

Ignorance is Bliss

To get ready for this conference ("Toward an Ignorance-based Worldview"), I sent out sort of an invitation. Here's what it said:

"Imagine an ignorance-based science and technology in which practitioners would be ever conscious that we are billions of times more ignorant than knowledgeable and always will be."

Acknowledging ignorance might be the secular mind's only way to humility.

Wes Jackson responding to Wendell Berry's letter 22 years later in The Land Report

When we ask children to practice a skill, repeat a pattern over and over and over again, play the scales and modes, do the exercises, repeat the paradiddles, we are hoping and praying that each child will discover the bliss that comes with ignorance.

For drummers, practicing paradiddles is like meditation, paradiddle paradiddle. . .
. . . RLRRLLRLLRRLRLLRRLRLLRRLRLLRRLRLL ad infinitum.

Play the RightLefts and LeftRights on the middle drum, put the RightRight on one drum and the LeftLeft on another drum; with enough effort this will get you to a steady, evenhanded groove without much intent, without thinking about it. You do need three drums, or the middle and two sides of a table, or a door and the walls either side of it, or. If you are not getting a groove or a big enough groove, try accenting the second R of RR and the second L of LL very slightly.

Same thing with double paradiddles:
RLRLRRLRLLRRLRRLRLLRRLRRLRLLRRLRRLRLL

Play the first two Rights on the drum to your right and the first two Lefts (after the first RR) on the drum to your left, keep it steady now! Feel it in 3's and you get a 6/8 groove that will put you on the 12/8 Path for the rest of your life. This works with conga drums or dumbeks, djembes, the floor tom and high tom of a drum set with the snare in the middle.

Slow. Steady. Alternation of hands. Do it till you don't have to think about it. Make it automatic. Until action is its own attraction.

Why is ignorance bliss? Why are we born to groove!
Why are we born to groove? Why is ignorance bliss!

Release from thinking, or what some call "stinking thinking," may be a prerequisite for clear thinking. It feels so good to be doing something well, smoothly, focused, flowing, grooving, so that when you stop doing it your mind has had a chance to rest, to clear itself of confusions and multi-taskings and information overloads.

Also, in flow/groove mode emotions can surface and be released into the groove, turned over to the grooving group, to listeners, to witnesses, given away forever, shared with the past, present and future.

The combined ignorant bliss of a trio or quartet (thinking here of all the legendary jazz groups that were usually three or four people) can be the bliss of many.

Pat Campbell:

Take that 6/8 and 12/8 pattern and see how it fits many musical possibilities. Sing the songs that fit the pattern--while you play. Play the pattern--while you listen to recordings of music that work that groove. Fitting songs include "Las Estrellitas de Cielo" (Mexico), "Rio Grande" (Tex-Mex) , "Arroz con Leche" (Puerto Rico), and "Chacarera" (Argentina). As for recordings, sample the music of Tito Puente, Eddie Palmieri, Ruben Blades, Eva Ybarra, Mariachi Vargas, and Carlos Santana (just for starters). They play in many meters, of course, with 6/8 and 12/8 among them. Why not sing-a-long as you play-a-long, and play-a-long with those who have had these rhythms in their traditions forever?