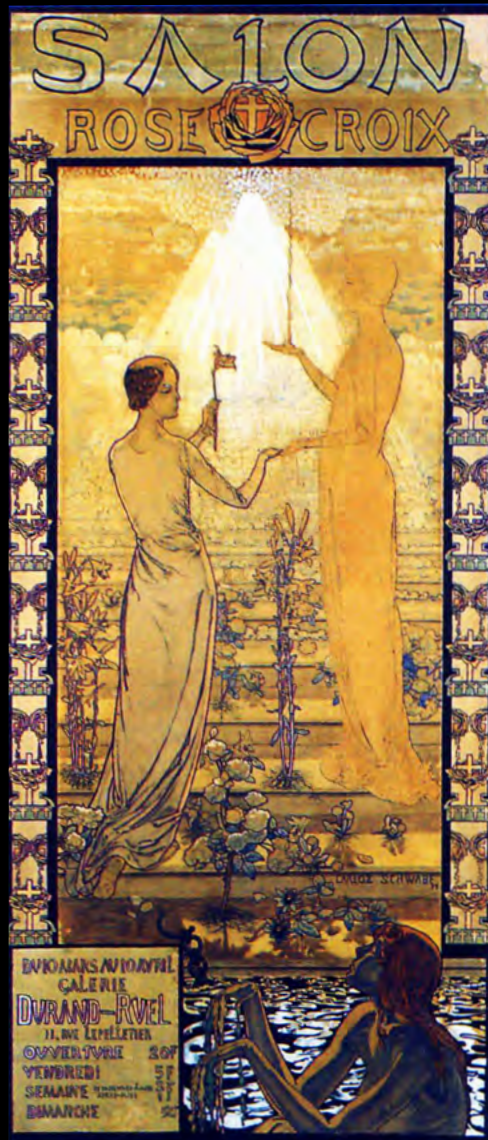


ROSIKRUCIAN DIGEST

Volume 103 Number 1 2025



Art

ROSICRUCIAN DIGEST

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Art

This issue of the *Rosicrucian Digest* celebrates Art as the Rosicrucian Salons (Salons de la Rose+Croix) of the 1890s may have done, exploring music, writing, painting, sculpture, and dance from a mystical perspective.



On the Cover:

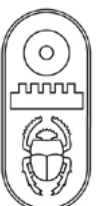
Salon de la Rose+Croix poster, 1892.

The Rosicrucian Salons

The Salons de la Rose+Croix were a series of six annual art and music exhibitions organized by Rosicrucian Josephin Peladan in Paris from 1892 to 1897. These avant-garde events brought together the leading Symbolist painters, writers, and composers of the era, showcasing works that embodied the mystical and esoteric ideals of the Symbolist movement.

The first Salon in 1892 opened with a grand ceremony featuring music composed specifically for the occasion by Erik Satie, the official composer of the Salon. Each day was filled with artistic displays and performances, culminating in Rosicrucian soirées dedicated to theatre and music. By the time the exhibition closed, more than 22,000 guests had attended, marking an astounding success that resonated far beyond Paris, influencing artists worldwide. The Salons de la Rose+Croix became a defining moment in the history of Symbolism.

Among the artists who participated in the 1892 Salon was Henri Martin, a Symbolist painter who later embraced Pointillism and Impressionism. His work, *The Appearance of Clemence Isaure to the Troubadours*, played a significant role in the founding of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC. For further details, see the article “Clemence Isaure: The Rosicrucian Golden Isis” on page 48.



TUNING YOUR HEALTH WITH THE COSMIC

LET MUSIC BRING HARMONY INTO EVERY PART OF
YOUR BODY

*H. Spencer Lewis, FRC
Imperator (1915 - 1939) and Co-Founder of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC*

Much has been discovered in recent years regarding the value of light in restoring normal, healthful conditions in the human body, and all that is now known in regard to this subject is but elementary compared with the vast possibilities still awaiting practical experimentation. But in the field of music are to be found similar possibilities, more easily analyzed and applied and more fascinatingly introduced into our everyday life.

