions occur (if we let them) through the abundance of dimensions that surround us.

O.K., here’s another, more pertinent example: Being a drummer, I could spend 3 hours a day, 6 days a week practicing on my snare drum. At the end of 5 weeks I could play for you and would likely wow you with my astounding technique. Or I could leave my snare drum alone for 5 weeks, and then sit down with it and play in front of you. The freshness of the snare after a 5 week absence opens up all kinds of doors; I am open to aspects of its music making potential that would have been hidden from me by the multitude of techniques my 5 weeks of practice produced. Serendipity strikes in the form of unexpected sounds and themes. I may begin by playing with the butt of my drumstick, held in my fists. The very unknowable-ness of this approach opens up magic and energies invisible to the technician who, with machine like precision, always knows what they are going to do before they do it. The end performance, whether short or long, loud or soft, is far more magickal than the controlled technical expertise of the friction approach.

The abundance and presence of magick manifests itself in many ways in Random Touch’s play. The alchemical transformation of playing a paper grocery bag or a balloon are rich examples of harmonic interactions where these seemingly **inanimate*** objects participate and interact. Once that door is open all kinds of nearby energies rush in to play as well, and something greater than the sum of its parts is created.

*** inanimate:**

I see personalities everywhere. I talk to my computer. I mourn the loss of my car when I sell it. I talk to lakes and mountains. In 1973, under the influence of LSD, I first experienced the personality of a motorcycle. The knack for interacting with “inanimates” has stuck around. Of late we’ve been taking advantage of Random Touch guitarist Scott Hamill’s restored barn where I’ve been discovering antique farm implements. My playing such implements utilizes a sort of non-technique that draws magick (with handmaidens alchemy and serendipity) into the interaction.

Back in 1974 I hitchhiked to Berkely, California from Illinois. After wandering around the campus I was drawn to the library and found myself reading L. Frank Baum’s *The Wizard of Oz* for the first time. I had watched the movie pretty much annually since early childhood. Upon finishing the book I was inspired to write a metaphysical analysis of the story. The crux of my writing was this:

* It is a story about the movement of spirit into matter and back out again.

* The Tin Man equals inanimate matter. Inanimate matter hungers for a heart.

* The Scarecrow equals plant life, the next step up from rocks and dust. Plants have a heart (all plants pump, albeit without an animal “heart”) and they hunger for a brain.

*The Cowardly Lion equals animal life. The animals have a brain, but hunger for courage to overcome their brain induced anxiety.

*Dorothy equals human life. Human life has courage (or at least is capable of having it) and all humans hunger for home (which is not in this physical world – here we are all visitors).

*The Wizard equals a god or demi-god (some level beyond human). He begins by operating out of the friction paradigm, creating an artifice that seems both powerful and magickal, but behind which lies impotence. On the other hand he hungers for and, in the end, achieves the practice of real magick, as seen when he offers to each supplicant what they seek.

It is all a cycle. At any one point there is movement, and a sense of advancement, but all are merely points along a circle, each point equal to every other point.

In my view the table, the car and the computer are all entities. Granted they are exceedingly static relative to ourselves at this moment. In reality, all is equal. It is only in our dualistic world of alive/dead, knowledge/ignorance and spirit/matter that we imagine otherwise. Of course words too are party to this duality, and so can seldom convey more than half the "truth" at any time. We are all, like the melting Wicked Witch of the West, morphing into new and often unimaginable shapes, the only constant being contradiction and change. At our best we humans are like Homer's Odysseus and Baum's Dorothy - courageously charting our way back home, asking the gods to work their magick whenever possible.

Think of this: in childhood we experience the world directly, without intermediary. For a child everything is imbued with magick. With adulthood we cease to experience the world first hand. We have three choices: first, to exist a sort of apparition, wandering like a ghost and haunting our childhood, second, to experience the world through the symbols we have been handed, e.g., that empty lot is not a place for fantastical play, but rather is something worth \$100,000 that could have a building placed upon it, and third, we can choose to unlearn, to melt and evaporate the symbols supplied us through the education/socialization process. In their place we can allow the universe to replace these symbols with new symbols - symbols that are pertinent to and harmonic with ourselves and the world we inhabit.

The symbols we learn while growing up tend to be symbols that lead us to dramas that are about rejecting our reality. We complain, we seek solace in addictions or in anxious control of our environment. Symbols delivered to us by the universe come to us as revelations. They make sense to us and resonate with our inner wisdom because they encompass existence beyond this lifetime. They show us how to transcend an old symbol by embracing new one. For instance, imagine someone who has incarnated on Earth many, many times as a mother. She carries deep within her a wisdom and knowledge of the mothering process. Should she be unable to have children in this lifetime she may at first think that her life is without meaning. By identifying her condition as a cruel twist of fate, she rejects her reality and refuses responsibility for its. However, if she comes to understand the deeper meaning of her wisdom, if her symbol of motherhood can be transformed, then she may realize that teaching and writing about mothering – sharing her wisdom not with a handful of children, but with thousand of mothers around the world - is her true path to contentment and meaning in this life.

