



Soundcloud Transcription
Individual Program
Industry, Mental and Spiritual Prowess Setlist

During this time of working with Bjork + Bianca Jagger, Daniel Lismore - Vivienne Westwood's protege and Gucci's Alessandro Michele, the Artistic Director - it was striking to me that they all have this warrior-strong mind + spirit - and that most of the artists that i meet - don't. And the contrast became very clear to me, that this was a kind of deciding factor of creative expression and subsequent success. This ability to be strong and sensitive at the same time. And i think there's a lot for Artists to learn from a martial artist's tenacity and training, as well as from the spiritual arts like meditation, that help tap into creativity and emotional intelligence - so important or an Artists training - and life itself. Because we've had enough Kurt Kobains and Amy Whinehouses. There's a lot of addictions that we hear about in music, and there's an emphasis on connecting in our music through pain. And what I do with my Artists, is I help them tune into the reality, because it is a reality - that i've witnessed - that there is a more harmonious way to be and make it as an Artist. So that's the main philosophy of my work with UBUNTU.

So with UBUNTU, my coaching platform for musicians, we focus on 3 kinds of prowess. Industry prowess, mental prowess + spiritual prowess.

Now prowess we can define as exceptional bravery or ability, especially in combat or battle or an exceptional or superior ability, skill or strength, and we can also say it's a valiant or daring deed, so there's a lot of implication of courage with prowess.

INDUSTRY PROWESS

So starting with industry prowess - UBUNTU has a setlist that helps musicians make the transition from being a musician to an Artist. And there really is a difference. There's one example I always give to my Artists about Björk - I remember we were having an orchestral rehearsal for her performance at the Royal Albert Hall, and the violins were playing a part mezzo piano and Björk stopped the rehearsal, went up to the conductors block and talked to musicians very softly and said, look - imagine a building that's dilapidated, crumbling, falling to bits - and that you can see rays of sunshine glimmering through the cracks, and that sunshine warms your body. And she wanted them to play from that feeling, from that image, from that place. That was, to me, an example of an Artist - it was a Björk moment. It was not impressing but expressing - and this is what i work on with my Artists. Is this idea of expressing yourself instead of impressing.

Artist Development

So that leads me into Artist Development. We talk about Artist Development in the Industry Prowess Setlist. It's about developing your story as an Artist. Do you know what your story is - is the story that you're giving, the feedback that you're getting - is it accurately portraying what you think you're giving out into the world. Also your sound - I remember talking with a Japanese composer called Ume who worked on the martial arts films 'Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon' - and he said to me - you know I love Björk's music so much. The dovetailing across the bars is what he loves and how he identifies Björk as an Artist - and you know I've worked on Björk's music extensively but as soon as he said that - and i realised this before - but it really popped out at me even more. And being able to recognise other Artists sounds whether it's Björk or Mick Jagger or Led Zeppelin, is a really useful exercise and process to be able to define your sound even more. We work with style as well. Everyone's going to fit into a genre whether you like it or not, we're all kind of algorithm-ised nowadays with Spotify and the likes - but what differentiates you and makes you stand out - is your style. It's what makes people believe Artists. For example there's a country and western singer called Dolly Parton, she sings a lot about common themes of heartbreak, love stories, but what really makes us believe her and makes her stand out is this radical vulnerability that she has, that's her style. And it makes her stand out, and this is what I work with Artists on as well. I also talk with Artists about creative collaborations, developing or introducing that into their work. Björk was the Queen Bee of this, we actually called her the Queen Bee as well, Björk would work with avant-garde Harpists, Inuit throat singers - so eskimo throat

singers, Dokaka and Razhel human beatboxes, Timberland - R+B/hip hop artists - and at UBUNTU we introduce or develop that in an Artists work as well.

Marketing + Image

Marketing and Image is also an important part of industry prowess. So I get Artists thinking about developing consistency in how they present themselves as a whole package to the world. And that's from the seemingly little things to the big things - so that involves writing style and emails, and social media posts. You know, seemingly little things. Interview style, dress/image, musical aesthetic as we touched on before, aesthetic in music videos and social media aesthetic as well. And all these things need to combine and synthesise into something authentic and consistent.

