

# Be the Architect of Your Self

“Presence” needs a home. Inside you. Part of you. You have to build that home. The first necessary ingredient is consciousness. The second necessary ingredient is efforts done with dedication, purpose and love for something greater, bigger than yourself.



*Villa La Rotonda, Andrea Palladio, architect, Giorgio Faccioli, photographer*

I remember first seeing this villa from a distance. On top of a gentle rise in the surrounding land, it was serene, majestic, stately—exquisite! There are only two dozen Palladian villas, all of them in what’s called the Veneto—the area of Italy near Venice. Every single one of Palladio’s villas are close to perfection, created with intense dedication, mathematical order, creativity and loving consciousness. When you enter the house (“the house” is an insane understatement!) and stand in the grandeur of the central rotunda, you’ll wish you could live there. And you can...at least in your memories.

***“I’ll treasure that forever.”***

To me, that phrase does a pretty good job of encapsulating what constitutes any individual’s presence. There are thousands of variations on that theme of presence, but it is always about the building—the **conscious** building—of a human animal into a human being who then pursues a path to becoming an individual. The Collective may have its own presence, but that doesn’t belong to any single human animal.

“I’ll treasure that forever.” We all vaguely know what that means. We say it unconsciously all the time. But lasting treasures are made up of the things we, *personally and consciously* find worthy, honorable,

valuable and beautiful. The list is long: our successes, our challenges that made us grow, the wonders we encounter of nature and civilization, the people who inspire us by opening our inner eyes to a level of dignity beyond who we are today, the arts (film, music, dance, painting, sculpture, etc.) that stop our trivial busy-ness for even a brief moment.

But to keep those experiences, those memories, you need a place to put those treasures—*consciously*. Otherwise, experiences get lumped together in a juvenile pile of “awesome!”

Music—good music—can help you build the internal, unseen structure to house your presence. Much of Bach’s music can feed your Being with the fuel to build those unseen structures. The last music Bach was working on is a collection of 14 fugues and four canons, “The Art of the Fugue.” All are based on a simple theme, a d-minor chord and scale. Below, I’ve included the theme’s first 30 seconds as the four voices enter: alto (blue), soprano (yellow), bass (green) and tenor (purple).

J.S. Bach, Die Kunst der Fugue, Contrapunctus 1, Zoltán Kocsis, piano

BWV 1080, 1

7

12

This first “Contrapunctus” is less than three minutes, and you’ll hear how he builds on the theme. The rest of the variations get more complicated—some of them extremely complicated! But all of them reverberate with the theme.

I’ve included the written music for a few measures (roughly 30 seconds in) from a mind-boggling performance of perhaps the most complicated Contrapunctus of them all (*below*). You can see the return of the “ur-text” (the original theme) as it meshes with this variation’s lightning fast racings.

J.S. Bach, Die Kunst der Fugue, Contrapunctus 9 alla Duodecima, Winston Choi, piano



Here's the exercise you can try while listening to this piece. First of all, watch the video of Daniel Choi's hands and how he so clearly—and *so fluidly*—manages to bring out both the urtext theme and the theme for this variation in all four voices. That's genius.

But don't just be mesmerized by his performance! While seated, sit up straight, breathe slowly and deeply, have your arms/hands relaxed at your sides, and slowly move your hands in mirror-like small circles: in toward the body, forward, out to the sides and back to the starting point. While you keep doing that, imagine that you're coiling the energy of this music around a central pillar (namely, your spine!) to create electromagnetism that can be stored like a battery.

This ain't easy! But it can help accelerate your Being's capacity to create lasting, conscious structures that house more than just memories. These structures provide a permanency of presence, purpose, dignity, composure and happiness.

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