

Lecture and performance for EU Ministers of Environment

Ljubljana, April 11th, 2008

Dear Minister Podobnik, (= Slovenian Minister of Environment)

It was great pleasure to lecture and perform for you and your colleagues, EU Ministers of Environment and their staff, last Friday in our National Gallery.



For the sake of a vivid memory, please have a look at the attached photos and here is the short summary of my workshop as you requested:

The topic of discussion of your meetings was the synergy of climate change, biodiversity and sustainable use of forests.

SYNERGY OF DEEP ECOLOGY AND DEEP CULTURE:

My contribution was highlighting yet another synergy which needs to be added to the ecological sustainability strategy of European policy if we want to be successful: the synergy of deep ecology with deep culture. At very least for two reasons:

1) Only societies with deep cultural environment can be expected to act genuinely sustainable and bear the consequences of sacrifice and self-education to the issues. Acting out of low cultural level results in a raw, short term self interest, search for diverse policy loopholes and production of "green books" as is the case with numerous global companies.

2) Even if we for a moment imagine the extraordinary success and see reversed global warming with fully cleaned-up environment and healthy nature, WHAT FOR ? - where would be the meaning to live in such nature if we let our cultures to be degraded to barbarism ?

At stake is the synergy of sustainable ecology and deep culture, and the key to success is the education of our societies through interdisciplinary application of Art processes as i have, for instance, demonstrated with the orchestral workshop after my speech. This is my appeal to the policymakers of EU Parliament and Commissions: to help creating the opportunity for such experimental pilot project, where we could explore the interdisciplinary power of Art as an important element in transformation of society. This is something different from supporting traditional institutions of Art.

THE VISION:

As it is essential for our body to breathe clean air, so it is as essential for our soul and spirit to breathe deep culture. If we discuss sustainable use of forests and biomass, let us not forget those forests where every single tree bears its unique and timeless name: Bach, Rembrandt, Shakespeare, Raphael, Palestrina, Beethoven, Dante, Mozart, Pushkin, Sibelius, Goethe, Bartok, Presern, - forgive me if I now stop naming thousands of trees of our ecologically endangered cultural forests! It is not enough if these sublime creative qualities are safely "protected" in the greenhouses of cultural institutions to be available as entertaining and often exclusive ornament of life, we must explore additional opportunities for this genius "Art -Biomass" to be available as a PROCESS, as a transformative power and technique everywhere where we are dealing with the most critical issues, dilemmas, challenges and decision making in our modern world.

I started my presentation by reminding all participants - (who were sited AMONG musicians of the symphony orchestra, please see the analysis of my orchestral workshops below) - how our Slovenian forefathers and mothers responded to the tragic challenge of industrial revolution 100 years ago: Through the introduction of farming machines in the USA low wheat prices in Europe forced thousands of our farmers to immigrate to the New World. But their love for our land was so deep that they could not imagine their fields go wild and despite knowing of no return, they planted these very forests we are so proud of today!



And now, 100 years later? The challenges we face are 100 times augmented, we face a convergence of many forces: Enormous environmental degradation, global warming with all consequences, financial crisis, flight of jobs, widening gap between few rich and many poor, rise of fundamentalism and "sub-culture", religious clashes, power abuse, corporate and other wars....to name but few.

If we single out ecological sustainability challenge we can see a short and long term strategy:

Short term is to send out fire fighters if the house is in flames.
Long term would be the synergy of deep ecology and culture.

I have later demonstrated through my workshop (using violin concerto by Beethoven) that it is possible to hear and re-discover the elements of nature as they become individualised through the genius of composer into masterpieces of Art. In this way the synergy of deep ecology and culture can be understood as healing and creating nature.

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF VISION, THE EUROPEAN STYLE LEADERSHIP?

In the course of the evening i then introduced the participants to the violin concerto as a musical implementation strategy. The resounding patterns of music can be experienced as a development journey through various stages to its own glorious completion. The heroic journey to the "wholeness". From linear (left brain) to polyphonic and intuitive, from "one bottom line" to multiple bottom line, from shareholder value to stakeholders value from the interval of the prime to the octave, from "ego" to "I". We asked the question: can we find those qualities which would characterise "European style" leadership" ? And the answer came as the experience of the unfolding higher meaning of the masterpiece.

