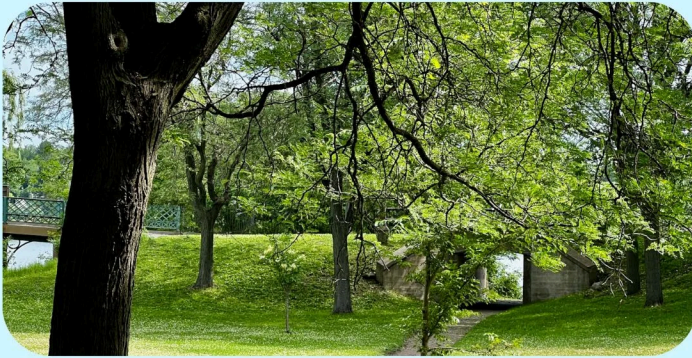




Mastering Recovery

Rooted in the Steps



Practicing the Principles

With Barry Lehman

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Playing Well With Others 🤝

Practice, for a musician, is mostly a private process.

I sit in my practice room and work on what I need to work on.

Notes. Rhythm. Sound. Range. Endurance.

I listen to myself and try to figure out what I can do better.

I'm a fantastic musician in my practice room.

I know what I'm doing. I don't have to worry about what anyone else is doing.

Then I go to rehearsal. That's different.

Rehearsal is what happens when I bring what I have practiced into a room with other musicians who have been doing the same thing.

Now I have to listen.

What **I** play affects what **you** can play.

And what **you** play affects what **I** can play.

Life is an ensemble.



 **That's Only the Beginning- Of course!**

Playing the Old Version

I was reminded of that last week at Birch Creek Wind Ensemble Retreat.

Birch Creek is one of my two summer music experiences that I look forward to. This year there were over 60 adults playing remarkable and challenging music.

One piece wasn't working for me the way I thought it should. I had played an earlier version many times and knew how I thought it was supposed to sound.

When the leader asked me to pay more attention to what was happening in the ensemble, my first reaction wasn't exactly a shining example of openness.

I wanted to challenge him. That was not conscious questioning. It was more of "...but I know what I'm doing."

Then I went back and listened to a recording of the older version.

Aha.

I realized what was happening.

I wasn't hearing the music that was in front of me.

I was hearing the older version internally. It made sense from where I were sitting.

My experience wasn't wrong.

The old version wasn't wrong.

The section leader was responding to what was happening in **this** ensemble, with **this** score.

Now.

The music had changed.

If I wanted to play well with this ensemble, I had to listen to what everyone else was playing **now**.

That sounds a lot like long-term recovery.

Living Recovery:

What Is It Like to Be in Relationship With Me?

Last week I talked about humility and becoming right-sized.

Humility doesn't end in a better understanding of myself. It makes possible a better relationship with others.

Which brings me to Steps 8 and 9.

In early recovery those Steps can involve cleaning up considerable wreckage.
But what do they look like after years of recovery?

Maybe one question is:

- *What is it like to be in relationship with me today?*

Long-term recovery can have its own danger.

I've been doing this for a long time.

I've worked the Steps.

I've gone to meetings.

I've learned a few things.

I know how recovery works.

Except sometimes I may know how it worked.

The people around me have changed.

The world has changed.

I have changed.

And I may still be playing the old version.

That's where the principles we have been practicing this month begin to work together.

Willingness allows me to consider that something may need to change.

Humility allows me to admit that I may not be hearing everything correctly.

Then comes *patience*.

Listen.

Don't immediately defend myself.

Don't immediately explain why I'm right.

Care enough about the other person to wonder what they are hearing and experiencing.

Maybe that's one way of understanding love in recovery.

Not simply as an emotion.

Love as care.

Love as listening.

Love as making room for someone else's experience.

Making an Amend

That's also helping me think differently about amends.

An apology says:

I'm sorry about what I did. Yes, that's important.

But making an amend asks something more.

Now that I understand what I've been doing, am I willing to change?

If I'm told that I am not playing in sync with the rest of the band, it doesn't accomplish much to say, "Sorry," and then play exactly the same way the next time.

- I have to adjust.
- Listen differently.
- Play differently.

An amend isn't simply saying that I wish I hadn't done something.

Amend means change.

And sometimes I may need time before I can do that.

I may need to say:

I hear you.

I realize I'm coming from a different place.

Give me some time to understand what's happening.

It's learning how to play well with others.

That's not failure.

That may be patience.

And love.



A practice for the week:

Once each day, notice one interaction with another person and ask:

How is what I'm doing affecting us?

Don't immediately decide who's right or wrong.

Instead:

Listen. Notice. Adjust.

Maybe you need to say less.

Maybe ask a question.

Maybe hear what the other person is actually saying instead of what you expect them to say.

Maybe nothing needs to change.

But if you notice that your part is getting in the way:

Change how you play it.

That's practicing amends.

A Closing Thought

Life is an ensemble.

Who we each are becoming affects us.

My recovery isn't only about becoming a healthier me. It's about becoming someone who can live more fully in relationship with you.

Sometimes that means listening carefully enough to discover that the version playing in my head isn't the version everyone else is playing.

Sometimes it means admitting that what worked before isn't what is needed now.

And sometimes it means changing how I play.

That's more than saying I'm sorry.

That's making an amend.

Of course, once I know something needs to change, there's still another question:

Am I willing to actually do it?

That can take courage.

We'll get there next week.



Upcoming Conversations and Events

Practicing the Principles and growing forward. Continue the conversation in the MasterClass:

**Wednesday, September 2 at
12:00 pm CDT.**

Master Class

With Barry A. Lehman

I'm interested.



Back issues of the newsletter can be found at: **Newsletter Hub.**

Email me. I always look forward to hearing from you



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