The revolution/evolution:

We currently inhabit a narrow region between the bottom of our feet and the up-stretched tips of our fingers, positioned within a virtual two-dimensional plane that is comprised of 200 million square miles of surface. Above us is airless cold, and below pressured heat.

The squashed flatness of our surface life (truly approaching the two dimensionality of a plane) may explain why so many of us are focused on hierarchy; with so little above and below, we strive for the limited high ground. This striving is unnecessary if the abundance of dimensions and magick is recognized. We can exit the narrow earth plane when we dream or meditate, or anytime we use the harmonic approach. But for most of us this would mean letting go of many dear dramas, to some of which we are terribly addicted. (Think of the price people pay just to keep “abreast” of things: the latest technology, television news, newspaper news, local gossip, etc. These are all transitory surface things – but oh how we want to be plugged in! What if we unplugged? Meditated daily. Learned to stop both the external flow of words and the internal flow of words? What deepness and richness can open up to us. We worship the mind, but it is just another tool, like our hands or our intuition. We are here to experience feelings, and to do so the mind must be dethroned.)

We all must do something, and although that something may be insignificant, it is, as Ghandi said, utterly important that we do it. I see the members of Random Touch as following their bliss in the Joseph Campbell tradition. It is a drama that resonates with a deep part of us. It is our Lila (a pastime on a higher plane). The fall-out of this, a mere tributary into the mainstream, is a revolution at the edge of the entertainment world. Yet how dwarfed it is by the multitude of other endeavors, such as growing food, raising kids and governing. What is entertainment (to lump *Gone With the Wind* and *Van Gogh* together) but an expression of human ritual and the externalization of internal emotions and archetypes? When it resonates it spreads like a tenuous glue to create the potential for human culture. Amidst the scheme of a worldwide revolution/evolution our little revolution at the edges of entertainment is but a reflection of that larger event. Creation does equal destruction. The act of creation destroys and the act of destruction creates.

In relaxing into an organic harmony with multi-dimensional energies around and in Random Touch, we literally exit this plane, entering multi-dimensional places and arriving at destinations as far from the earth plane (metaphysically speaking) as the asteroid belt or the magma 2000 miles below the surface of Earth. These places replace the unified and monotone gravity source of the Earth surface with multiple gravity sources. Among the asteroids the pull from Saturn to the left is on par with the pull of a two mile long asteroid to the right, and is further offset by thousands of tugs from rocks in the immediate vicinity. Seemingly closer to home, but really many realities away from us, picture a place 2000 miles beneath the surface of the earth. There we find gravitational forces acting from above and below and from every side. The act of creating music that comes from places far from the surface is a break from the virtual 2D world and into the abundance of extra dimensions.

Random Touch's approach to accessing magick is just one of many avenues. Our particular approach is founded on the harmonic paradigm and on play and is dependant to a great degree on the "fresh toy."

In the act of accessing magick to create art, the magick in and around the medium of creation becomes less rich in easily accessed magick. In common parlance, the artist gets in a rut. We like to bring a sense of play, an expectation of fun, to our creative process. This is the most invitational approach to magick that we know of. It's not by chance that play is the method through which children best access magick.

By seeking new toys (hardware, software, readymades), or rotating old toys, we find that a sense of play and a richness of magick accompany our activities. Of course a piece of hardware or software that is brand new, or has lain dormant for months, may first require some familiarization to occur, but then a great sweet spot of exploration occurs and the play and magick are at their best.

We find that working with “readymade” instruments tends to freshen our approach to traditional instruments. For instance, after playing a 50-year-old barnyard watering trough with a wooden rake, the idea to “rake” drums and cymbals with oddball drumsticks and tools from the kitchen may manifest itself.

One of the cosmic rules to which we are all subject is that we each have to create something. And create something we will whether we do so consciously or not (what a marvelous and underappreciated force is will). The truth is that we create our entire reality, including the so-called bad things. Think of this: if you wanted to be a revolutionary musician and yearned to experience the thrill of seeing the old replaced with the new, what sort of backdrop would be required? Would being born into the a fantastic, long-standing artistic renaissance, surrounded by like-minded, well-employed artists be ideal? Of course not. How about a world terrorized by Bush and associates, with media controlled by a handful of lawyer and accountant helmed corporations, where safety and security take center stage above all else (as if death didn't wait in the wings for every one of us). Sure, why not? Wouldn't the next renaissance arise from just such ashes? So am I responsible for Bush? Absolutely. He provides the perfect backdrop for me to live out the drama I've come here to experience.