We demonstrated different qualities of leadership by performing with the orchestra certain passages of the masterpiece and in addition i commented by painting symbolic icons on the flipchart:

***The most essential leadership capacity to be continuously aware of, is the presence and metamorphosis of the identity of the masterpiece, (thema, brand, essence, big picture)

***Particular supportive relationship of musical lines that can be experienced as servant leadership (contra point weaving around the theme, feeling enlivening an abstract idea, on organic level the blood capillaries nourishing nerves)

***The experience of crescendo and subito piano at the highpoint: the leadership mastery of productive resignation (Goethe) (TAO of ancient Chinese wisdom, grafting of crabapple in agriculture)

***And foremost, to hear in the music one of the most essential elements of any real learning: the ongoing cycles of birth, death (crisis) and renewal.

Then i introduced to the participants the structure of the classical "sonata form" which is the musical architecture of the first movement of the violin concerto. We could experience the deep meaning of the four stages of this sonata form as they unfold, reflecting archetypal stages of human biography: youth, midlife (crisis), maturity and integrated wisdom and in music: exposition, development, recapitulation and coda.

We could then experience how at first the orchestra (without the soloist) reveals in the exposition the entire journey as a VISION, and only then the soloist enters the scene and IMPLEMENTS this exposition in productive oscillation of tension and harmony together with the orchestra. A deeply meaningful example of relation between leaders and their teams.

The last step of the workshop was meant to demonstrate the relationship of masterpiece to the elements of nature. We listened to the process of the "development" section of the first movement of the concerto, how the music expresses at first the melancholic earthly quality of musical identity, transitioning in organic fashion as if from the character of the roots of the plant to the unfolding greening of foliage, alive, growing, increasing playfully till at the highpoint, as in a productive resignation, the identity turns into the red of the rose, opening in most innocent and devoted, gentle and vulnerable gesture towards the warm and airy sound of sunlight and concluding with overpowering crescendo to the mighty entry of the entire orchestra, thundering the identity theme in its most fiery form. We could hear music on various levels at the same time: earth, water, air, fire; roots, leaves, flowers, seeds; lifeless, enlivened, deeply sentient and fully human. Through music truly sacred space was created at that moment and it was as if the NATURE could be heard calling on us from everywhere:

WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO ME ???!

The workshop was concluded with the performance of the entire concerto.
With warmest regards, and thank you for making this event possible,

Miha Pogacnik
www.mihavision.com

PS: If you are interested to read the analysis of my orchestral workshops for leadership, you are welcome to read on:

SURROUND ORCHESTRA: DEVELOPING LATERAL THINKING

By Claude Morgan Lewenz

In business the basic parameters of operation are time, place, subject matter, and social relations. Of these, subject matter--minding our business--is supposed to be the focus of the company. However, social relations, both effective team relations on the positive side and office politics on the negative side, tend to be the dominant reality of what occupies much of the company's time. Since all employees are people, and people are complex social beings, this is not surprising. What is a bit curious is that businesses usually focus their energy on their subject matter-- manufacturing, distributing, services, marketing--not understanding how to work effectively with the people factor, which in fact determines if the business succeeds, barely gets by, or goes under. Why is it a symphony orchestra can work in such perfect harmony with synchronous team work, but a more highly paid corporate team cannot?

Medical research has shown that the human brain has a left side and a right side, with the left side being the cognitive, rational, thinking side, and the right brain being more associated with creativity, emotions, and perception. For years it has been a truism that left-brain business people buy IBM computers, while right-brain artists buy Apple. We divide ourselves into either rational human beings or creative ones. The problem with this kind of division is that it is based on a lack of exercise of parts of the brain rather than an actual distinction between types of people.

In fact the two parts of the brain work best when they work together, and in Castle Borl, Slovenia, in July 1998, in a conference entitled Art Sponsors Business, Director Miha Pogacnik used a full symphony orchestra to demonstrate how to make both sides work together. What he did was to take a standard format orchestra and change two things: time and place. Above in the first paragraph, we mentioned time and place in business, where it means the work day and the work location. The reason we mentioned these is because when one intentionally makes a significant change in time or place, it tends to change the subject matter, the social relationships, or both.

In the performance in Art Sponsors Business, when we walked into the concert hall we first noted that the Slovenian Radio-Symphony Orchestra was seated where the audience was supposed to sit, only in a surround, checkerboard fashion--every other chair was empty, and the audience was asked to sit in the empty chairs among the orchestra. In itself, this is a remarkable auditory experience, as the sensation of being seated within the music is so completely different from the conventional stage-audience setting. Altering place changed the relationship with the orchestra.

In addition to changing the expected place, Miha also altered time. The orchestra would play a bit, and then Miha would tell them to stop, and he would then speak, explaining what we were listening to and what would be coming next. For many this was quite helpful, as classical music is a different language, and indeed there is much to hear, too much for many not so experienced in music.