Promotion

Another part of industry prowess is getting Artists to think about their promotional reach. So developing their regional, national and international fanbases on social media platforms and expanding national coverage such as national radio airplay, high profile playlists - Spotify - getting interviews, and features on online media / blogs.

Funding

Another part of the industry prowess setlist is funding. At the beginning on an Artists career being able to have a bit of a financial safety net is really useful. So I help artists write grant applications for funding. So that could be for live performance or touring, now that it's possible again. Industry events, recording new material, creative residencies, creative collaborations - being able to pay the people you just want to collaborate with - equipment software costs for protocols and the like, and just for creation of new music, you can get funding, you know, to cover your time, the time it takes to create your work. You know, maybe some of you are blessed right now and you have the time to create, but you might be juggling work outside of music with your music work as well - and having a bit of a financial safety net - to enable you to decrease the financial stressors and give you that time to create - is going to be really invaluable for Artists.

Goal setting

And goal setting is another part of the setlist - so that's developing short and long-term goals - which includes reaching out to collaborators, management, agents, promoters, publishers, record labels, agents, PR/pluggers - in a consistent way. Also collating, curating, editing your video and audio material for social media - Artists create lifelines instead of deadlines for doing all of that in a short-term + a long-term way. Also writing producing, recording + releasing new music and making music videos - if you're there. So that's industry prowess and that setlist, helps a musician, as i said, helps a musician transition from being a musician to an Artist to really being + making it in the working world.

MENTAL + SPIRITUAL PROWESS

And next i talk with Artists about mental + spiritual prowess. And we develop these two prowesses, and this setlist for these prowesses - helps musicians harmonise with the day-to-day inner realities of being an Artist. So you know, it's tough being an Artist, and these prowesses enable you to be that strong but also sensitive Artist that you need to be - to be an Artist day-to-day, and to hopefully, if and when, make it as well. So for example, the Samurai, a Japanese warrior clan, they chose as a truest symbol of their warrior clan - a cherry blossom, it's a beautiful flower, beautiful pink flower, very fragile. And their motto was 'like a petal dropping in the morning sunlight and floating serenely to the earth, so must the fearless detach himself from life, silent and inwardly unmoved.' And it's a beautiful metaphor really, for having your biggest weakness be your strength. And this is very applicable to being an Artist. Because as an Artist, you're going to need to be radically vulnerable, and maybe you're going to need to go to the darkest, and seemingly most dangerous corners of your psyche, revealing things about yourself that you don't want to reveal but that your work requires you too, and allowing yourself disappointment - setting yourself up for perhaps flamboyant failure. You know Björk, when i started working with her, she was actually making an album about her divorce, an incredibly vulnerable emotional place, and an example of this radical vulnerability, and an example of her courage as well. So we need to be willing to bare our souls, and to put ourselves in the crossfires of harsh judgment at the same time, and do things that may seem seemingly silly or stupid or can be easily misunderstood, and give ourselves the permission to do those things. And, you know, there's going to be a lot of rejection, again talking about mental prowess, there's going to be a lot of rejection to deal with, so