The ancients knew a great deal about the effects of music upon the human system. Some centuries ago it was believed that the ancients thought that the whole effect of music was mental, or shall we say emotional, but many recent scientific discoveries have revealed the fact that the ancients really understood the psychic or spiritual effects of music as well as the emotional and that is why music in various forms was introduced in the religious and spiritual rituals of nearly all of the ancient cults.

From analyzing the psychological effects of music the investigations led into the study of physiological effects and here a new world of possibilities was found. It became evident, then, to all of

the investigators that the mystics of old had utilized sound, especially sound in relationship to rhythm, as a means for not only affecting the human emotions but the human health and the harmony of the body generally.

It may be necessary here to state just briefly that music, as we understand it today, is a combination of sound and rhythm, or shall I say sound regulated by rhythm. When I say sound, I mean all of the various sounds which the human ear can

hear or interpret normally. There are many sounds in the universe which the human ear cannot hear and many which the average ear does not hear, but which the developed ear can hear. Sounds may be produced by nature or by people accidentally or deliberately. Every sound has a definite place in the keyboard of sound and we



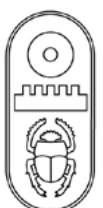
H. Spencer Lewis playing his cello. An accomplished musician, painter, and writer, he was dedicated to the arts and understood their mystical value. Photo from the Rosicrucian archives.

may say theoretically, that the keyboard of all the sounds in the universe would be like unto a piano keyboard that reached through hundreds of octaves. Many of those octaves would produce a sound that the ear would not hear because their pitch would be too high or too low. Taking the normally heard sounds, however, we find that these can be placed within a keyboard that is not much larger than the standard piano keyboard. The whirl of a revolving wheel on a piece of machinery, the blowing of the wind, the howling of air currents around a house or through a tree, the patter of rain on the roof, the sliding of coal down a metal chute, the beating of horses hoofs upon the ground, the chirping of the birds, the falling of water over the rocks into a pool, the words of the human voice, the tum-tum of a tribal ceremony, and every other sound that the ear can hear is connected with one of the notes of the universal keyboard. Musicians learned this fact many years ago and in all of the great masterpieces of music we have either an actual imitation of nature's sounds or such a symbolical resemblance to them that the idea of the representation is set up in our consciousness even though an actual imitation of the sound is not attempted.

We need not take time to argue the fact that the human emotions have a very definite relationship with the health of the human body. The fact is that the psychic or psychological side of a person is so closely related to the normal functioning of all of the organs of the body and with the normal activity of the spinal nervous system and the sympathetic nervous system that anything which disturbs the harmony or equilibrium of the nerve energy and emotional activities of the body is sure to disturb the harmony of the health and produce either disease or discomfort.

The spinal nervous system and the sympathetic nervous system are two separate channels for the expression of the vital energy in the human body and for the distribution of that energy into every part of the body. Anything that disturbs the proper flow and activity of the nerve energy is sure to produce not only a nervous effect but a physical and chemical effect in the human body.

Throughout our bodies are distributed not only the many nerve centers, known as ganglia, but a number of larger centers sometimes referred to as the psychic





centers of the human body, or the emotional centers. The solar plexus is but one of twelve such centers that controls the emotional reactions which set up certain definite effects in the nerves and physical functions of the human body either for good or its opposite.

Those musicians who have studied the subject and especially those scientists who have gone very deeply into the analysis of the principles involved have found that these twelve psychological centers of emotionalism are so connected with the ganglia of the sympathetic nervous system and with the nerve centers of the spinal nervous system that there is a harmonious relationship like that which exists between the various notes of the musical scale.

The twelve large psychic centers are especially sympathetic to twelve definite sounds of the musical scale. With each human being these musical notes are different. In other words, the solar plexus

may be attuned with the note of C with one person and with the note of E with another. Another one of the psychic centers in the left side of the head may be attuned with the musical note F with one person and with F sharp, with another. As persons grow older or more healthy or more developed in their intellectual and psychic sense, the pitch of these notes to which the psychic centers are attuned may be raised, and, with persons who are deteriorating in physical strength through disease or through the violation of natural laws, the pitch may become greatly lowered.

