REMEMBERING LATIN JAZZ GREAT WILLIE BOBO WITH NEW EXHIBIT

Eric "Bobo" Corea and Gill Correa honor dad Willie Bobo along with grandson Valerie Corea at 5th Street Grease Building. (Bette Braxton)
Though younger music fans may not have heard of the Puerto Rican percussionist Willie Bobo, those of us old enough to have seen him in a live performance or owned his records know he was a legend. So it was with much anticipation in March, that I attended opening night of “Spanish Grease: The Life and Sounds of Willie Bobo,” a tribute exhibit at the William Grant Still Arts Center in West LA. The latest in the center’s African American Composers Series, the exhibit has been closed due to coronavirus restrictions, which were implemented just after it opened, but this Sunday the center will offer a virtual walk through hosted by his sons. In light of recent events, the online event offers a timely moment to celebrate Bobo’s contributions to music.

As Bobo himself explained in one of his best known LP’s of the same name, “Spanish Grease” means “Spanish soul.” That album as much as any of the many he recorded, represents the blending of Jazz and Latin Rhythms that he became famous for. Growing up in the Harlem section of New York, Willie “Bobo” Correa (Bobo was a nickname given to him by a fellow musician), began his career at a very young age playing percussion with Tito Puente and other famous musicians like Herbie Mann, Miles Davis, and Dizzy Gillespie, to name a few. Some time later, he came to the West Coast where he joined Cal Tjader, and eventually formed his own band.

The exhibit features an impressive collection of photos, posters, and album covers spanning his life, from his early years in New York to his later years on the West Coast. I personally felt a sense of nostalgia while looking at the photos of his performances in California, as I am sure I was in the audience in some of them.
At the opening event, a Latin Jazz ensemble played some of Bobo’s most famous songs, and after it finished, there was a percussion session that featured his son Eric “Bobo,” who showed everyone that rhythm runs in the family. Watching it, I remembered the many times I saw Willie perform, beginning with the first time, more than fifty years ago at the famous Lighthouse in Hermosa Beach. As a young 20 year old just starting to enjoy Jazz, and specifically Latin, I was so impressed that soon after I bought myself a set of timbales and have been a part time percussionist ever since.

When you saw Willie perform you were entertained not only by his music, but also by the funny comments and antics he became known for. Often, when a set was over, he would look at the audience and say, “We are taking a small break. So we will be “white black.”

Once after a break, I saw him walk to the stage and as he was waiting for the rest of the band, he took the microphone, stood there for a few minutes, and suddenly screamed at the top of his lungs “Band- where the hell are you?!?” scaring the crap out of everyone in the audience. I recall another time, he was performing at a club in East L.A. called the Pasta House. A fight suddenly broke out on the dance floor and it happened to be a drum solo on the timbales. Willie was looking at the fight while playing and I noticed that he was making the beats on the drums match the blows and tempo of the fight. He did not end the solo until the fight was over.
Bobo's charm was always part of the experience of seeing him. I remember another show I attended when he played a song with a good dancing beat and for whatever reason, no one got up to dance. Before he started the next song he told the audience the name of it, and then in a loud voice added, “And this time... Don't dance!” Of course, everyone got up and danced.

The thing that made Willie Bobo's music special was its range- he made hard driving songs with a lot of percussion, but also slow romantic songs on which he sang in a soft mellow voice that was extremely appealing. Songs like “To Be With You”, “The Look of Love,” and the classic “Dindi” come to mind. By the time he died in 1983, he had established himself as a pioneer in the fusion of Jazz, Latin Rock, R&B, and the rhythms that eventually became known as Salsa. But it was his friendly attitude and his sense of humor, along with his talent, that made him unforgettable.

“Spanish Grease: The life and Sounds of Willie Bobo,” has been extended through mid November but the art space is currently closed due to pandemic (classes, workshops and other programs have all been live-streamed) and a virtual walk through of the exhibit with Eric Bobo takes place this Sun., June 7, 6 p.m. PST. More info wgsac.wordpress.com.
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"Prayer and Well-Being: Addressing Fears and Contagion" 
June 19, 7:30PM PT

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Many around the world are struggling with concerns about contagion, as well as racial discrimination right now. You're invited to join a live webinar entitled, "Prayer and Well-being: Addressing Fears and Contagion." It will be live-streamed on YouTube on June 19th at 7:30pm PT. Join with the following link: youtu.be/LYzh3Fwh8uk

A Q&A session will follow the talk, so please come with questions!

The following is an interview with Christian Science practitioner and international speaker, Nate Frederick, who will be delivering the talk. Jeff Johnson, a member of one of the sponsoring churches—Ninth Church of Christ, Scientist, Los Angeles—conducts the interview.
JEFF: Hi Nate. So, your talk is going to share a “Christian Science” perspective. Can you clear the air a bit on that phrase? There are many misconceptions.

NATE: Absolutely. First, it’s not Scientology. I know many Californians have made that mistake. I’m not a scholar of Scientology, so I won’t try to explain their faith.
Christian Science, however, is a spiritual “Science” that's laser-focused on one thing: learning to heal by gaining the mindset of Jesus. Christian Science churches are, in a sense, centers for spiritual learning. But Christian Science isn’t confined to the walls of a church in the same way that biology is not confined to walls of a scientific institute.

