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By Franklin Kiermyer

The Spirit of Drumming: Intention

This is my third and final guest article here. I've used this opportunity to share some of my thoughts about the spirit or heart of music.

That's because even though articles about technique can be very helpful, what's harder to learn – and much more important – is how to let the music come from the heart and share it with others.

It's all about the feeling. Great music feels great. That's its defining characteristic. I've heard very simple music that required little technical expertise and was absolutely great and I've heard very complicated music that required incredible virtuosity and was also truly great.

Result Follows Intention

In music, like everything else, result follows intention. What you are trying to do defines your actions and your actions create the result. In other words, great things don't usually happen by accident. It's also true that the more we understand why we are trying to do something, the more likelihood we'll accomplish it. That's because the real power of intention is activated by feeling righteous about your motivation.

There's more power in doing something for the betterment of all rather than solely oneself. Looking into our motivation leads us to be conscious about the real value of our intention. When we're sure our motivation is noble, we can use the power of that righteous conviction to fuel our path.

If we are motivated by a desire to do something positive for the benefit of everyone, not only will we have the power of that intention, but our result will have that flavour, too. If, on the other hand, our motivation is more selfish or self-aggrandizing, we will struggle against our own reflection and that's how the result will feel.

Spending time sharpening one's clarity of intention is very worthwhile. If my goal is just to be a musician, there's not much chance I'll be a great one. I'd have to be much more focused in my intent to achieve that. Examples of a more focused intent could be as simple as "I want to develop a way of playing that combines the great feeling of so-and-so's groove with so-and-so's passionate soloing." Focusing intent is an evolving practice. The more you do it, the more refined and illuminated the path.

Know Your Motivation

It's also extremely beneficial to spend time looking into one's motivation. If I want to play drums because I'll be rich and admired, my chances of playing great music will be pretty slim, mostly because this is completely self-serving. It doesn't connect with others. On the other hand, if I love the feeling of hearing great music and I want to experience making beautiful music to share, I will have already taken the first step towards realizing my dream. The power comes from wanting to create and share something great. It feels righteous. Understanding our motivation is also an evolving practice. The more you try to look inside at why you want to do this, the more an honest and powerful feeling of faith grows in what you're doing.

At a certain age, most of us feel the need to understand our motivations. Many arrive at some type of easy conclusion early on and leave it there. For others, understanding what makes us tick is part of our evolving self-knowledge that never ends. A deepening knowledge of my own motivation has informed my playing and continues to do so. It changes it. It helps it be more honest and real. The point is, you can feel that in someone's music.

Learning about the intentions and

motivations of our role models can help us understand more about the power of this intention/motivation equation and our own mindset. What did they set out to do and why? What are we setting out to do and why do we want to do it?

Vulnerability

The second point of research – why – is usually harder to discover, especially in ourselves. That's because often, we'd prefer not to look at what might be our less-than-noble motivations. That's when the most controversial key of all comes into play: vulnerability.

Vulnerability is a key because it opens the door to both honest reflection and sharing your feelings with others. You have to let yourself confront the difficult feelings to work through them. That's true of developing your paradiddles and also true of developing an understanding of why you're practicing paradiddles in the first place.

If we want to make music that feels great, we need to open up to that great feeling as well as confront the obstacles that come up as we try to manifest it ourselves. That takes courage. Then, if we want to share that feeling with others, we need the courage to open up to them. The only way to open up is to let down your guard. That's vulnerability. The more you experience this, the stronger you grow and the more the feeling flows. That's the path to greatness.

It's about love – loving that feeling, loving your courageous heart that motivates your quest, loving the music making, and loving the activity of sharing it with others. The more passionate the love, the greater the music.

That's all for now, my sisters and brothers of the drum. I wish you all the best and peace always.