The attunement of these psychic centers with the musical notes is such that when the proper note is played upon a piano, violin, or any other instrument, or actually sung by the human voice, the psychic centers respond to that note by vibrating either in attunement with it or inharmonic attunement with it. For instance, if a person's solar plexus is in attunement with the musical note of E natural, of the first octave above middle C, then every time that note is played or sung in the presence of that person, there will be a mild stimulation of the vibrations of nerve energy acting through the solar plexus, and this stimulation will cause the center and its connecting nerves to function more freely, more perfectly, and with a tonic effect upon those parts of the body connected with that center. On the other hand, any note that is discordant with the note of E or out of harmony with it, and especially one which is removed a musical fifth from it, will cause the solar plexus to become disturbed by such vibrations of sound and thereby cause the nerve energy connected with that center to become disturbed in its harmonic or rhythmic functioning and a sense of illness, depression, slight pain, or nervous strain will be felt and this condition may leave an



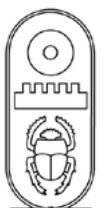
impression upon certain parts of the body lasting for several hours or several days.

As stated above, all music consists of sounds regulated by the laws of rhythm. Taking the finger and tapping on a drum with a regular beat like the ticking of a clock does not constitute a form of music except in a very fundamental sense, but the moment you break up the beating into one beat with a pause, then followed by two, then one again and followed by two, you have the elements of rhythm and the striking of the drum begins to imitate the fundamental use of the tum-tum in Eastern music and additional varieties in the rhythm will produce various effects which are essential to all forms of music.

The moment you begin to vary the pitch of the sound and change from one note to another you enter into the second law of music which deals with melody. Thus by varying the pitch of sound, or the time of it, you have sound, plus melody, plus rhythm, and all music is composed of these three elements.

By varying the pitch of the sounds you cause the sounds to affect different nerve centers. Producing only one sound continuously would only affect one of the nerve centers. By changing the pitch from one sound to another you include many or all of the nerve centers. By changing the rhythm you also produce a variation in effects because you cause either a harmonious effect upon the natural rhythm of the nerve energy or a disturbing rhythm.

It must be remembered that the nerve energy in the human body is not a continuous stream but a pulsating stream. The electric energy in the wires of our homes which supplies us with the so-called alternating current, flows at a rhythm of sixty pulsations a minute, usually, producing what is technically called a sixty-cycle current. It is due to this fact that the present-day electric clocks will keep such good time because the sixty pulsations per minute move the hands sixty seconds per minute. If another energy were to flow along the electric wires at the rate of seventy-two pulsations per second, it would upset the



rhythm of the original pulsations and would cause the electric clock to go wrong and it would disturb the effect of the light and of any other machinery or device connected to the wiring. Through the human body the nerve energy pulsates at different rates in order to affect different parts of the body and to cause different organs to act and respond and do their work. Any disturbance of the nerve energy is sure to produce a disturbance of some physical functioning in some part of the body, resulting in temporary illness or the beginning of some disease. Anything that will stimulate the nerve energy in its pulsations will produce a greater amount of vitality and energy in some part of the body either for the good of the health or to its detriment, according to where and how the effect is produced.

A note that is harmonious to a nerve center strengthens the nerve energy, stimulates it, invigorates it, and causes it to make the nerve center function more completely and more beneficially. Anything that causes the nerve center to feel a shock of inharmony or an impulse of inharmonic vibrations will cause aches or pains or cause the breaking down of some blood cells or cells of tissue or cells

of other matter, and when such cells break down the beginning of a disease of some kind is established.

It should be seen from this, therefore, that music can have a very serious as well as very beneficial effect upon our nervous system and, therefore, upon our health. Enrico Caruso, the great singer, was alleged to have the ability to sing certain musical notes that would occasionally cause pieces of glass in the room to shatter. This is because everything that exists has a harmonic relationship to some musical note and if an inharmonic note is produced the disturbing vibrations of the inharmonic rhythm or pulsation will cause all of the vibrations in some article to be upset and it will shatter or crack and break.

Many musicians have produced upon the violin or cello or upon the flute or clarinet musical notes that have caused articles in a room to sing forth their own note out of sympathy, or to give forth another note as a sort of protest against the inrush of inharmonic vibrations. The pipe organ is especially qualified to produce some deep notes that are very disturbing to material things and to the health of the





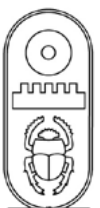
body or to produce other notes that are very harmonious.