And if you take the phrase itself, the word “Christian” evokes a savior. The word “Science” is about knowledge. So, you couple these terms together and you get the knowledge—or the knowing—that saves us from life-errors and brings health and freedom. Jesus said, “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32) and Christian Science shows us how to make that statement practical in everyday life.

JEFF: Now, you didn't grow up in Christian Science. How did you first come across it?

NATE: My mom was kind of church shopping when I was young, so I got to attend several different Christian churches that all had their own spin. In my teenage years, I drifted away from Christianity and became interested in non-dogmatic spirituality through meditation techniques and other Eastern approaches. I was so fascinated with spiritual experience that I studied religion in college with a focus on “perennial philosophy.” I was looking for the universal principles behind spiritual experience. I wasn't expecting to find any one particular religion to be the end-all for me. But my whole life changed when I read Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures, the textbook of Christian Science, written by Mary Baker Eddy.

After reading Science and Health, a cascade of healing followed: a long-standing shoulder injury from my youth disappeared, my dad gave up alcohol after years of trying everything and failing, and a chronically ill woman who I did personal care work for was up out of her bed taking dance and art classes in a matter of months. I believe that all of those healings were a direct result of Christian Science prayer.

JEFF: And do you think it's possible to heal contagion through prayer too? I know that's on many people's minds right now.

NATE: Absolutely! I've seen it many times. In fact, I've heard from several people that flu or Covid-19-like symptoms have disappeared recently while listening to one of my lectures or other Christian Science publications online. In fact, I had an experience myself with flu-like symptoms at the beginning of the Covid outbreak. After a night of prayer, the symptoms—beginning with the fear—disappeared and never returned.

The discoverer of Christian Science, Mary Baker Eddy, had a lot to say on the topic of contagion. In fact, her article Contagion (which has been recently translated in many languages on ChristianScience.com) has this line in the first paragraph: “Floating with the popular current of mortal thought without questioning the reliability of its conclusions, we do what others do, believe what others believe, and say what others say” (Miscellaneous Writings, p. 228). In the lecture, I will question a lot of the materialistic assumptions that we've been inculcated in since birth. I'll talk about the spiritual perspective that Jesus had and how it can untether us from any limiting beliefs about physicality governing us. This wholly spiritual perspective can reliably release us from fear and negative sensations in the body.

JEFF: I love recalling how Jesus healed many forms of contagious disease and also said that everyday people who followed his teachings could do the things that he did—and even greater.
NATE: Exactly. Jesus healed contagious diseases, including the most feared disease of his day which was leprosy. Mary Baker Eddy, following in Jesus’ footsteps, was recorded healing many forms of contagious disease, including diphtheria, tuberculous and membranous croup.

In the lecture, I’m going to talk about two points that are often absent in the public conversation about contagion. Firstly, the mental nature of contagion. And secondly, how a spiritual mindset can not only mitigate the effects of contagious disease, but can actually prevent and heal them.

To that first point, it’s easy to yawn when others yawn, cry when others cry, laugh when others laugh. It’s easy to be moved to experience the beliefs and sensations of others—good or bad—unless we defend ourselves mentally from other’s beliefs. I think this is commonly accepted, but I think this truth runs much deeper than we assume.

I was once called to visit a man dying in a hospital from what the doctors and family believed to be demonic possession. He lived halfway around the world in a culture that believed in demonic possession as much as the current western mind believes in the inevitable effects of certain drugs. I didn’t buy into the contagious narrative that everyone was believing about this man because I don’t believe in the reality of demons, even though they are experienced as real as anything else in some cultures. I think of demons—and other unGodlike beliefs—as errors analogous to mathematical errors like 2+2=3. Obviously, you could see and experience an error like that just like you could represent a truth about math. But the error actually has no cause, origin or “God.”

In this case, I rejected this man’s belief of demonic possession as an erroneous belief made manifest on the body. I prayed from the basis that this man was God’s image and likeness as it states right at the beginning of the Bible. And I held mentally to a God-like conception of his identity until I was filled with wholly spiritual sensations of peace and love. Well, that man recovered shortly after that prayer in a way that appeared miraculous to onlookers. But it was a divinely natural experience that was profoundly logical to me. I will share this account more in depth in the talk.

JEFF: That’s beautiful, Nate. Let’s pivot to talk a little bit about what’s in the news. We hear a lot from our political leaders about how they are going to follow “the science” in making decisions regarding this pandemic. Can you explain more about how Christian Science differs from “the science” they are referring to?

NATE: Science is about patterns and regularities of experience. Most people think what is fundamentally, unchangeably true are the laws of matter. Like the germ theory of disease, for example. Yes, there is an incredible level of consistency to that theory. But I think there is something more fundamental to life than the patterns of matter. I think consciousness underlies everything and the way we think informs our experience more than anything else—even more than modulations of matter.

