

The Heart and Soul of Jazz: Culture and Spiritual Quest

An overview of the vital inspirational threads linking the music of
John Coltrane, John McLaughlin, and Horace Silver.

Though the musical contributions made by these individuals vary greatly
in style, characteristics, and impact, each has openly embraced culture
and spirituality in a way that defined their lives, propelling and evolving
their music accordingly. Their spiritual journey of self-discovery became
the main purpose and message of their music.

Special thanks to Dr. David Demsey

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May 2011

Chako Intro/Background

Good afternoon, thank you for being here. In 1992, I moved from Brooklyn to Hong Kong with my Chinese wife. Two years later, I moved to the island country of Singapore, located at the southern tip of Malaysia with the Indonesian island of Sumatra just to the south. New York is referred to as a melting pot. Singapore is the melting pot of Asia. After a 3-month trio contract with former Ramsey Lewis drummer Redd Holt, I got a job leading my own trio at the world famous Raffles Hotel in Singapore, where I played 6 nights a week for about 6 years. My trio consisted of local Singaporeans, one Filipino and one Hokkien Chinese, later replaced with a Eurasian (half Portuguese and half Chinese). I gigged steadily in Shanghai, China for just under a year, before settling in Yokohama, Japan for 6 years, where I lived just before coming to this Masters program.

16+ years of Asian experience influenced my music, my career, and every aspect of my life. I released my first CD in Hong Kong in '94 with an American bassist and Indian drummer, playing 5 Horace Silver covers and 5 jazz standards, just before moving to Singapore the same year. With its colorful array of cultures, I heard interpretations of jazz I'd never encountered before, by Indian, Malay, and Chinese musicians who sat in with my trio. I played my jazz, but enabled the guys sitting in to do their own thing. As a result, my "standard" trio was augmented with instruments new to my style, such as conga, bongos, tabla and didjeridu. Immersed in the culture there, I made friends and associates off the bandstand. I began imagining music that went beyond my trio format - music blending my post-bebop style with the new sounds I heard there.

I recorded my 2nd CD there in '96. It included my first originals, with some standards. The changing influence of my environment was just beginning then, but by the year 2001, I had released 3 more CDs, culminating in a double release of all original music called *Integration* (also the name of the band). This CD fully represented the cultural influences I'm talking about, and I'll be playing some music from this work at the end of my talk. The *Integration* band and its CDs were aptly titled, being comprised at different times of Chinese, African-Americans, Eurasians, Malays, Indians, Filipinos, and a British musician. Asia had changed me and my music, enabling me to develop a unique synthesis of style.

The other affect Asia had on me involved direct, experiential contact with Asian spiritual practices. From childhood I always read books on philosophy. I especially relished books like

D.T. Suzuki's *Essays on Zen Buddhism*, the writings of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu, *Autobiography of a Yogi*, *The Life of Milarepa*, and many others of the same ilk. But when I began *living* in Asia, all my prior interests in the subject of enlightenment crystallized and began impacting my music. In Asia, I began finding my "Self" in personal terms, and my "Voice" in musical terms.

I learned to be more tolerant and accepting of others, not something we Americans, who champion the individual above all else, are particularly known for on the world stage. To many, Americans are perceived as loud, arrogant and selfish. Live long enough with an open mind outside the USA, and you may better understand these perceptions.

Asia broadened my views of what jazz could be - I was no longer a purist, as I was often called while still living in the States. I understood that jazz represents freedom, and inevitably embraces culture. Though there's little debate on the origin of jazz, it has long ceased to be limited to any particular race, creed, or country.

I'm discussing my own unique history, but of course, borrowing from other cultures, and indeed, to make one's music a testimonial of one's inner search, is not new at all. I argue that culture and spirituality are not only predominant aspects of jazz, but essential inspirational threads linking all great music.