The great musicians of the past, who are known as the great masters of music, composed many of their pieces for the purpose of bringing together as many musical notes as possible which would affect certain centers of the body and produce soothing or enlivening effects. John Philip Sousa, the late eminent march king, learned the secret of writing military music in such a manner that the standard rhythm of march music could be augmented by the use of certain notes in certain passages of his compositions which would arouse the nerve energy and produce a tonic effect and cause the listener to be invigorated and stimulated and even over-energized and thus encouraged to march and carry on their tiresome walking in the face of great fatigue and suffering. Other compositions arouse the centers which deal with the emotions and produce emotional effects that are joyful or sad leading to retrospection, visualization, and other mental conditions.

If these musical laws and principles are utilized in a therapeutic way, they can be made to stimulate a broken down nervous system, to awaken a sluggish organic

action, to quicken certain nerve centers in their functioning, to stimulate the blood, to soothe over-active glands and organs, to lower a feverish temperature, to purify the blood through stimulated nerve energy, and even to quicken the healing processes of diseased tissues.

I have already stated that certain musical notes affect each of us beneficially. It is rather difficult to learn just what those notes are except from noticing that certain pieces of music, played at certain times, do make us feel stronger, happier, more harmonious, and vitalized, while others are very depressing in their effects. It has been noted also that if a person sings such notes as are beneficial, the effect is greater than when they are played or sung by someone else. Unconsciously, a great many persons have become attracted to certain songs that they find themselves humming or singing many times a day. Usually they think it is because they like the tune, or like the melody, or perhaps like the words. The fact of the matter is, they have unconsciously noticed that the music is soothing or beneficial to the nervous system, perhaps to the entire system, and that is why they continuously sing or hum such songs. These songs become almost



like theme songs to one's life. Every now and then a new song will supplant one of the old ones, but a careful analysis will show that the new one has many of the same strains or groups of notes that the old one had.

There is no question about the beneficial effects that come from having good music in the home. Naturally enough, those compositions which have been carefully written and inspired in the minds of great masters and then carefully developed are the ones which are the most beneficial, while much of our popular music has little or no effect upon us except in a detrimental way. If one cannot play properly and express the right music for one's moods the best thing is to purchase such records as contain such music as we feel stimulating and helpful to us, and listen for them on the radio, and tune out or eliminate the undesirable music. A person who has a collection of eight or ten beneficial vinyl records in the home and who plays these once or twice a week or hears similar pieces over the radio is sure to have better health than the person who never allows the effect of music to harmonize their being. All of the Cosmic

operates in harmony and with vibrations that harmonize in all departments of life, and by finding the theme song or any song that contains the proper group of notes for our own individuality and having these played occasionally, we attune ourselves with the harmonies of the Cosmic and keep our physical well-being balanced and in attunement with nature's creative, curative forces.

No one can tell you what pieces of music are best suited for you except after weeks and months of study, but you can discover for yourself by playing those pieces which have always appealed to you the most and analyze what effects they are really having, for often during such self-analysis and meditation one will notice that a properly selected piece of music will cause the nerves to become stimulated and invigorated and the whole body to feel soothed and strengthened and at the same time there will be an emotional or spiritual sense of uplift and contentment with life. When such pieces are found they should be prized as ones containing the keynotes for your own life, while those pieces which seem to have an opposite effect should be carefully discarded and eliminated.



MUSIC THAT MOVES US

Grand Master Julie Scott, SRC

Today we are going to experience music that moves us.

As you have no doubt experienced, music can move us on many levels.

It can move us physically, for example, when we can't help but tap our toes or sway to the beat.

Researchers have found that people perceive and make sense of what they hear by mentally simulating the body motion thought to be involved in the making of sound. So, when we tap our feet to music, it's actually our brains trying to make sense of the sound.

A good example of this occurs when listening to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik."

It's almost impossible not to move to that music, isn't it? That movement is our brains trying to process the sound.