But in this concert of music and breaks, Miha allowed the audience to let their thoughts go free. All too often in listening to an unfamiliar classical concert, our mind wanders--thinking about what we ate for dinner, family matters, concerns about work, and at other times we fall asleep and dream. However, we feel guilty because in a concert, "You are supposed to be listening!" In this concert, the break times were a time to let our minds go for a walkabout. Indeed some of the people took out notebooks and made notes as their thoughts wandered. The surprise effect of the music and breaks was on the quality of thought. Instead of just mulling over the issues, a type of lateral thinking began--connections were made, new models or paradigms emerged, and in the case of problems, new solutions became clear. The quality of the thinking was clear, strong, and insightful.

How did this happen?

Let us recall the discussion of the left and right brain. Our left brain, which governs the right side of the body, is reported to do the cognitive thinking that characterizes most business practice. However, far too often our cognitive, rational brain gets locked up, much like a frozen river in winter. The music being played by the orchestra is about the other side of the brain--the creative, the emotional, the intuitive and perceptive. The music functions like the first warm spring breeze on the frozen river, as the rigid thoughts are set aside, while the other side of the brain listens to the music. As water begins to flow in our frozen-thought brain, the rigidity begins to break up, and the river--our mind--begins to flow again.

It would be easy to get lost in the music, except that Miha would stop the orchestra, and speak -- instead of music, which may be a language of the right, creative side of the brain, he would introduce words that required processing by the left-cognitive-rational side of the brain. One may speculate that it is this rapid shift that frees up the mind, and makes rational thought more coherent, more perceptive.

This analysis may seem particularly left brained-cognitive-rational in its attempt to explain the remarkable results of the Surround Orchestra. This may not be surprising when we note that the author of this analysis is a businessman, a Westerner with a cultural history of pre-eminence of the intellect over the intuitive. And in fact, there are other ways of explaining the effect on the mind, which I leave for other writers. Because while it is interesting to understand the process that brings about the effect, what is paramount is not our explanation, but the fact of the effect itself. It works, and it does so without subscribing to a religious, political, or economic affiliation. It's not based on New Age psychobabble, but the greatest music of all time, one of the hallmarks of Western civilization and its gift to the world.

There is a practical application of this Surround Orchestra method. In the past, when businesses sponsored symphony orchestras they did so for the public relations value. While this charity had civic merit, the worldwide demise of so many orchestras for lack of charitable or tax-supported funding suggests that a new relationship may be needed. Economic sustainability must be part of an orchestra's composition. Perhaps this method can offer a new model of economic sustainability.

In Plato's hierarchy of governing archetypes for both nations and individuals, he speaks of five levels, with the middle being oligarchy, the rule of money or gain. Above oligarchy, Plato identifies timocracy, the rule of honor (as in the military or sports teams), and highest of all the pursuit of excellence, as exemplified by artists and musicians who continue to seek to improve, to be better, even if the world already regards them as the best.

Business evaluates its success in the oligarchic terms of its profits. What is curious, however, is that while the owners evaluate success in terms of profits, the public tends to be attracted to human excellence in the products and services, not in gains made by their producers. The brand names that became adjectives in common speech gained this recognition for their quality, not the profits they subsequently made for their companies. Yet, let us ask what model is presented to company personnel that expresses this need, this priority for pursuit of excellence.

While business is measured in terms of its gains, motivating its peoples requires more than just money. Some try competitions, in which one earns honor and recognition; sports analogies are often used to try to motivate personnel, especially in America. But this is a timocratic model, and in the end, all too often, it fails to achieve its goal for the simple reason that it is the wrong model--a successful business is not about winning, but about the pursuit of excellence. The orchestra seeks to play better for the sake of music, not to win the prize. Each member must pursue excellence in his or her performance, and at the same time, must play in sync with the others.

However, beyond the passive models to motivate personnel, the power of the Surround method for business may be especially useful to stimulate creative and lateral thinking. If business and the arts can establish a working relationship that provides for the financial support of the orchestra, and offers the business assistance in balancing the creative and cognitive parts of its personnel, we might have a new model for economic sustainability of the orchestra, and cultural sustainability of the business. Business is as much a part of life as culture, and indeed problems occur when one loses the balance between the two. Art sponsoring business may be a good idea.

The diverse cultures of the arts and of business provide a new opportunity for the development of intercultural relations. This method deserves a close look by business and industry, not for charity, but for its own survival and its pursuit of excellence.