we need to be tough, we need to grow a kind of elephant skin. That's what I tell my Artists - that they're going to need it. Because criticism happens, it's gonna happen even if and when you make it. Björk gets plenty of criticism and you know it's just an opinion, a criticism is just an opinion, and the thing is not to ignore the bad reviews, but to keep all the slights that people may say about your work there in the back of your mind, and use it as energy, fuel to convert it into creative energy, you know don't be taken down by it. Don't let the rejection define you. And also actually something that's trickier to do is to accept that criticism - and to think that actually there's a grain of truth to it. And it takes a lot of strength, mental prowess and strength to be able to do that. To think, that ok, that something in your work actually allowed that critic to lower the bar, and you know, maybe you haven't found a way to make your work speak to the people you're trying to speak to but that's actually on you, the Artist. And we need to take it in, not blow it out of proportion, and get back to work. And that takes a lot of mental prowess and strength. And you know if you do get criticism, you can say, 'you could be right' - to the person saying it - it has a nice kind of double edged sword to it, they may not realise that you're kind of maybe slighting them a little bit as well. And you now Envy nowadays - there's so much social media - again we need to be tough, we need to toughen ourselves up. It's so easy to see what other people are doing and what other people have. You can scan for how other Artists are being mentioned in news articles, magazines, rather than you. And it can create a lot of envy. The thing is you know it actually distracts you from what you should be doing as an Artist, which is creating, and actually depletes the space for honest self-criticism as well. You know it's also an easier place to be a passive victim as well, coming from this place of envy, it's easier to blame other people or other situational circumstances as to why you aren't where you want to be. But the thing is, you know, especially in music, it's not fair, other Artists are gonna get the gigs that you want, maybe Artists that are not as good as you, they're gonna get more money, more adoration, perhaps, they might marry someone richer, be able to spend more time on their art, have better social connections than you, perhaps. And you know it's tough, and it's not fair, but envy doesn't help Artists to get where they want to be. So we need to be tough, again mentally strong and have this prowess, to be able to continually show up, and to have his elephant tough skin. And to be able to recover from these critical injuries, blows that will happen at some point or another. Again we need to be mentally tough. You know, perhaps your work is gonna get slighted or slated, but what's actually even worse is being ignored. So there's a novelist / art critic called Jim Lewis. And he says 'If people dismiss your work, strive to make them hate it. If no-one hates it it might not be art, and it's not because offending people is inherently valuable. But it's that if you put a true gesture out into the world it's going to please some people and displease others. So the moral is - don't make your art go down so easy. You know a lot of people don't like Björk's music. And it's fine and is actually even preferable. Don't be afraid of it, it's going to be inevitable if you're kind of doing it right. And actually we can learn more from what people say they don't like about your work, from the applause you're gonna get from family and friends or the critics. And actually it's the qualities in that work that bother people the most, that are the things you should be cultivating and nurturing, kind of pushing outside the axis of vice, being so outrageous that those qualities actually become virtues - it happens all the time in art. So that's talking about mental prowess and the reasons why as an Artist it's really integral to harmonising the inner realities of a day-to-day life of an artist.

I'm gonna move onto talking about spirituality and what that means and then I'll talk about the mental and spiritual prowess in UBNTU's setlist.

So just to define spirituality a bit, because I think there can be a lot misunderstanding about what we mean by spirituality, and spiritual prowess. Actually The Royal College of Psychiatrists in the UK - promote spirituality when they're dealing with mental health. So they've very helpfully given definitions of what spirituality is, what spiritual practices are, and the spiritual values and skills that come from these practices. So I'm just gonna go through them.

So they say - spirituality - you know there's no one definition - but in general it's something that everyone can experience, it helps us to find meaning and purpose in the things we value, it can bring hope and healing in times of suffering and loss, and it encourages us to seek the best relationship with ourselves, others and what lies beyond. And that definitely has strong ties to being an Artist. So spiritual practices - they list practices that span being religious to non-religious. I'm gonna talk about the non-religious. So that's spending time enjoying nature, giving yourself in acts of compassion, spending time in meditation or deep reflection, following traditions