Experts have found that, when runners listen to music, they often match their stride to a particular beat, which can help them regulate their pace. If they listen to music with a faster beat, they will run faster. This is called auditory motor synchronization. The same applies to marches that inspire and motivate soldiers

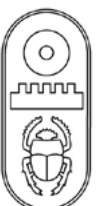
to keep moving, even when they may be exhausted or disheartened.

Music can also help to create rhythmic heartbeats that then affect our brain waves, creating a feeling of tranquility that we experience throughout our entire being.

Almost one hundred years ago, H. Spencer Lewis noted: "Unconsciously a great many persons have become attracted to certain songs that they find themselves humming or singing many times a day. Usually they think it is because they like the tune, or like the melody, or perhaps like the words. The fact of the matter is, they have unconsciously noticed that the music is soothing or beneficial to the nervous system, perhaps to the entire system, and that is why they continuously sing or hum such songs."

The technology of modern devices such as a Garmin or Apple watch can measure the physiological effects of music, such as heart rate variability, which is a measure of the beat-to-beat changes in heart rate. This is what H. Spencer Lewis was referring to, decades before the technology to measure this was invented.

While using a Garmin device, I have listened to a lot of music noting which





From the collection of the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum. At left are a bell and a flute, and at right are castanets, all of which are thousands of years old.

pieces create the most heart coherence for me.

There is one particular piece that immediately soothes my nervous system, according to my Garmin device and according to how I feel. You may find a similar effect, although each of us has our own heart coherence music. It is Vivaldi's "Four Seasons, Spring, Largo."

Please breathe slowly and rhythmically while listening to this music.

There is evidence to suggest that music also moved some ancient people in extraordinary ways.

Some songs connected ancient people with the spirit world.

For the Australian aboriginal people, Dreaming or Dreamtime represents the relationship between people, plants, animals, and the physical features of the land; the knowledge of how these relationships came to be, what they mean, and how they need to be maintained in daily life and in ceremony. It is a magical realm that connects us with the source.

Today these Aboriginal people still use music and movement or dance to enter or attune with this realm.

In ancient Egypt, images were drawn on temple walls showing musicians and dancers. In your museum, the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum in San Jose, we have

castanets and flutes and other musical instruments used by the ancient Egyptians more than 5,000 years ago.

The ancient Egyptian deity of music, love, beauty, dancing, and joy was Hathor, the cow deity. She was one of the most popular and powerful deities and a protector of women.

The Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum displays several sistrums—a musical instrument that imitated the sound of Hathor rustling through the reeds. The word sistrum is Greek; the Egyptians called this instrument *shh, shh, shh, shhhh*, which was the sound that it made.

Today, during their most mystical ceremonies, some South American shamans use an instrument made of palm fronds that makes this same rustling sound – *shh, shh, shh, shhh* – moving their initiates deeper into the mysteries.

Pythagoras used music for healing, as did the Therapeuti and the Essenes. At the Pythagorean School in Crotona, they played invigorating music each morning and soothing music each evening.

Some pieces of music move our emotions too - some move us to sadness and others to happiness. We all have our favorites. Two songs that many members are familiar with are "La Vie en Rose," performed by Soror Edith Piaf, and "What

a Wonderful World,” performed by Louis Armstrong.

Devotional music can also move us and is used in almost every religion. The following are some examples of devotional songs from three different traditions.

First is the Christian hymn “Amazing Grace.” The lyrics to this song were written in 1772 by former British slave trader, John Newton, who claimed that his life was spared by the mercy of the Divine, during a storm at sea. He later became an abolitionist and preacher. It’s a message that forgiveness and redemption are possible regardless of the sins we have committed and that the soul can be delivered from despair through the mercy of the Divine.

I particularly like the version of the song recorded in 1947 by Mahalia Jackson, one of America’s greatest gospel singers and someone whose grandparents had formerly been enslaved people.

Here are the lyrics: “Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I’m found, was blind, but now I see.”

Another piece of inspirational devotional music is a Sufi song entitled



Mahalia Jackson.

“Chaap Tilak,” with lyrics from a poem by an Indo-Persian Sufi mystic, singer, musician, poet, and scholar named Amir Khusro, who lived in the thirteenth century. A notable performance of this song comes from Abida Parveen and Rahat Fateh Ali Khan.