Just think of it, I can say “go” to my body and the whole entire body runs forward. I can have a thought and then my mouth and hands will instantly move to express it. The arrow of causation is from thought to experience. Often we think the opposite—that matter or the body governs us. But that false belief cripples people. If we submit mentally to being subject to matter’s apparently inevitable laws of chance, decay and death, then fear and dis-ease are the natural result. Thankfully, Christian Science shows us how to align our thought with God, the divine Mind, and by doing so find
freedom—exemption—from fear and disease. And that's not all. As we learn to think out from God, divine Love, we can experience the most holy and wholesome states of mind. We can discover what the Bible calls “the peace of God, which transcends all understanding...” (Phil. 4:7).

Once you experience true Consciousness and its effects, material beliefs about physicality governing us can lose their hold. And a harmony of mind and body can ensue that I don't think is achievable by any pill or material method.

All that said, Christian Scientists strive to be the most law-abiding, loving citizens on earth. So, they vaccinate whenever it is required by law, and put the safety and peace of their communities before personal concerns.

JEFF: Now, what about those that are unemployed right now? Can Christian Science help them too?

NATE: Of course! We are always employed by God to express His/Her nature. One of the things that Christian Science helps people obtain is a deeper, more thorough understanding of God or Life. There's a line in Science and Health that says, “It is our ignorance of God, the divine Principle, which produces apparent discord, and the right understanding of Him restores harmony” (S&H, p.390). If we're unemployed or simply feel underutilized, as we focus on a beautiful and right understanding of Life and then express it, new opportunities to be valued naturally arise. There have been so many times in my life where I've experienced economic loss. But after praying about there being no loss or death in God, infinite Life—and striving to express a right sense of Life—amazing opportunities arose.

For example, after college, I went on a coming-of-age, around-the-world trip. I was learning many new skills on my trip and growing in my expression of spiritual qualities. But there came a period when I was basically down to my last penny and the car I was expecting to inherit fell through. Well, I prayed knowing that God was my source, supplying all good to his beloved child. I developed a deep expectation—an absolute faith—that progress is the law of God. Then, I got a call out of the blue from someone who offered me a dream car, and the opportunity to put some of my recently acquired skills to work as I worked to pay off the car.

If that was a one-off experience, I'd brush it aside. But I could tell you stories like this all day, and you'll likely hear many more accounts along the same line if you attend Wednesday night Christian Science testimony services. That's what I did when I first found Christian Science, and they regularly were the highlight of my week.

JEFF: That's really great, Nate. Lastly, let's touch on another sober note. With the death of George Floyd, the US—and much of the world—has been protesting for equal rights and justice for black people and for police reform. Do you have anything to share about that?

NATE: Sure. My heart goes out to anyone who has faced the horrors of racism in their life. That has got to end. And it's mighty inspiring to see so many around the world standing up and saying, “No more!”

Now, Christian Science is not political in nature and the church does not take definitive political stands. The church honors individual thought and our ability to work on these matters in our own hearts and lives. But Christian Science includes that protest spirit against injustice of all kinds. Mary Baker Eddy spoke out against the atrocities of slavery early in her life. And later, after discovering Christian Science, she wrote this: “I saw before me the sick, wearing out years of servitude to an unreal master in the belief that the body governed them, rather than Mind. The lame, the deaf, the dumb, the blind, the sick, the sensual, the sinner, I wished to save from the slavery of their own beliefs ...” (S&H, p.226).
She saw the greatest injustice that the world faces is not simply an unjust system of human rules, but false beliefs held in individual consciousness. And when we begin with ourselves, and actually rid ourselves of racism, discrimination and limiting beliefs within, we can begin to love in an intelligent way that brings lasting solutions to the surface.

Jesus lived in a world where the Roman empire had overcome many great civilizations and the Jews were under Roman occupation. Just imagine if China or Russia was in control of the US. Finding freedom from that political power would be the main objective of Americans. But Jesus saw things differently. He didn't primarily speak out against the Roman government. Much more often he spoke about a kingdom (or government) of God within. He taught people how to allow divine Love to govern their minds, then how to live in line with universal Love. I think this approach has been time-tested and remains vital for our enduring happiness and health.

I've seen instances of racism healed in my individual practice of Christian Science. And they came as a result of praying like Jesus did. As Science and Health notes, “[Jesus’] humble prayers were deep and conscientious protests of Truth, — of man's likeness to God and of man's unity with Truth and Love” (S&H, p.12).

JEFF: Well, thanks so much for talking a little bit about this, Nate. I hope everyone can join “Prayer and Well-being: Addressing Fears and Contagion.” Again, it will be live-streamed on YouTube on June 19th at 7:30pm PT. Join with the link below: [youtu.be/LYzh3Fwh8uk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LYzh3Fwh8uk&feature=youtu.be). You can submit questions for the Q&A during the talk.

NATE: Thanks so much, Jeff. I’m looking forward to it (smiles).

To learn more about the sponsoring churches or watch a replay of the webinar go to:

Ninth Church of Christ, Scientist, Los Angeles website: [https://www.christiansciencelosangeles.com](http://www.christiansciencelosangeles.com)

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