The wonder of it is that he is exactly the right person for everyone at once. Look how he fulfills the drama of the angry liberal democrat, now drunk with the feeling of community and common purpose with all liberals. He has the same effect on the members of al Queda. And for the fundamentalist Christians he brings back, in the teeth of America's decline, the glow of yesteryear's values (or imagined values) like a Norman Rockwell painting brought to life. This life - with Bush, the internet, Fiji bottled water and global warming - is our life. It is not practice. The Bush in all of us is out of the dark, dank basement and standing in the bright glittering sunlight. Embrace it and watch it evaporate. The next renaissance is birthing all around us.

Much of what is happening right now is a reflection of our being on the cusp of a revolution/evolution, and this friction/harmonic dichotomy is the breaking

point. In a sense the friction reality is like a two dimensional plane. The razor thin skin of the planet upon which we live is a reflection of this plane. The boundaries are severe, the options and alternatives quite finite - perfect conditions for justifying the necessity of the friction paradigm. The beckoning 3+ dimensional world is lush with abundance. Life suffuses everything; layer upon layer of worlds, of realities nested in realities. Here every lake is an entity. Whole civilizations of non-carbon life populate the Sun, Titan, the magma a thousand miles beneath our feet. The revolution/evolution doesn't destroy the 2D world. Some merely step off it and into the world of 4-, 5-, 9- and 11 dimensionality. There is still heartache, drama, work and an entire spectrum of experiences; there is simply less focus on friction.

This move/revolve/evolve into 3+D isn't out of the blue. Our descent or fall into matter, or more accurately, the illusion of duality, prefigured the bounce which is now taking some of us from 2D land to multi dimensionality, and will ultimately take everyone back home to a non-dualistic world.

This 2D/multiD break reflects the rich emotional drama that everyone here on earth, whether present as observers or actors in full, have come here to witness. The climax may well have the grandness and spectacle of any artful drama.

This physical split, this mitosis, will happen some time in the future. Will it be as the Mayans suggest? December 22, 2012? Does it come with earthquakes of landmasses? With our own personal death? In 2097 for both the living and the dead at once, like the Rapture of Christian fame? Or did it happen last week, and we simply haven't awakened to it? Before we came to earth we all signed up for mystery and surprise, and that is exactly what we're going to get. This is a quantum split insofar as the old virtual 2D space continues, and it's a renaissance for those who leap to the multi-dimensional universe.

Now back to the here: to the small patch of surface upon which Random Touch has emerged: I'd like to suggest that place has an enormous influence upon those who inhabit it. Is the conservatism of the Midwest the result of its lying atop one of the oldest plates of bedrock? Certainly it is the perfect backdrop for the unorthodox art of Random Touch.

Here in northern Illinois we stand atop 350 feet of glacial rubble, swept like sand onto the beach of the middle North American plate after wave upon wave of glaciations swept the Canadian surface bare. Below that is two or three miles of

limestone and other sedimentary rock, all the creation of 500 million years of shallow seas and the pressure of matter above the deposits. Below that is the bedrock, at least 1.3 billion years old by most reckonings, and a full 28 miles thick before reaching the sea of molten rock upon which it floats.

This deep and old bedrock, incredibly stable relative to the other plates, surely brings a grounding to the Midwest. As with everywhere else, the land around and below us exerts tremendous influence. In some of our music I've detected a chanting that is reminiscent of the American natives' music. It is not so much a cultural influence as an influence of the same land. The two music forms are joined as the marsupial and the mammal are joined; alternate responses to nearly identical pressures and influences.

With almost half a century of living in this patch of the midwest I am acutely aware of the history of human settlement in the area. I love to roam and capture images of the moldering remains of the 19th and 20th century infrastructure efforts: river powered industries that arrived here pre-electricity in the early to mid 19th century have left their mark. They stand now as wonders of returning nature and abandoned human efforts.

The abundance of water and rich topsoil, and the old growth woods of tall oaks and hickory with their attendant fox, possum, raccoon and deer, all speak to me and make their way into the art of Random Touch.

This is all very regional. It is our Lila, our pastime, and therefore is also an expression of the cosmic and the universal that, in the end, can only incarnate itself in the specific and the localized.

After all these words I'd like to quote Scott Hamill, a considerably more succinct man than myself: "You just listen to the music in something and then play along." Yep. I can't say it better than that. Still, it's been fun framing it in a profusion of words.

Before this landscape departs, I miss it. Before this renaissance arrives, I greet it.

Be well. Best wishes,

Christopher Brown, Fall 2004