Abida Parveen is Pakistan’s most accomplished singer of devotional music. She is an expert on Sufi music worldwide. Sufism is Islam’s esoteric tradition.

The theme of this song is the transformative power of a mere glance from the Divine, a central theme in Sufi mystic literature.

Some of the lyrics include: “I give my life to you, Oh my cloth-dyer, You’ve dyed me like yourself, by just a glance.”

Now we will consider a recently released song from Snatum Kaur, whose sacred chants are part of an ancient practice known as kirtan. This chant includes the phrases “I am” and “Sat Nam.”

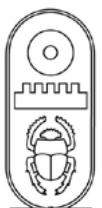
In the ancient language of the Sikhs, Sat means truth and Nam means name. Together, Sat Nam has a deeper meaning: “I am truth,” or “Truth is my essence.”

Our final piece of music to consider is a song that moves many of us in profound ways – the “Rosicrucian Chant,” written by our dear frater H. Spencer Lewis.

Here are the lyrics:

O, love, that knoweth of no fear,
A love, that sheds a joyous tear,
O, Love, that makes me whole and free,
Such love shall keep and hallow me.
So Mote It Be!

Note: If you would like to see a playlist on Apple Music of all of the songs mentioned in this article, click [here](#).



DEBUSSY'S MUSICAL ALCHEMY THROUGH WATER

*Raul Passos, FRC
Grand Master of the Southeastern European Grand Lodge*

Nature isn't at the surface; it's in the depth.

- Paul Cézanne

Of all the elements traditionally considered from an esoteric point of view, water is perhaps the most enigmatic. Indomitable, though sometimes giving the illusion of being controlled, through its elusive and often furtive presence, its imprint is felt directly and indirectly in various phases of human action, consciously and subconsciously affecting our interaction with the world.

In the Jungian universe, and especially in that of alchemy, water is closely associated with dissolution, often characterizing periods of crisis or revolution. However, it is also the operation that allows processes of expansion that would not occur otherwise—which, extrapolated to a mystical reading, leads to the opening to a subtle reality, to contact with the Greater Being, making possible a transcendental experience of the Whole. Spiritual experience is therefore, par excellence, within the scope of the alchemical operation of water.

Music is an artistic manifestation that interacts with emotions in a particular way, due to that are essential for its production. It is not crystallized in a closed space, but requires a temporal window for its revelation, a space in which interactions

with the psychological landscape of the performer and the listener take place. This unique dynamic is particularly conducive to opening the window of the subconscious. The association between music and water is therefore particularly relevant from the perspective of mysticism, and no composer was as prolific and fascinated by

the theme of water as Claude Debussy (1862-1918). In fact, although water as a source of inspiration has long existed in Western music, it is through Debussy that it is embodied and instrumentalized beyond the realm of inspiration, becoming the very essence in action, in such a way as to produce an unprecedented revolution in the history of music, while also enabling the existence of an effective



Claude Debussy

bridge between the art of sound and spirituality.

However, before approaching Debussy the composer, his importance for music, and the leading role of water in his work, let's consider for a moment the question of the "pictorial" representation of extra-musical elements in music.

Suggestion vs. Representation

Strictly speaking, music does not convey a specific and defined message, since the perception and interpretation of the musical phenomenon are profoundly



Paul Bril, Fauns in a Wooded Landscape, ca. 1626.

subjective and can vary from one individual to another, even within a homogeneous cultural context, and even for the same individual at different times. That is, the sound event operates physically and according to established intrinsic rules, but the message (if that is the right word to use) that emerges from it results in a particular way depending on the listener, since it depends on and interacts with other factors (memory, physiology, psychological state, etc.).

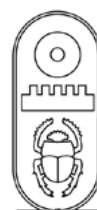
Therefore, it must be said that the very association between a given element of nature and its possible musical representation is fundamentally debatable at its root. However, from the point of view of musical syntax, it is legitimate to argue that throughout history a series of compositional procedures and characteristic figurations have been established which, often supported by context or suggestive titles, have forged a somewhat archetypal and vernacular sonic aspect of the element of water in its most diverse forms, such as watercourses, waterfalls, snow, waves, rain, and, going a step further, creatures—mythical or not—associated with the aquatic universe.