Now, I'll briefly examine three iconic figures in jazz: John Coltrane, John McLaughlin, and Horace Silver. I hope to illustrate how, in different ways, they all blended foreign culture into their music, and were on spiritual quests that directed the purpose of their music. (-5 minutes)

Coltrane - Culture

John Coltrane's wife Alice said he studied many types of music, from Japan, Africa, India, Brazil, from Buddhist temples, and spiritual music from many sources. Touring the world, he'd often accumulate so many books and recordings he'd have to ship them home separately. (Porter 274) He was interested in many instruments, like the Japanese Koto, Shakuhachi, the harp, he played flute and bagpipes, sometimes investigated rhythms on the drums, and he owned and played a guitar, saying "...maybe I'll stumble across something I wouldn't get on the piano...". (Porter 273) His fascination with all kinds of sound is well documented.

For the submitted written version of this presentation, I wrote about Coltrane using Latin and African elements in his music. Due to time constraints, I'll limit this talk to Indian music. Suffice to say, the extent to which he listened, heard and assimilated the sounds around him, and his interest in culture, was astounding. Among the first to play world music, he said in a 1961 interview, "Change is inevitable in our music...". (Porter 202)

Handwritten pages of Indian scales and ragas were found in Coltrane's home. A proper definition of Indian raga is too complex to give now, but it is like a scale or melody that evokes a certain mood. It's based on an ancient science called Nada Yoga or, Yoga of Sound. Far more complex than merely a scale, many aspects of raga appealed to Coltrane: the virtuosic call-and-response dialogue between drums and soloist, the range of melodic possibilities, the drone replacing harmony, the improvisatory aspect, and a crucial feature called *rasa*, which is the specific mood, feeling, or effect of each raga.

Coltrane liked sitarist Ravi Shankar so much he wanted to copy the spirit of his music. He believed the modes and pentatonic sonority of Indian music was the most universal aspect of all music, which appealed to him. (Porter 211) Coltrane studied with Shankar. He wanted to know how they improvised within the fixed structure of the raga, and how to use microtones. Shankar once gave Coltrane a musical demonstration, playing the *alap* of a raga (an *alap* is the first, most important section of a raga). Gradually adding improvisation, he demonstrated the sitar string bending technique, and Coltrane was moved to tears. (Porter 286)

Besides modes and improvisation, Coltrane's soprano sax sound is also linked to Indian music. He often used a fixed set of notes and rhythms repeated over and over, inducing a meditative state in the listener. He seems to have accepted the ancient Indians' belief that all living creatures respond in certain ways to the repetition and vibration of sound, revealing the connection of music to the molecular structure of the universe. (Porter 12) Also, unlike the full-bodied soprano sound of Bechet, Hodges, or Lacy, Coltrane's is crisp and dry, with a bright nasal tone closely resembling Indian instruments called *shehnai* and *nagaswaram*.

He discovered the songs *My Favorite Things* and *Greensleeves* could be played as ragas. When told the great Indian musician Ali Akbar Khan played *Greensleeves*, Coltrane said, "I wish I could hear him do it. Then I'd know if I was playing it right. Most of what we play in jazz has the feeling of just that one raga". (Lavezzoli 278) To give you some idea of what

these traditional Indian instrument sounds like, and so you may later compare the sound with Coltrane`s soprano, I`ll play some shehnai for you now:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R15fT2wiEMI> (1 minute)

Indian music inspired Coltrane to use two bassists and the droning tamboura at the Village Vanguard in 1961. To paraphrase from Lewis Porter`s biography, "The impact of Indian music on Coltrane can be heard in sustained drones, exotic scales, and the way he likes to repeat and develop short motifs, like the sitar... The influence is explicit in the song, *India* - a chant that never moves from a G pedal point. Composer and jazz scholar Bill Bauer found the probable source of that tune in a religious chant from a Folkways LP. The Indian singer`s melody is nearly identical to Coltrane`s...". (Porter 209) Let`s have a listen to *India* now. Notice the droning bass, the lack of chord changes, and a statement of melody followed by extended improvisation... <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0wuaquaMmGA> (2 & 1/2 min)

Coltrane - Spiritualism

Coltrane was fascinated not only in sound, but also in world cultures. In some, music was said to have mystical powers. He hoped to find those, telling Nat Hentoff, "I`ve been looking into those approaches - as in India - in which particular sounds and scales are intended to produce specific emotions...". (Porter 211) He said that music expressed higher ideals, creating thought patterns that can change people. (Porter 261)

