

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO VARIOUS PROBLEMS

From time to time the far-famed Zouki Cultural Labs receive inquiries from the perplexed as to how to deal with various ITM-connected situations. Since sharing of accumulated wisdom is what the ZCL likes to believe they do best, some of their more recent contributions are appended.

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SESSION BRATS

Keep a baseball (or hurley) bat close by. As soon as one of these unspeakable Spawn of Lucifer launches into a WTWKPTF (= weird tune, weird key, played too fast) hit them smartly upside the head with your Dissuader of Choice. Use sufficient force to get your point across but not enough (at least initially) to cause serious injury or death. May be accompanied by gentle verbal reminders such as "I don't think you should do that again" or (in California) "It really hurt me to have to smack you like that." Smile a lot as you say this. (For those concerned with the legal aspect of such activity, most jurisdictions in the USA recognize this as "totally justifiable assault" subject to no penalties whatsoever.)

SHOUTS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

These of course vary from social group to social group and range from inarticulate grunts to more complex vocalizations such as "Kuvoiniemessa kapuni-enaaurissa!" heard recently at a pub session in Uusikaupunki in Finland. (Rough translation: "Neat stuff!")

"Give it stick, infidel dog and son of dogs" is approved encouragement in much of the Islamic world, while Japanese musicians will occasionally hear "Mutabe wakarimasen

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isominashita, desu-ka!" in the middle of the Coleman reel set (translation is roughly "May the spirits of ten thousand deceased Sligo fiddlers view your efforts with kindness"). By the way, the traditional "Banzai" is now viewed as somewhat nationalistic and is used only among bodhrán players.

"Oohhhahhhagainmoreoohyes"

This was recently reported to the Zouki Encouragement Hotline by a fiddler whose session had recently re-located from Stinky's Irish Rose Pub and Pizzeria to the Love Mountain Honeymoon Resort near Lake Tahoe. "The encouragement was there, all right," he reported, "even though we hadn't started to play or even take out instruments out. Oddly enough we didn't hear it again, but maybe that's because we started the session with 'The Butterfly' . . . I have to say though that it was more distracting than encouraging. We never heard anything like it back at Stinky's so we weren't sure how to react . . ." The correspondent reports that yet another move - this time to an ashram further down the Lake - is being seriously contemplated. "I think we'll take a triple ringing of tinny little bells for encouragement over that ooh - ahhh routine," he stated.

ANIMOSITY BETWEEN SPOONS PLAYERS

Correspondent Jim B. in Connecticut reported a recent unpleasantness involving two spoons players at his local session.

"Our regular spoon guy Bert and a visitor whose name we never really got - might have been Montgomery - got into a rather nasty verbal altercation regarding spoon sizes and materials," Jim B. reports. "I'm not sure what the protocol is on this, if any, but Bert became seriously unhappy after a hornpipe set and asked M if he could see his spoons. M thought a bit but eventually complied.

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Turns out he was using custom-made units that appeared to Bert to be roughly twice as big as the average soup spoon and made of what Bert - who owns an auto-body shop and should know what he's talking about - claimed was 'composite', graphite and steel and zircons and who knows what else, while Bert's were delicate smaller ones made of druidic yew-wood from a specially-bred stand of trees in Sligo somewhere. Bert's sounded fine to the rest of us, while M's made a kind of loud clacking sound.

"The discussion got really distracting and we finally had to ask the disputants to move to the other end of the pub. In the meantime we noticed a kind of funny smirk on Melissa the bodhrán player's face. It stayed there whole time while the spoons guys were carrying on. Finally we heard a loud expletive and M stalked out of the pub. Bert had to sit out the next four sets because of sweaty palms. He kept muttering but we decided to leave well enough alone. I suggested "Fanny Power" to the troops as a way to bring the temperature down.

"My question to the ZCL is how I as session alpha should have behaved under the circumstances. Was I correct to leave the two spoons guys to sort out their own problems or should I have intervened in some way?"

The ZCL sub-unit in charge of percussion matters agreed that Jim B's situation deserved further consideration, and were reportedly leaning in the direction of staying the hell out of the whole mess, but the official decision is being awaited. It will of course be promulgated here for the guidance of others in Jim B's position.

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