Those who listen to the piping of the birds, to the murmur of the breeze among the foliage, to the laughter of the pebble-studded stream, and try to catch their elusive harmonies, must realize that the keynote of Nature's music is its extreme subtlety. All is enchantingly indefinite, between the notes. . . . It always eludes us, and that is why we love it. If one thinks of the opening phrase of Debussy's *L'après-midi d'un faune* (*The Afternoon of a Faun*), this same subtlety is noticeable; all is subdued, delicate, nebulous—for Debussy was the first composer to turn entirely from the human and write Nature-music pure and simple.

- Cyril Scott

From Nature and Towards Nature

This intriguing quotation by the British composer and occultist Cyril Scott is a calling card for the universe of the great French composer. It is also pertinent to talk a little about the historical period in which the silent revolution led by Debussy, perhaps in spite of himself, takes place.



It is not at all surprising that the musical moment of rupture, which was foreshadowed in the years immediately preceding the turn of the twentieth century, contained a certain tendency toward liquefaction, we could dare say. Since the tonal-musical system, from its very birth, contained at its core the formula for its own dissolution, given its exhaustible possibilities, this dissolution could be accomplished in two ways: from the outside, by a vertiginous rupture of opposition and negation; or from within, by a disaggregation of its intrinsic logic, as happens to a living body in the twilight of old age, when its Vital Force abandons it and it ceases to be a suitable vehicle for the expression of life. From this point of view, there could not have been a more propitious moment for Western music to make a leap in perception, to add a supernatural element, because the momentum allowed and demanded the manifestation of a new reality.

It is nonetheless curious to observe that in Debussy, the one who played the decisive role in this “change of frequency” to which we inexorably attach the word *new*, there was a sense not of worship,

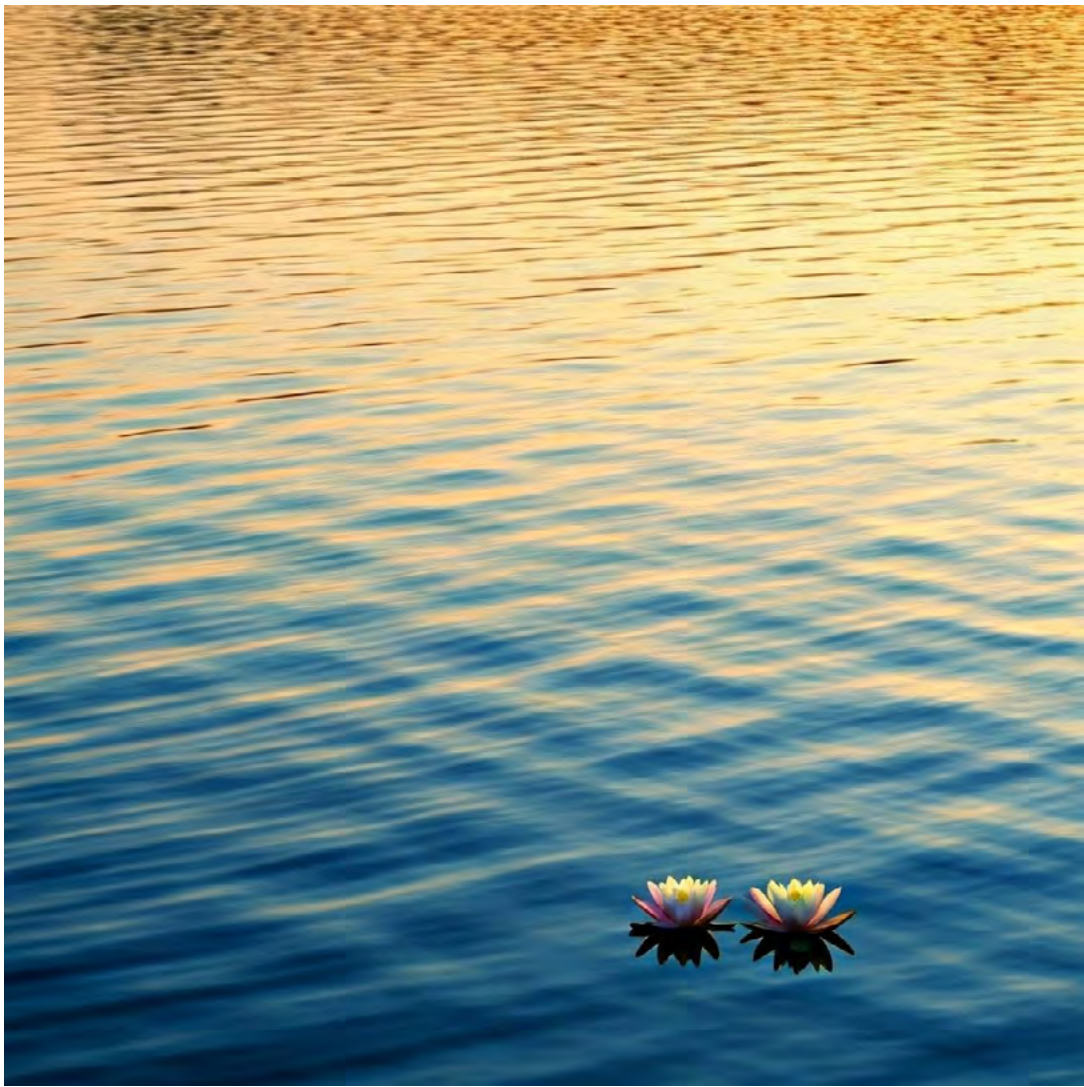
but of reverence for the past. This is borne out by pieces such as “Hommage à Rameau” (“Tribute to Rameau”—a reference to the great French Baroque composer), in the ancient forms invoked in *Suite Bergamasque* (which features the famous “Clair de Lune” (“Moonlight”)), or in the adoption of traditionally consecrated musical structures such as those in the suite *Pour le Piano* (*For the Piano*) or the *Préludes*, which unequivocally reach out to a formal, inspirational past. With Debussy, however, it is a matter of evoking, not of invoking: the substance that is coated with the established formulas is of an originality never seen in previous generational transitions. The clothing here does not define the content; it only gives it materiality. This coexistence of an original substance within a traditional structure undoubtedly contributed to the paradoxical subtlety of the musical revolution represented by Debussy: it is astonishing that one of his exact contemporaries, Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924), whose refinement and aesthetic sense also possess great originality, fell short of being a revolutionary.