Coltrane came to feel his music was an extension of his religious beliefs. After studying many non-Western religions, his views became universalistic. (Lavezzoli 273) In the liner notes of his album, *Meditations* (1965), Coltrane declares, "I believe in all religions". He said: "My goal is to live the truly religious life and express it in my music. If you live it, when you play there`s no problem... My music is always the spiritual expression of what I am - my faith, my knowledge, my being... when you see the possibilities of music, you desire to do something really good for people, to help humanity... Music can make the world better, and I`d like to point out the divine in a musical language that transcends words." (Porter 232) When asked in 1966 what he would like to be in ten years, he said, "I`d like to be a saint". (Porter 260)

Coltrane believed we should strive for perfection, equating playing perfectly with living perfectly. (Porter 259) He accepted the diversity of human beliefs as representing one God in

different ways. His song titles reflect a mixture of religious references, such as *The Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost* which is Christian; *Dear Lord* and *Meditations* which are more general; and *Om* suggesting Eastern beliefs. Other examples are: *Prayer and Meditation Suite*; *Ascension*; *Selflessness*; *Amen*; *Ascent*; and *Attaining*.

The fourth movement of his most famous and successful album, *A Love Supreme*, is a musical setting for an original poem to God, written by Coltrane and printed in the liner notes. For each syllable of the poem, he plays one note, basing his phrasing on the poem's words. In a thorough analysis of the first song form and solo, Porter concludes: "He's telling us that God is everywhere, in all keys and register... There's a method behind the piece - it's not abstract, but dictated by the message he wants to convey". What Porter is referring to is Coltrane chanting the words "a love supreme" at the conclusion of the song, after playing a melodic phrase in all keys, similar to the way a preacher might repeat to his congregation. I'll play this now: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xuSsZmJCFas&NR=1> (4:55 - 7:00 = 2 minutes)

Coltrane's 1965 release called *Om*, contains verbal chants from Hindu and Buddhist holy writings, describing the primal sound "om" as the common denominator in all things. The spiritual message of Coltrane's music is pervasive. His code, and the most important point of my presentation, is that you can only really improve as a player by improving as a person. (Porter 107) **(7:40 talk + 5:30 music = 13:10 total)**

John McLaughlin

Coltrane is a perfect segue way to guitarist John McLaughlin, because McLaughlin surpasses "...all other jazz musicians in his ability to mainstream Indian music and spiritual values to jazz and rock audiences...". (Lavezzoli 330) He's a disciplined virtuoso in pursuit of spiritual enlightenment. Like Coltrane, McLaughlin was exposed to beliefs that differed from the Christianity they knew as children. Classically trained on piano and violin, McLaughlin discovered flamenco music, jazz, blues, rock, and Indian classical music very early on. He became "...the first guitarist to fuse the attitude and autonomy of rock players with meticulously honed jazz and classical chops...". (Lavezzoli 331) He studied with Ravi Shankar, practiced yoga, meditation, vegetarianism, and professed devotion to an Indian guru. Poems, quotes, and even pictures of his guru adorn McLaughlin's earlier album covers. He came to the same realization that Coltrane did: music and spirituality are inextricably linked.

One of McLaughlin's 1st recordings was called *My Goal's Beyond*. Half of it contained one of the first examples of unaccompanied guitar in recorded jazz, and the other half was Indian-flavored, foreshadowing McLaughlin's famous Indian band called *Shakti* and in fact, other world fusion efforts in jazz too. (Lavezzoli 335) I'm going to play an excerpt of a song called *Peace One* (that's "p-e-a-c-e"). Notice the droning of the Indian tamboura, the same instrument Coltrane utilized. Notice the tabla, and melodies played by the violin typically used in Indian music, and soprano sax, which if you recall, strongly resembles the traditional Indian sound. Notice McLaughlin's fast single string tremolos and note bending, mimicking the sitar to some extent. The whole song is based on D-dorian, emphasizing mode rather than vertical harmony. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eGkNt7MAg0w> (3:00)

