

“We Are Not Afraid of the Dark”..... The Story Behind the Song

There's a story about Albert Einstein. I don't know if it actually happened, but the essence of it rings true no matter what. In an interview, he is supposed to have remarked that the single most important question anyone should ask themselves is this: "Is this a friendly Universe?"

Great question. And if your answer is YES, then doesn't it spark a kind of joy, and eagerness to cooperate with that friendly universe? For me, it's a huge relief, like we're all on the same team here. Let go. Relax a little. Each one of us a unique and unrepeatable expression of that friendly universe, the whole deal, all of the light and all of the shadow.

Our western culture tends to split things into opposites. And for better or worse (there's a set of opposites, right there!) we have come to associate light with goodness, and dark with evil. Which feels a little bizarre to me, because, as far as I can tell, it's pretty much 50/50 here on this beautiful light/dark planet.

I personally love walking out at night under a velvet black sky studded with stars just as much as I love waking up to the sweet clarity and freshness of the morning sunshine.

It's like that graceful yin/yang symbol, the circle divided equally into black and white sections by a reverse S-like shape. The dark swirl contains a seed of light, and the light swirl has a seed of darkness. It makes complete sense to me that each side always has the potential to morph into the other, in a kind of graceful cosmic dance.

The light and the darkness may look like opposites, but they are actually just different expressions of the same thing: interconnected, interdependent, and complementary. They belong together, and they can't be separated. The one can't exist without the other, and we love them both.

This song...."We are not afraid of the dark"....started out as a strong and simple lyrical stand....claiming all of the light and all of the shadow as who we really are....and knowing that wherever we are, we're already home, celebrating full contrast, with divine love intelligence looking through our eyes.

A little history: By the time the summer of 2017 rolled around, I felt like I was suffering from a weird kind of PTSD because of all the crazy crap I was hearing every day on the national news.

I wanted to write something strong and sane and soulful in the face of it, but I had no words. So, JD and I started with the music.

I was looking for something strong and haunting, like those traditional Appalachian tunes which come out of the old folk melodies of England and Ireland....elemental and stirring in their starkness and simplicity.

And then what started playing in my head was Dolly Parton's kick-ass song "Jolene," which has completely knocked me out ever since it first came out in the 70's....A strong pentatonic melody with chords that flipped between major and minor modes. We followed that feeling and soon we had the beginnings of "We Are Not Afraid of the Dark."

JD and I first recorded piano and vocals, and then invited our dear friend Marcy Baruch to sing the high harmony. As soon as we added Brent Rowan on guitars, and Christian Teele on drums, the song really took off. All we needed was a choir of enthusiastic kids and adults at the end, to give the full effect of humanity marching together toward sanity, with our Better Angels.

But where could we possibly find such a ready-made soulful crowd of amateurs? Cheap or free?

On a sweet Sunday afternoon, a week before Christmas, 2018, all my very cute and earnest students and their families showed up for our yearly piano and singing recital. After an hour of fairly impressive kid songs and lots of great hor d'oeuvres, JD and I realized we had a captive audience.....who, with a little encouragement and coaching, could also double as a choir!

That's who you will hear in the final choruses. Ordinary magic, showing up as always, right on time. Light, dark, heart, soul, and everything in-between.