

CREATIVE FLOW

When we feel uplifted by an inspirational concert, or are moved by a touching story or a painting, a part of ourselves is being nudged. We obtain access to an experience of ourselves that we are not in constant communication with, and that connection with ourselves adds value to our lives.

But what part of us is it that is moved? Why is a sunset beautiful? Why are we stirred by the sound of the wind in the trees, or of waves crashing on rocks?

Something is speaking to us from within these experiences– something of a hidden nature; something that can't be seen with the rational, logical eye – it fills us with awe and with wonder. We are hearing a part of ourselves – we are feeling the truth and depth of our own inner life in resonance with nature in the external world.

But how can we as musicians access that deep part of ourselves in order to feel inspired and experience our own creative flow?

This inner life that gets touched by art and creativity uses symbolic language as its mother tongue. Since the beginnings of recorded history man has worshipped statues, created paintings and told myths and stories rich with the symbolism of gods and heroes – the purpose of which was to live by, be warned by and from which to learn. These sculptures and stories celebrate specific messages using symbolic language. Symbolic language provides a method of understanding and communicating with the most mysterious aspects of life and the deepest parts of our selves. One of the messages celebrated within symbolic language since the dawn of time is that of creativity's cyclic nature.

THE CREATIVE CYCLE:

1. Incubation. Even though you can't see anything productive, something is happening.
2. Quickening. Flutters of energy that begin to formulate into ideas.
3. The labour of a birth. The creation gains in energy and reaches a zenith. There is high productivity and the creative flow feels strong.
4. Decline or entropy. Creativity loses energy and begins to wane. It becomes less able and lacking the flare it once had.
5. Death. It's gone back into darkness and incubation.

Stories such as the Greek myth of Persephone (goddess of creativity) abducted by Hades (King of the Underworld) symbolize the creative cycle. Demeter (mother of the earth), Persephone's mother, is grief stricken at the loss of her missing daughter and all crops cease to grow. Eventually she strikes a deal with Hades that Persephone will return to the surface of the earth for six months of every year (spring and summer) but will go back into the underworld for the next six months (Autumn and Winter), symbolically illustrating how the seasons of the year also abide by the cycle of creativity.

Getting to know the seasons of your own creativity can be fruitful. It's interesting to ask yourself what makes you feel excited, inspired, passionate and connected to your

possibilities and the power of your experiences. Remember also to look upon yourself with compassion when you're feeling less connected or energetic, and know that those feelings of interest and excitement will return.

In performance we need compassion for ourselves and to let go of the ideals of perfection. We need to risk being vulnerable and give ourselves permission to be authentic. The more we want to please others; the more we try to be infallible and get attached to results, the more we disengage from our own creativity. Creativity knows nothing of perfection - it's only curious about what happens now or immediately next. It's excited about playing, about seeing 'what happens if..?' It is time-dependent in that it exists within a flow and our task is to give ourselves to it, allowing it to flow through us. We can choose to focus on, and 'tune-in' to, our own creativity by paying attention to our 'present-moment' experiences, feeling the character of the music and preparing so much that the instrument feels like an extension of the body.

It takes strength to choose creativity over criticism. It takes courage to not become lesser through fear of judgment or need of approval. But the best and most fulfilling way to experience your own nature is by daring to give yourself with whole heart to your creativity and, whoever is in the audience, playing for yourself and for the people that love music.

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