of yoga/tai chi, joining team sports or other activities that involve cooperation and trust, spending time in contemplative reading - like literature or poetry, appreciating the arts - is intrinsically spiritual - being creative is intrinsically spiritual (painting, sculpture, cooking, gardening - you know all artistic ventures outside of music as well). Making and keeping good family relationships is a spiritual practice and as well as making and keeping friendships especially with those who we trust and have intimacy with. These are spiritual practices. And from these practices come spiritual values and skills that we can use, so they say again, the Royal College of Psychiatrists in the UK - that these spiritual practices can help us to develop the better parts of ourselves, help us become more creative, patient, persistent, honest, kind, compassionate, wise, calm, hopeful and joyful, and that it's actually part of the best mental health care as well. So, these spiritual skills include being honest, and being able to see yourself as others see you, being able to stay focused in the present, to be alert, unhurried and attentive, Being able to rest, relax and create a still, peaceful state of mind. Developing a deeper sense of empathy for others. Finding the capacity for forgiveness, being able to be with someone who is suffering while still being hopeful, learning better judgement for example about when to speak or act, or when to remain silent or do nothing, learning how to give without feeling drained, and being able to let go of things that are hurting you. And so in this sense, spirituality emphasises our connections to other people and the world. So perhaps, you know, already, intuitively, you can see that being able to connect with yourself and other people, learning the skills + the values attached to those skills, is also a really integral part of being an Artist day to day - the inner life of being an Artist - and you know making it as an Artist as well. The epitome of an Artist, in this case, a martial artist, who has combined these mental and spiritual prowesses with the technical, industry prowess - is Bruce Lee. And Bruce Lee was inspired by a german philosopher called Eugen Herrigel, who studied buddhism and martial arts in Asia, and actually launched a whole series of Zen books, perhaps you've seen Zen and the Art of ... - it's thanks to him - and this german philosopher talks about how relying on mastery of technique - is not enough - that being technically proficient doesn't automatically give way to mental and spiritual loosening - but that we need to master both skills simultaneously - the technique/industry prowess + mental/spiritual prowess, and that's what i work with artists on is doing this simultaneously. Eugen Herrigel says, you know if you really want to master an art, technical knowledge is not enough, one has to transcend technique so that the art becomes and artless art growing out of the unconscious. And its really this mind-body connection that Bruce Lee became famous for, in a sense that having an empty mind - being able to transcend your sense of self - is how you actually become at one and perfect your technical skill - and its something quite different from the progressive study of an art. They can't be obtained these prowesses - mental and spiritual prowess - just by progressive study of the technique of an art - and actually martial artists really embraced this philosophy and a lot of Americans after discovering Bruce Lee went to the dojos to learn the martial arts, not just to be a great martial artist, but to marry mind/body/and soul in their art, and that was a lot thanks to Bruce Lee and his acknowledgement of the power of marrying mind/body/soul. So this is what i talk about and get Artists to think about in the mental and spiritual prowess setlist that again, helps harmonise a musician with the day to day inner realities of being an Artist.

Mojo

So I give soundbites of inspiration for my Artists, and the first soundbite is about mojo - and how an Artist can experience more mojo - i mean you know when you've got it, your family and friends know when you've got it. People around you, the audience know when your mojo is really on full power, and to develop that what i do is i get artists to experience more superpower mindsets - so that's courage, hope, calm, joy and resilience which you might be able to connect is related to spiritual prowess. And Artists being able to experience those things more in their day to day life, experiencing more courage, more joy, more calm, butterfly effects into experiencing that in their creative lives as well. You know, as an Artist your art is life and life is art. It's all interconnected. So we also talk about - in reference to developing your mojo - discovering your own optimal arousal for flow, and experiencing the link between the superpower mindsets of courage hope, calm, joy + resilience and the link between those mindsets and having flow and being creative. And the Artists really experience that. They embody how that feels, and how those links feel. Again, with the emphasis being on experiencing, Artists experiencing these things. I also get my Artists to experience the interdependence between technical/industry, mental and spiritual prowess. So again focusing on what Bruce Lee famously focused on - is really working on all three at the same time - and experiencing how each prowess can help the other. And also with reference to mojo, developing your mojo, i get artists to question and also hijack their artistic assumptions. There's a

great story, that Tim Gallway - a famous tennis coach - tells his athletes, - he actually continued the Zen and the Art of series that Eugen Herrigel, the German philosopher + Bruce Lee's inspiration, started. So he talks about this story of - there are three guys in a car, and they pull up to a red light. And they see a woman about to cross the street, and they notice that the woman is naked, and one of the men in the car is a pessimist, and he thinks, you know, what is the world coming to, now there are naked women walking the streets and it's acceptable, the other man is an optimist and thinks, you know, thank you, thank you God for putting this beautiful lady in front of me. And the third man, doesn't see good or bad, is not judgmental of the situation, and just sees what is, how things actually are. And he realises that the girl's eyes are closed. So he gets out of his car. Runs over to the woman, puts his jacket around her. Gently wakes her up, explains what happened, the situation, and she's very grateful. And this is an example of the importance of really seeing things how they are, not putting our assumptions, our biases onto situations which I see Artists do a lot. And so that's what we work on is, questioning and hijacking the assumptions that Artists have, about the business. You know about how maybe they should be in order to get a record deal. About how their image should be in order to be accepted by the music world. Assumptions about how the business world works. I find there are a lot of assumptions. So we work on hijacking them and really coming back to place of really seeing how things are. From a non-judgmental place.

