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Chapter 1
Introduction



There is an ocean. It is an ocean of consciousness, an ocean of bliss. Each one of us is a drop in that ocean. In that sense, we are all one — or as a famous American television commercial states, “We’re all connected.” Illusion would have us think that we are all separate entities, separate drops. But if that were true, we would all evaporate rather quickly.

As we expand our limited selves into this infinite consciousness, we tap into a network of infinite possibilities, infinite creativity — great, great power. Carried by the waves of this ocean, we swirl past all limitations and maximize our God-given potential. Everything good that can possibly happen to us, from within and without, does. Our abilities expand beyond all reasonable limits, and we become a magnetic force for abundant light and all that that implies.

We are all part of a universal game. Returning to our essence while living in the world is the object of the game. The earth is the game board, and we are the pieces on the board. We move around and around until we remember who we really are, and then we can be taken off the board. At that point, we are no longer the game-piece, but the player; we’ve won the game.

As musicians/healers, it is our destiny to conduct an inward search, and to document it with our music so that others may benefit. As they listen to the music coming through us, they too are inspired to look within. Light is being transmitted and received from soul to soul. Gradually, the planet moves from darkness to light. We as musicians must surrender to the ocean of our inner selves. We must descend deep into that ocean while the sludge of the ego floats on the surface. We let go of our egos and permit the music to come through us and do its work. We act as the instruments for that work.

If we can live in this realization, we will constantly have deep motivation for what is played, never getting stuck in the ungrateful consciousness of good gigs/bad gigs, out-of-tune pianos, low fees, ungracious audiences, and so on. Instead, our minds will be consumed with what a very great privilege it is to be the one selected to deliver the message to others. We will no longer be caught in the mundane world of good music/bad music (“am I playing well?”) Instead, our hearts and minds will be focused on the task of remaining empty and alert to receiving this God-inspired information and translating it faithfully, without any coloration from us.

Chapter 2
My Story



Numb in Long Island

I grew up in a cultural wasteland. I'm sure that people from the suburbs all across America can identify. Post-World War II America had witnessed "miraculous" innovations, such as television, drug-induced labor and TV dinners. The baby boom was such that hospitals came to rely on drugs to hurry along the process of birth; no time for mom to get too comfy. Machines monitored expectant mothers. Caesarean births increased greatly. Drugs and intrusive hospital procedures – such as treating the mothers-to-be as if they were sick – severed the time-honored process of mother-child bonding. If Mary had given birth to Jesus in 1950, all those Madonna pictures would have shown her groggy from drugs with an insert of Jesus under a heat lamp next to twenty-five babies!

This time period produced "amazing discoveries." Cans and boxes were created to preserve food: just heat and serve. Researchers found ways of adding vitamins and minerals to create a "superior product." Fortune smiled on our civilization, and flavor-enhancers were born! I ate canned peaches packed in delicious sugar gravy for about fifteen years before actually eating a fresh peach. What a disappointment that was! Fresh peaches tasted like lemon-flavored suede shoes! Nothing could match the ecstasy of drinking the juice from canned peaches or pears.

Most of the kids I knew ate dinner the same way; we took our plates from our moms and went to the den to eat alone while watching television. In that way, we could remain blissfully shut down. Television short-circuited our minds, and the salt and sugar in all the food kept our senses occupied. By eating alone,

we didn't have to converse or answer questions. There was enough distasteful stuff of that kind in school.

I'm waiting for new, startling evidence to turn up, showing that the Greeks and Romans had a crude form of television before their downfall. Television and its programing contributes more to the dehumanization of society than any other development in history. It seems that the successful strategy in the market place is to keep us hungry, horny, and as unfocused as possible. Mind-melding with TV robs us of an inner connection and makes living in the moment intolerable. TV is a drug, and we as a nation have become hooked. It isn't hard to see why the baby-boomers pursued their drugs so vigorously. Turn on Saturday morning TV for kids and watch an ad for cereal! Beams of light come streaming out of the box, and when the cereal is consumed, the child becomes encircled in golden honey light and then blasts off for Venus! Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin died trying to feel that good!

