

Through the Bus

I learned one of the most important violin lessons of my life, out on the streets of Los Angeles. I was a street player in LA for several years and learned many things, like:

1.) being able to pace the numbers in a musical set, so as to get the most money out of the audience (start cheerful and familiar, then something beautiful and singing, then something intense and fast (that's to coax the quarters out of their pockets), then something boring to move them along to make room for the next crowd);

2.) learning how to play into a big space,

3.) learning how to play amid numerous distractions,

4.) learning how to give energy to and to get energy from an attentive audience;

5.) learning to read people's minds—I actually became a little psychic and could tell when somebody was going to give me money and when they weren't.

One day, I was playing on the corner of Wilshire and Fairfax in front of the May Co., just down the street from the Museum of Art. Looking half a block down the street, I saw a woman who gave me the definite vibe that if I could make her hear me she would give me some money. So, I started sending sound down to her just as this great big city bus comes roaring around the corner. Desperate to get that woman's quarters, I flashed on what karate masters do when they break a log with their bare hands; they think "through the log," so I thought "through the bus," and suddenly felt my bow arm drop into the string, truly drop in a totally relaxed way into the string. I felt, rather than heard, the sound pour out of the violin like a river, washing up against the bus and deflecting down the block to the woman with the quarters.

At this point I'd like to remember that it actually worked, that I actually got that lady down to the corner to put money in my case. The truth is, that I cannot actually remember whether she did or not, I was so enthralled by my violin playing discovery, my realization about the

connection between relaxation and the largest possible sound. I think she did.