

PERSPECTIVE: I Won't Let You Fall
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We went to a jazz club in the Village the other night. Long narrow space a few steps down. Black lights and dark walls. Metallic objects behind the stage that you wouldn't want to see by light of day. Probably wouldn't want to see any of it by day, stripped of the fine mystery of this summer night.

The band was already playing when we sat down. Knew right away they were good. Tight but not constricted. They were throwing handfuls of bright yarn at one another. These would weave of their own accord in mid-air, then lay down soft. Living fabric of sound slipping and slicing into both brain and belly.

At the start of the next piece, the drummer-leader of the band introduced his players. Told us who would be taking solos. Name by name, giving us time to applaud each. Spotlighting them all.

Thought it was a nice band, a nice sound. Until the long, exposed solos began. Supported only by the upright bass and drums, the sax takes off. He moves into it, gets behind it. Starts to lift it.

Thought it was a fine solo. Until I saw the drummer's eyes. Focused like a mother on her child, a father on his son. A clear, hot tractor beam that seemed like a solid presence in space. It radiated the message, it shouted silently: I will not let you fall.

And he was there, laying out rhythms for the sax, skipping stones across the vast smooth lake of sound. Here and here. Cross on this. On this. This and this and this. These are here for you. For your dangerous passage to the other side.

And we held our breath at the beauty. As sounds strung and threaded together. Floating like living tapestry in the air.

Again the drummer's eyes. There is more. There is more. I know you have more in you. And we will find it, give it form. Together. I will not let you fall. This syncopassion. The heated beam of my eye. Trust me I will not let you fall. Go there. Go there.

Inspired, it would seem, the sax went there. Taking us all along with him. And back down to Earth, guided by the same hot tractor beam.

In this drummer-who-happened-to-be-an-SGI-member, we saw a new leader, a new leadership. The first Soka Gakkai president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, said that the essence of education is not to put something into students. The essence of education, he said, is to pull out what is already there. Echoes of another great educator, John Dewey: There is a world of difference between having something to say, and having to say something. Everyone has something to say. New paradigms of leadership are about making people feel safe — to say it, try it, do it. Safe even to fail.

Because they know you'd never let them fall.

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