School was a place where we were all supposed to develop our minds and learn social interaction. Whatever personal interests we were developing dissolved in an ocean of useless information. Since the relevant was indistinguishable from the irrelevant, it was hard to develop a genuine affinity for things we might have cared about. For me, there was no joy, just homework. Studying music in elementary school was as interesting as a lecture on early menopause. The teachers in my time were likely to subvert a child's wonder about the nature of sound and its formation into music. Music became another thing you had to pay attention to: more questions to answer, more tests to take, more scolding to incur, more *pressure*. Teachers often didn't relay the information with any enthusiasm. In school, we were asked to care about things we didn't care about and stop caring about the things we did, and generally behave in a manner that contradicted childhood. We were fed to institutions who baby-sat us, when it was love and compassion that we craved. I understand that it is much better in many schools these days, but the education I grew up with was of the conveyor-belt variety. Our society was — and still is — the

progenitor of prepackaged emotions, fast-food boredom, “popping fresh” apathy, artistic oblivion, pop culture body-snatchers — or, as Robert Hughes puts it, living in “the empire of Donald Duck.”¹

No wonder Western civilization is producing so few real artists. In American society, a child is lucky to survive with his or her artistic tendencies intact (or unlucky, perhaps?)

School Daze

In school, I had a tendency to daydream. I would sit in class, hum to myself and look out the window. Whatever the teacher was saying dissolved into a non-linguistic drone. Having no interest in what was taught, I could not concentrate. Extremely bored, I learned to be anywhere but in the moment!

By junior high school, I was a solidly dysfunctional learner; one of many such casualties. For example, I remember taking a class in algebra. The first week or two, I was involved in the subject. But one day, I missed five minutes of what the teacher was saying and was lost for the rest of the semester. Ashamed by this, I would keep quiet. I developed a belief system of personal inadequacy. The same thing happened with most of my courses. After a few minutes of not understanding anything, my mind would drift and I would space out. Everything got kind of surreal. Once in a while, I would try to tune in, but it seemed that the teacher was no longer speaking English. His or her mouth would be moving, but the sound coming out was “wawawawawa ... ”

As I hid my ignorance day after day, the fire of low self-esteem raged, and with it, the steam of escapism rose within me. I would escape this self-loathing by absorbing myself in television when I got home. My mind was quieted by the blue light as I stimulated my senses with sugar. Later on in life, I would find much more dynamic substances with which to stuff my feelings. In this way, the trials and failures of the day would drift into distant memory

¹Hughes Robert. *The Culture of Complaint*

– not to disappear, but to arrange themselves as another piece in the mosaic of my dysfunctional existence. It wasn't until very much later in life, while in therapy, that I heard the word "dysfunctional." After being told I was dysfunctional, I remember leaving the therapist's office elated. I wanted to celebrate! No wonder nothing ever worked. I wasn't a "bad" person, I just wasn't functioning correctly. What a relief!

As a child, toward the end of the day I would have gotten nothing done—no homework, no practicing, nothing. I remember my father coming down the stairs from his nap at 5:00 pm (he worked nights) and asking menacingly, "Did Kenny practice?" My mom would say, "No, not yet." He would look down at me in the den watching television and point his finger, saying something sternly to me. I don't remember what it was, I was so busy cringing!

I would go to sleep having made a resolution to start the next day off better. But the next day I would get overwhelmed, and the whole dysfunctional process would begin again. I thought, in my self-loathing, that I was lazy and stupid. Mental hell on earth is waking up with expectations every morning and going to sleep disappointed in yourself every night!

Most Popular Guy

I had a free ride of sorts. Although I had very little success scholastically, I had even less athletically. I was a total couch potato and suffered from great lethargy. In the summer, when all the kids would go to camp or elsewhere, I would stay in the house next to the air conditioner. The TV and refrigerator kept me company all summer. I felt isolated and numb. I was the only kid who came back from summer vacation with his skin paler than when school had ended!

I had no outstanding physical attributes, nothing that distinguished me from the other students. I would have been a total loser in school but for one thing—I could play the piano. And I could play very well. I started playing at seven, and by

EFFORTLESS MASTERY by Kenny Werner



Kenny Werner is an accomplished pianist who began performing at age 4 and, by age 11, had appeared on television. While at the Manhattan School of Music he became restless with his musical direction and began to explore Jazz as new means of creativity and expression. Along his journey, he was inspired by masters of the craft to rethink not only the technical aspects of creativity, but also the spiritual aspects. *Effortless Mastery*, is not only an account of that journey, but also an insightful guide for all those wishing to remove their own barriers to cre-

ativity in life and the arts. While Mr. Werner happens to be a musician, the concepts presented here are applicable to every profession, aspiration or life-style where there is a need for free flowing, effortless thinking.

"...if you've constantly pointed to other players and thought that they possessed something you didn't, or if you've practiced for years and never really improved, or if you always play great but your music lacks depth and meaning for you, read on."

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