McLaughlin really immersed himself in Indian culture, studying the *vina*, a southern Indian long-necked lute with a pear shaped wooden body, for two years until deciding he couldn't continue without compromising the integrity of both instruments. Spiritually, his path was similar to Coltrane's, whom McLaughlin admired. In an interview with Peter Lavezzoli, for a book titled *The Dawn of Indian Music in the West*, McLaughlin said, "...devotional music is that which addresses the need of a person to access a higher sense of awareness, in which they feel a oneness with the subject or object of their desire...", and in his opinion, it's because of Coltrane that westerners have any alternative to the church's devotional music. (Lavezzoli 338) McLaughlin says there are *only* two schools of improvisation in the entire world: Indian classical music and American jazz. When asked whether one prepares you for the other, he said, "...a background in either does not prepare anyone to "adopt" schools of music, though it can help...". He emphasized, and these are very telling words, "...only love has the key to opening the doors of different musical cultures...". (Lavezzoli 339)

Let's listen to a little of McLaughlin's ground-breaking group, *Shakti*. Notice the interaction between guitar and percussion, and recall I mentioned that characteristic when describing the aspects of Indian music that appealed to Coltrane.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wHDO1HN06Fc> (3:00)

I emailed McLaughlin in preparation for this recital. I was delighted, if not a little surprised, that he took the time to respond. He said the best way for him to describe his connection with Indian music and indeed, his philosophy in life, was to recommend a book called *The Mysticism of Music, Sound, and Word*, by Hazrat Inayat Khan, a Sufi musician who practiced,

composed, played and sang so much he said he reached the stage of touching the “Music of the Spheres”. He then felt he could do more good for the world by talking instead of playing. In the preface to this book, he said, “...Now, if I do anything, it is to tune souls instead of instruments; to harmonize people instead of notes...”. I believe his ideas are profound. I’d like to quote a little from Khan, because his philosophy represents well the themes of this lecture. Here is a minute taste of ideas that all the artists discussed today seem to be in tune with:

“...the power of music depends on the grade of spiritual evolution that person has touched”.

(Khan 137)

“The effect of music depends not only on proficiency, but also on the evolution of the performer...” (Khan 53)

“Man’s state of mind can be read by his touch upon any instrument; for however great an expert he may be, he cannot produce by mere skill, without a developed feeling within himself, the grace and beauty which appeal to the heart.” (Khan 57)

“Music is called a divine or celestial art, not only because of its use in religion and devotion, and because it is in itself a universal religion, but because of its fineness in comparison with all other arts and sciences.” (Khan 59)

“All religions have taught that the origin of the whole of creation is sound”. (Khan 78)

“What art cannot express, poetry explains; what poetry cannot express, is expressed by music. Therefore to a thinker music in all ages will stand supreme as the highest expression of what is deepest in oneself...”;

“...in the East... music has always been taken to be a part of religion...” (Khan 89)

“No part of the world, East or West, can really deny the divinity of music. In the first place, music is the language of the soul; and for two people of different nations or races to unite there is no better means than music. For music not only unites man to man, but man to God”.

(Khan 97)

(5:45 talk + 6 music = 11:45)

Horace Silver

The last musician I want to mention before introducing some of my own music, is pianist and composer Horace Silver. I really couldn't agree more with what pianist and founding member of *Weather Report*, Joe Zawinal, said in the foreword to Silver's recent biography, "Throughout the history of music, there have been thousands of master players, artists, and composers. Yet each generation has produced relatively few individuals with something so distinctive, personal, and recognizable that when you hear the music not only do you know whose music it is, but it also seems you know that *person*".

Silver is one of the first fusion musicians. His 1956 hit single called *Senor Blues*, was inspired by music he heard in Brazil. Fusing the more elusive non-Cuban Latin rhythms with an infectious melody expertly arranged in 6/8 time, was most unique and impactful. (Shadwick 38) As Jelly Roll Morton said: "...if you can't manage to put tinges of Spanish in your tunes, you will never be able to get the right seasoning for jazz", (Rosenthal 39) and Silver did so frequently. Like Coltrane, he was *always* listening, inspired by what he heard and incorporating it into his music as he did with *Senor Blues* and throughout his career.

