

## BOY INSPIRED AS SONOMA LOCAL PLAYS THE RITZ IN DC

I was in DC shopping for colleges with my daughter. She had the first night in the dorms, and I had the evening by myself, so I bussed down to the Potomac River for a tourist's stroll. The Georgetown waterfront bar waitress answered my inquiry, "Well, we *used* to have a piano here. There's a nice one around the corner at the Ritz Carlton." It was an ebony Steinway in the corner of a large plush living room.

I quietly eased on to its quilted leather bench, tossed a quiet motif into the room just below conversation level, and waited to see if anyone approached to arrest me. Soon Abraham's Theme filled the space, then some George Winston, Will Ackerman and Easy, which I wrote with David Field. A concierge stopped doing busywork; the room changed energetically.

While I was playing, a 7 yr old African boy left his family gathering at the fireplace, approached the piano, watched the hammers striking the strings, and contemplated my sounds for some time. In an interlude, he asked sweetly, "How did you learn to do this?"

I reflected a bit and then said, "I don't really know. I have something *like* this at home, and I put my hands on it often." He reached out and gently stroked the strings. I joined in, played with him. We made music together. His family was watching. It was a very lovely moment. Later I thought that someday this kid will be a musician, and I played an encouraging role in his musical life. I said good night to the doorman and walked alone into the nightlife, amidst sidewalk café's. I felt a tingling in my feet. I just played The Ritz in Washington DC.



There's more inspiration in this story than appears in the story above that appeared in the Sonoma County Gazette. I'd only recently come out of the closet as a musician, let alone one that could play at the Ritz. I'd used piano for ten years as a biofeedback for unwinding tension patterns I lived with that were associated with a "mild" congenital cerebral palsy. I'd backed into creating lovely music as a natural result of my somatic attunement. I began working with a piano therapeutically for the same reasons many give for not paying musical instruments, physical incapacity. That doesn't have to happen.

I recall my childhood growing up in Sherman Oaks, constantly on guard against the approach of the bullies at my elementary school who taunted me with names while cornering me looking for an opportunity to twist my contracted left arm and shove me off balance. I was a klutz. I got around without shaking, but suffered spasticity and atrophy on my left side. When Mom bought me a piano lesson at age seven, it was my last one. I couldn't tie my shoes, so who are we kidding, piano?

Cerebral palsy had left me with obvious contractions and structural imbalances. My right side developed to overcompensate for spasticity and limitation of movement on my left side. As I grew up, doctors and physical therapists told me that CP interrupted my motor functions that exerted muscles, but didn't affect my sensory nerves, which they said were unrelated. Later I learned that sensory awareness was the key to feeling the accumulation of tension in spastic patterns, and that only through awareness, could I learn to release. I became more conscious of accumulating tension. I could learn to settle, ground and center. How did I do that?

In the late seventies I conducted a bodywork practice in the galley of the S.S. Vallejo, which was moored at Gate Five in Sausalito (where Alan Watt's lived.) In between clients I'd sometimes sit at the nice baby grand in the sunlit foyer, one-fingering its keys forlornly, and remembering why I couldn't play music.

I had decided to do bio-feedback training to explore developing my manual dexterity. I'd progressed greatly in my massage work, but I felt I'd gotten away with a lot by using my body weight more than my agility, and was ready to tackle my finger dexterity. I'd been shopping for biofeedback equipment, and then it occurred to me. Wait-a-minute, if I could hear my forlornly in my one-fingering, that's mechanical biofeedback. Maybe I don't need beeps, buzzers and lights or expensive electronics!

I tried a not so forlornly finger, this time with some breath and a relaxed centered posture. Bingo, no forlornly sound! I compared the cost of renting a piano to my market research in biofeedback technology, and spent more time at the piano in between clients on the Vallejo.

I soon discovered that the easiest way to touch the keys with my left hand was with my little finger and my thumb, which sounded nicely harmonic. Very nicely in fact. So I just played that way with my left hand, repeating the pattern an octave up in my right where I could throw in my middle finger and play a total of five notes. I was ten years into somatic awareness at this point, and it didn't take long for me to try different posture, attitudes, moods etc. in which to play my own little five note arpeggios.

I stayed in A (minor) for what seemed a long time before I discovered moving to down one note into G more variety than I required in order to study tone quality. A music teacher who heard me said I was playing "fifths," the most common building block in harmony. No wonder the sound held some interest. She taught me to build a scale on any note, and transition through the "circle of fifths" which tied all keys together.

You know how when you buy a new car you start seeing more of your model on the roads? All of a sudden, I started hearing intervals in popular music that were also fifths. It turns out that an "open fifth" (without the third) was a common feature in the new age music I was listening to. I found a couple favorite George Winston introductions with my evolving fingering one day, and all of a sudden I was playing with his sound.

Before long, I was playing some favorite themes by Ackerman, Vangellis, Bach, Beethoven, Schumann, Eric Satie and Arvo Part. I co-authored a beautiful piece of music

unintentionally, and I'm in the midst of another emerging composition. I'm still catching my breath from latest endorphin rush in my story; the possibility of a recording deal produced by William Ackerman on the inactive Windham Hill label.

Others are saying this about my music: "Splendiferous!" Hosanna Bauer "Euphoric!" Mark Feldman "Beautiful piano ... lifting my spirits ... bringing immediate joy ... thank you so much." Yael Raff Peskin "Mysterious and calming....Your piano playing is all that, and more..... Smooth, rich, velvety...like warmed dark chocolate....." Shoshana Geller "Your music makes me feel like a deep reflecting pool." Chance Massaro

"Professional musicians sometimes forget why we were originally drawn to music. Jerry began playing piano as a bio-feedback tool to unwind tensions. His story and remarkable ability to listen and produce mysterious sounds through original improvisations on popular and classical themes seem to help people rediscover their desire to listen." Seth Montfort, Concert Pianist.

"Jerry goes straight to the heart and soul of the music. He's an astounding person to play music with, and completely unique. I welcome our future collaborations and his contributions to the musical world." David Field, Recording Artist.

Jerry Green's Feedback Piano is online at: <http://www.greenermediations.net/piano>  
His embodied communication and conflict resolution work is at  
<<http://www.greenermediations.net>>.



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## Playing the Ritz

By Jerry Green

The Georgetown waterfront bar waitress answered, "Well, we used to have a piano here. There's a nice one around the corner at the Ritz Carlton." It was an ebony Steinway in the corner of a large plush living room. I sat on its quilted leather bench, tossed a quiet motif into the room just below conversation level, and watched to see if someone came to arrest me. Soon Abraham's Theme filled the space, then some George Winston, Will Ackerman and then Easy which I wrote with David Field. A concierge stopped doing busywork; the room changed energetically.

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Hear Jerry Green's Feedback  
Piano online at: <http://www.greenermediations.net/piano>.