Rebel Spirit

Now, the people I've worked with, be it Björk or Bianca Jagger, or the Vivienne Westwood connection as well, you know, they have a rebel spirit, they all defy conformity in one way or another. It's very much part of their identity, so we talk about that as well. I talk about that with my Artists. So we explore, what causes you an Artist to act on your empathy, and I get Artists to start creating from this place. I also get Artists to flag, and start thinking about and recognizing systems of not so obvious oppression. There's a great story - it's a 14th century Chinese parable called the Monkey Master Parable by Liu Ji - and it goes like this. So in the feudal state of Chu in China, a Chinese feudal state, an old man survived by keeping monkeys in his service. The people of Chu called him Chu Gong - the monkey master - and each morning the old man would assemble the monkeys in his courtyard, and order the eldest one to lead the others to the mountains, to gather fruits from bushes and trees. So it was a rule that each monkey had to give one tenth of his collection to the old man. And those who failed to do so would be ruthlessly flogged. And all the monkeys suffered bitterly but dared not complain. And one day a small monkey asked the other monkeys, ok but did the old man plant all the fruit trees and bushes? and the other monkeys said well no, they grew naturally didn't they - and the small monkey questioned them further - can't we take the fruits without the old man's permission - and the other monkeys said - oh, you know realised - yeah we can - so the small monkey said then why should we depend on the old man, why must we serve him, why must we be prisoners of this old man. And so all the monkeys realised the situation, and suddenly become enlightened and awakened to it. And on the same night, watching the old man, making sure he was asleep, the monkeys tore down the stockade, destroying it completely, they took the fruits so the man had nothing to eat. They left to the woods, never returned, and the old man actually died of starvation, he had no fruits anymore. So the kind of moral of the story is, Liu Zi says, that you know, some men in the world rule their people by tricks and not by righteous principles. And these people are just like the monkey master. They're not aware of their muddled-headedness and as soon as their people become enlightened their tricks no longer work. And the moral of this story is that sometimes situations are so normalised that we actually can't recognise them as being oppressive, just because they're so normal to us. And you know it's happening at the moment, and has been happening, the Me Too Movement + Black Lives Matter - both very relevant to the music industry. You know the ability to really pick apart social status quos and understanding our place in them and perhaps how we're facilitating them, as an Artist, is what I talk to my Artists about as well.

The Fat Cats

Now another soundbite in this setlist of mental and spiritual prowess is talking about fat cats - the fat cats - so that's experiencing how it feels to be on the other side of the computer or the concert stage. You know being a manager, being an agent, being a promoter, PR, record label, experiencing how it feels to be a person in the business on the other side. And exploring ways, with my Artists, we explore ways to approach people in the business and experience their impact as well, and this is related to, you know mental prowess is weaved into this part. Daniel Goleman,