As Bob Blumenthal says in the 2008 liner notes addition to the re-release of Silver's album *The Tokyo Blues*:

"Silver did not study Brazilian sources when he wrote *Swinging the Samba* or Middle Eastern modes when he penned *The Bagdad Blues*. Analysis of source materials did not lead him in future years to *Calcutta Cutie*, *Mexican Hip Dance*, *African Ascension*, or *The Great Mexican Indian Uprising*. And he most definitely did not immerse himself in the music of Japan when he wrote the four originals that appear on this disc. The Silver approach was more old school, born of an era when dues were paid by playing for the people, not just in a musician's own community, but in other local neighborhoods as well, when even aspiring jazz players gained passing acquaintance with rhumbas, sambas, polkas, calypsos, and other ethnic styles. As an African-American with Cape Verdean roots, Silver may have had a head start on many of his peers, but it was his open ears and uncommon gift for melody, structure, and small-group orchestration that allowed him to incorporate foreign elements with such

success” .

Silver “...prides himself on remaining open to all kinds of music and accessible to many kinds of people. Like Duke, he’s inspired by his travels and heredity.” (Ullman 79)

Examples of ethnic flavor in Silvers’ music include the bolero *Moon Rays*; the bossa nova *Gregory is Here*; the mambo *Nutville*; the samba *Time and Effort*; the rock sound of *Psychedelic Sally*; the oriental sound of *Dragon Lady*; The Brazilian groove of *Swinging the Samba*; the gospel of *The Preacher*; the folk blues of *Doodlin’*; and r&b of *The Backbeat*.

Silver’s willingness to use electric keyboard and bass on his 1970 *The United States of Mind* album is indicative of his openness to new sounds and trends. He personalized all his various influences never sacrificing his unique voice. It’s worth noting that when Coltrane was asked who he admired most in jazz, Horace Silver was the very first person he mentioned.

He lived a clean, drug-free, vegetarian, spiritually focused, self-healing lifestyle. His album with strings and singers called *Silver-n-Strings Plays Music of the Spheres*, has extensive liner notes including this explanation: “...We produce distorted lives if we do not create a balance between learning the melodies of spiritual principles, implementing and harmonizing them through our thoughts and deeds, so they may produce rhythmic positivity through our bodies and outer conditions. The intent behind this musical work is to help people experience a more expressive and progressive way of life, to balance the physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions of themselves, so they may radiate the beauty of The Music of the Spheres”. I cannot prove that Silver was aware of Khan’s philosophy, but 50 years before this album, the phrase “Music of the Spheres” shows up as an entire chapter of Khan’s book, the one McLaughlin suggested.

In my interview with former Silver band member Bennie Maupin, I was told Maupin introduced Silver to a bookstore with a wide variety of books on religion, mysticism, numerology and astrology. Like McLaughlin and Coltrane, Silver read a lot and had a deep interest in the subject of self-development. Once introduced to ideas like Khan’s, he absorbed and integrated them into his music. In Silver’s own very telling words, “The most difficult thing in life is the most important thing, perfecting one’s self, one’s character”. (Ullman 87) This was the uplifting message of Silver’s music, one shared by Coltrane and McLaughlin.

Silver's titles and lyrics reek of spiritual significance, such as: *Soul Searchin`*; *How Much Does Matter Really Matter*; *Cause and Effect*; *The Search for Direction*; *Direction Discovered*; *Empathy*; *Optimism*; *Expansion*; *Communion With the Creator*; *The Creator Guides Us*; etc... He released theme albums like *Music to Ease Your Disease* and *Prescription for the Blues*, both with Silver pictured on the cover in a doctor's lab coat, with liner notes and lyrics about healing the body, mind and soul through music; He released an album with Bill Cosby, filled with parental type advice for kids called, *Guides for Growing Up*; The double CD called *The United States of Mind*, explicitly incorporated his spiritual views into music, using song lyrics and liner notes to preach his message. Though his music had evolved since the 50's, my teacher Cecil Bridgewater reminded me: he *had* written *The Preacher*, and in fact, used his music to preach peace and unity throughout his career, a common thread linking all his work. Silver once said: "I've been thinking about music for healing, and what I can do. We're trying to uplift people's thinking, tout here, through the lyrics, a few spiritual principles that everybody needs to get in tune with". (Silver/Pastras 65)

