**Stepping into the Big Stately Pulse**

Much of the thought, and sentiment, around which I have built my experience at the harpsichord flows out of the imagination of my teacher at the University of Michigan, Ed Parmentier. Because this is a section about the large, encircling movement of the slow dance, it seems right to take a moment to describe Ed, and maybe provide a little insight into his unique nature. It is Ed, not a beautifully bedecked court dancer, that my mind's eye envisions when I start to speak about the big stately pulse and how we only need to step into it. Let me say here, there's no question that I'm a more graceful person than Ed – he's like a giant ostrich, an ostrich steeped in the poetry of early keyboard performance practice. He's 6'6" with limbs that splay about, especially when he is stirred by something. But it's Ed I emulate when I move about the studio to the accompaniment of a student's playing, especially when they're pushing their way through a pavane, a sarabande, a loure, perhaps a forlane. These dances are the vessels for a powerful idea that Ed planted with me in 1983 – that the movement of such meditative forms was always around us simply to be moved into when we're ready.

This was not an entirely unfamiliar notion – I had done Javanese dance as a staff child at Wesleyan University and learned a few things about Eastern spiritual thought regarding music as encircling patterns in the atmosphere surrounding us. The gong was not just the largest instrument in the Gamelan but the physical and sonic representation of a constant encompassing cycle that the players were either audibly engaged in or simply living. It would come around, reminding the instrumentalists and the listeners of this inexorable presence. This was the idea Ed delivered to me about the slow dance pulse, and it served me well, saved my skin in fact, during the most nerve-wracking performing experience of my life.

In the preliminary round of the Warsaw Competition, the 20-minute set began with Peter Phillips' Passamezzo Pavana and I was so nervous before playing, I had to sit in a bathroom stall until the last minute, listening to a self-hypnosis tape. When I was called to go on stage, I took off the headphones, and listened for, felt for, the rich, pulsating chords of the Pavane's opening – I saw Ed's large form loping, in

slow motion, across his cramped studio, and I imagined the circles of glowing sound waves carrying me across Phillips' manifestation of this gentle force, one of an infinite number. As I walked across the stage to the harpsichord, I had already entered the dance so fully that, sitting down to play, I felt no difference between where I had been moments before and where I was going.

This was magical, a contentment and ease in performing that I will always seek to replicate – I had stepped into something that was always there, and it was transporting me through my anxiety and the Italianate passagework that gauzily streamed across the surface of its deep permanence.