

DICHOTOMIES

The concept of **blending** was emphasized during the last two telephone planning sessions with Odean, Julian, Tom, Germaine and me. Odean talked about using ballads as a way to think about blending sound, singing into your instrument. Julian said that the blending of strings with saxophones is a **glorious problem**. Because we don't usually think of problems as being glorious, the idea of **blending as a glorious problem** flashed to me in neon as it contained many elements on many levels that have captured my thinking.

We all live in two realities, external and internal, and they are often at odds with each other. Our current zeitgeist is scarily infiltrated with hatred. But in this PLC community, there is a **life force**. There is hope for the future in the form of an inter-generational group of committed musicians exploring the purest art form, music, and the most democratic form of music, jazz. External and internal realities run in parallel form on different levels. For example, everyone in the group relates to the reality and hard work of mastering the music at hand. And, each musician's internal reservoir does a 'magical something' with the music. Jazz deals most directly and head-on with the paradoxes of life that parallels individual, internal paradoxes; love/hate; sex/aggression; sorrow/joy; hope/despair; and life/death. There is constant tension within the human mind to align opposing forces of needs, desires and their corresponding prohibitions. I think that this is one reason why we are receptive to resonate with dissonances in the music. Jazz can replicate an internal discord and offer a visceral understanding for us. It is as though an internal ceasefire is created. Odean's music, in particular, replicates the paradoxes that govern people and life. Both musically and culturally, this music is the reconciliation of differences, of opposites turning it into something sublime. **ELIXIR** is Odean's suite that he has prepared for the group. Webster's definition of elixir is, "a substance held capable of changing base metals into gold." We can think of our internal mental life as the holder, the trove, the reservoir or the well of base metal and the creative process as turning it into gold.

Aggression is perhaps the most difficult emotion for people to negotiate because hatred and destruction are at the low end of the aggression/love continuum. Most of us have erected strong prohibitions against these ubiquitous impulses. We start with base metals and with the addition of an elixir, we get gold. Our internal reality contains **everything** we've ever experienced, a childhood treasure trove. Most of this reservoir is not within our conscious awareness. However, it is especially accessible to creative people. The psychological principle, 'regression in the service of the ego' is how the individual reaches down deep into their private repository of ancient childhood lore, bringing forth resonant connections to their current life and thus neutralizing bad feelings. Most people are not aware of this happening, as in breathing, It is an automatic method that helps to flesh out and sort through painful feelings. It reminds me of Frank Conroy's memoir about jazz, **Stop-Time**. He gives an example of how his anger as a young boy is stuck. "He built a maze inside to keep the anger moving, to keep it bouncing in his head, its destructive energy trapped in a cycle of movement. He became a sort of emotional pinball machine." This metaphor also illustrates how making art, for the writer, and digesting it by the reader can facilitate for both the metabolizing of

daily emotional debris, the individual equivalency of making gold out of base metal. The writer had to delve deep into his mind, literature, music, mentors, all past experiences to create the metaphor of a pinball machine that is both visual and musical. Odean created and offers **Elixir**, the love and hope that is the gold at the high end of the aggression/love continuum.

The PLC group is blending glorious problems; saxophones with strings; life force, love and hope all neutralizing hatred; and status quo with “it enlarges us giving new parameters on which to value life.” (M. Don) The musical continuance orchestrated by Odean, is aggression being put, through the creative process, to its most humane use. It is solving a great dichotomy, blending a glorious problem on multiple levels.