Let's have a quick listen to a song from *The United States of Mind* called *All*. Listen to the lyrics and their unifying message. This is Horace himself doing the lead singing. (2:30)

For anyone interested in this great, but relatively unknown period of Silver's recorded work, I highly recommend all the albums starting with *The United States of Mind* in 1970, and ending with *Music to Ease Your Disease* in 1988. Those years include recordings with Eddie Harris on Silver's *Silveto* label, and the whole 5 album "Silver and..." series with Tom Harrell and Bob Berg: *Silver-n-Wood*, *Silver-n-Brass*, *Silver-n-Voices*, *Silver-n-Percussion* and *Silver-n-Strings*. (7:20 talk + 2:30 music = 9:50 total)

Greg Chako

My 1st idea for this project was to perform a big band version of a tune I recorded years ago in Asia with a small group, showing and talking about how I learned to orchestrate it for big band. I'm glad Dr. Demsey told me that wasn't as compelling a topic as this one. Schools' focus is on music notes and analysis when in fact, great music has never been about that. It's about something else. Some might find this presentation lacking in formal music analysis, because it is! I've chosen to talk about culture and spiritual quest instead, things shared by musicians and non-musicians alike. To complete the final degree requirement, I wanted to

present something I'm passionate about, something I believe essential for all great music to exist, and something I believe many people like to talk about. Isn't it ironic that one of the most popular topics musicians reflect on is one college music programs seem to avoid?

I began by giving you my background. Then, I tried to show how 3 amazing artists I admire have utilized the influence of culture and spirituality. Finally, I'd like share examples of my own work, illustrating musically the ways culture and spirituality has affected me. Were it easier to get a tabla and didgeridu player, with 4 horns and a full percussion section, I might have played this music live, but instead, just following the conclusion of my lecture, I will perform live with 3 of New York City's finest Brazilian players and 3 of my fellow students. With that 7-member group, I will showcase compositions that further demonstrate the themes I'm discussing - merging jazz and Brazilian with spiritually inspired lyrics.

First is a tune titled *Tokong Burung, Nazri's Place*. This is the song I revamped for big band while here at William Paterson, which I mentioned earlier as the subject of my 1st lecture idea. *Tokong Burung* is Malay, meaning *Island of the Birds*. Nazri is the dive guide's name from a scuba trip I took off the coast of Tioman Island in Malaysia. This "Island of the Birds" is a mass of rock jutting high out of the ocean, with steep cliffs, choppy waters preventing boats from landing, and tall grasses on the top, hiding the birds' eggs cherished by certain Malay villagers. They swim from the boat to the island, climb the cliffs, burn the grass to expose the nest, then take the eggs they find back to their village to eat. Few people dive there, so conditions are pristine. Underwater, sound is changed considerably. I use instruments such as the didgeridu and tabla, to mimic what one hears underwater, of waves hitting the boat or air bubbles floating upwards, etc... The didgeridu often mimics sounds of nature. Since it plays only one note, all the pieces I write featuring didgeridu, and I've written a few, are modal in nature. This arrangement evokes a vision in my mind of the exotic, if not somewhat eerie place I was in. I'll play the didgeridu solo through to the end. (4:40-7:08end = 2:28/2:30 minutes)

The next tune is notable because, like the last selection, I have the American drum set, the African conga, and the Indian tabla, all playing at once! And relating to aspects of Indian classical music, this tune begins slowly, with a statement of the melody, a modal guitar solo, then tempo quickens with tabla and tenor sax trading, getting increasingly free and wild. This resembles Indian classical music because a typical raga starts out slowly, and in subsequent sections becomes faster with increased improv dialogue between soloist and percussion.