a psychologist, wrote a book called Emotional Intelligence, and he says how in a very real sense we have two minds. We have one that thinks and one that feels. And these two are fundamentally different ways on knowing, and they interact to construct our mental life. And one is the rational mind and is this mode of comprehension, it's the one we're typically conscious of, and that is more prominent in awareness. And it's the one where we're thoughtful and we're able to ponder and reflect. But alongside that rational mind is also another system of knowing which is more impulsive and powerful, and sometimes illogical - and it's the emotional mind - and in this context, we're dealing more with the rational mind, thinking about you know, how do other people in the business perceive us, and how are our actions being perceived. And Dan Goleman writes, that there are cognitive rational mind skills, he lists them in his book, and he says they are: self talk, which involves conducting an inner dialogue as way to cope with a topic or challenge, or reinforce ones own behaviour - mental prowess in this sense over the rational mind also involves reading and interpreting social cues. For example, recognising social influences on behaviour, seeing oneself in the perspective of the larger community, he also talks about using steps for problem solving and decision making - for instance - controlling impulses, setting goals, identifying alternative actions, and anticipating consequences - a part of cognitive, rational, mental skills - also understanding the perspective of others - understanding behavioural norms, what is and is not acceptable behaviour, having a positive attitude towards life, and self-awareness, being able to develop realistic expectations about yourself as well. And all these mental prowesses, skills over the rational mind, are important, maybe you can connect them already, to understanding people in the business, how they feel, how they're reacting to you reaching out to them. So i really get Artists to experience this and embody this, as a way to develop mental prowess.

Making It

Now we also talk about making it in the mental / spiritual prowess setlist and we talk about developing an Artist's social support net from a genuinely caring place, so developing your relationships with family, friends and colleagues, and i don't mean networking, this is not related to networking, you know the thing is that, we need to be careful as Artists, of using people, when we're trying to rise up the ranks. The thing is, it may work initially, the problem is that people feel when we're being used, i'm sure you've felt this before, we all realise when we're being used, when the connection's not genuine, so that's one reason not to try and rise in the ranks just through networking, but also, in a deeper sense, you know, even if that does work, if and when you do make it, the relationships you have with people are really going to be your anchor - and you're going to want to be able to trust those people, and have them genuinely care about your well-being - and your relationships to have a very healthy foundation - so if your relationships are not built from this place, it's gonna be a very uneasy feeling for you, and speaking from personal experience, the people who have helped me in my career, are people who have genuinely liked me, and cared about my well-being, it's resulted from having genuine, consistent, long-lasting friendships with people around me - that develop into colleagues, it's a symbiotic relationship - the friendship and colleague relationship - and you know, also, further than that i can say myself, the people that i've helped subsequently, have been people that i've genuinely cared about and who i do have a caring and trusting, genuine, long-lasting and consistent relationship with, so we talk about with Artists, about developing your social network from this really genuinely caring place to help Artists make it. Another part of this soundbite of making it, is that i get Artists to practice artist warrior traits - so that's being humble, joyful, respectful, keeping their word, being authentic, curious, open, and staying motivated, these are qualities, traits that i've seen in these top level artists. Definitely in Artists that are less successful, i notice that there is more of an emphasis, a focus on individual achievement, on the kind of thought process of 'i'm great and you're not'. And this has actually been recognised by management consultants Dave Logan + John King, and they wrote a book called Tribal Leadership, and they recognised this as a stage that some middle-sized organisations go through - less successful organisations, of operating from this mentality of i'm great and you're not. And with Artists, there's a parallel, and you know it's very personal, it's about having to win, and about out-working and out-thinking competitors on an individual basis, and the result of this is a kind of collection of lone warriors, warriors, individual, lone and lonely warriors, and what we really want to be getting to, and what i've seen in these top level artists is what Dave Logan and John King in this Tribal Leadership book they've written characterise as instead - the mindset of - having a sense of innocent wonder - and a strong belief that life is great, and they just enjoy what they're doing, and the result is definitely not the goal - it's a happy cherry on the top - but it's this mindset in these top level artists - of pure

joy, enjoyment of what they do, regardless of the success on the other side - so that's what i work on with artists as well. And also re-living, re-experiencing, the interdependence of failure, happiness and success that they've already had in their lives - you know, the thing is, that unfortunately - unfortunately and fortunately - happiness is on the wrong side of the track to success - there isn't much of a relationship - but with failure and success, the relationship is very strong - we need to fail a lot in order to succeed, but again, success really doesn't have that much to do with happiness - so re-living these perhaps intuitive understandings you have, and re-living the experiences you've already had in your life outside of your creative endeavours - really helps my Artists relate this to their creative endeavours - and related to mental prowess - helps them strengthen themselves when the inevitable slights and failures happen in their careers, and we also talk about defining what success is for an Artist as well.