I'll play from the beginning of the trading section so you can hear the speedup and some of the musical interaction going on. (3:15-6:04 = 2:50)

The next excerpt merges bebop with Indian instruments. Rhythm changes in A-major to accommodate the tabla key, this song has altered harmony similar to Coltrane's *Countdown*, but after the guitar solos over those difficult chords, all fixed harmony disappears when bass clarinet and percussion solo over a droning bass. The Indian drums used are the tabla and the double headed Mridangam. The title *Murtabop* refers to one of my favorite foods in Singapore, an Indian dish called Murtabob, consisting of Roti Pratha bread stuffed with egg and either meat or vegetables, fried on a flat grill then folded over itself like a pancake and served with a side of spicy curry sauce. I changed the last letter of Murtabob to a "p" so the title emphasizes the Indian and bebop flavors. The rubato intro also mimics the opening *alap* section of a raga, before progressing to the melody and free improvisation. (0-2:27)

The next selection features my own lyrics. I've written lyrics to seven songs, and five of them have some significance spiritually, two are about love. This one is called *Creators of Life*. The lyrics are about thoughts transforming circumstances, because thoughts and imagination, to a remarkable extent, eventually manifest physical reality, hence the advantage of thinking positive. Notice the Latin groove and flute obligato... (0-1:48)

One of the songs I'll perform live later is called *Walk With Me*. This song has lyrics of spiritual significance, though it might not be obvious. I like to write lyrics that say something on multiple levels, with deeper meanings accessible just below the surface. For tonight, I've arranged this for 2 vocalists and 5 instrumentalists, but what I'll play now is an informal, unrehearsed session done in Japan this past summer with only a vocalist and drum machine. This may give you an idea of the direction I'm going: acoustic guitar, Latin rhythms, with lyrics that impart a personal and positive message. (play 0-3:35)

Songs I write are often inspired by places I've visited. When I was in New Caledonia, I wrote a song called *French Island Fantasy*, which I arranged to capture in my mind's eye, the shimmering sun and sea there. On a 2-week exploratory dive trip in the Coral Sea, I wrote a song called *Ocean Blues*. Staying at the home of a friend in Australia whose last name was Weathered, I wrote a song in his back yard on a particularly nice day, called *Fine Aussie Weathered*, replacing the word "weather" with his last name. That song also featured the

didgeridu my host said he liked so much. Coming home after living in Asia for more than 10 years, crossing the Verrazano-Narrows bridge on the way to an Italian restaurant in Brooklyn, with jazz blasting on the radio, I was inspired to capture my feeling with a tune called *Coming Home*. I'd like to play some of that, and hope you can feel some of the excitement I had. Notice the unique front line of guitar, trombone, and tenor, and the juxtaposition of both Latin and swing rhythms. After the piano solo, swing switches back to Latin for the sax and percussion solos. (0-2:55)

For my last selection, called *Yamanashi Snow*, I'll play the whole song for once. This was inspired by Yamanashi prefecture in Japan, a mountainous area including Mt. Fuji, famous for its pure well water, lakes, fresh air and stunning beauty. I was staying at a log cabin owned by a pianist friend of mine, sitting outdoors with my beloved Golden Retriever and guitar, looking up at the snow-capped peaks, when I was inspired to write this down. Notice the sleigh bells and wood block, and the Fender Rhodes, all used to evoke that peaceful, pristine, crisp, snowy landscape. (play 0-5:55)

Technically, this concludes my presentation, however, I hope you'll stick around for my live performance at 6:45, and also for the 10 minute video I'm about to play while I get set up for the concert. This is a documentary done in Singapore about 15 years ago, with interviews and musical clips of my band playing at Raffles Hotel. I realized that this video, though fairly old now, exemplifies some of the same themes I've been talking about. I'm inviting you to see and hear me in action back then, so perhaps by the end of this evening's performance, we'll have come full circle, past, present, and future - all connected and unified in one positive message to share with you! (8:20 talk + w/music 34:10)

[Play video:](#)

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