There was, however, something in the air, and analogous revolutions were also taking place in painting. Let us think for a moment of movements such as Impressionism and the recourse to Symbolism embodied, for example, by the Pre-Raphaelites, with whom the French esotericists were particularly associated. René Peter, Debussy’s friend in the 1890s, said of his music: “To judge by his works, and by their titles, he is a painter and that is what he wants to be; he calls his compositions pictures, sketches, prints, arabesques, masques, studies in black and white. Plainly it is his delight to paint in music.”

Despite this pictorial pretension, often supported by highly suggestive and inducing titles, on other occasions the composer seems to want to distance



John William Waterhouse, Gather Ye Rosebuds While Ye May, 1909. This is a classic example of Pre-Raphaelite art.

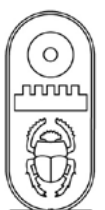


himself from any prefabricated reading and subsequent listening. Notorious examples of this are the famous *Préludes*, the titles of which, in the manuscript and in the first edition, appear only at the bottom of the last page of each prelude, in brackets and after ellipses. This deliberation, eccentric to be sure, is practically an emancipation from the conventional “title-consequent interpretation” arrangement. With this simple but decisive change in the position of the title (which will perhaps no longer be a title), the musical discourse is also emancipated from a predetermination dictated even before the first note resonates. It is a gesture of dissociation from the trodden path and a redirection towards something beyond the musical

phenomenon itself. At this point, water serves us as a connecting element.

Sailing Through Alchemical Waters

As we said in the introduction, alchemically, water is associated with dissolution, which, applied to the context we are studying here, means a dissolving of the personalization of “canonical” music, so to speak, as it had been until then, and of its traditional and academic boundaries. From a holistic perspective, the interpolation of Asian music (especially Javanese and the pentatonic and whole-tone scales) into Debussy’s compositional processes was no accident. This eventuality accelerated the fragmentation of the existing language and favored the infiltration of a music that, according to



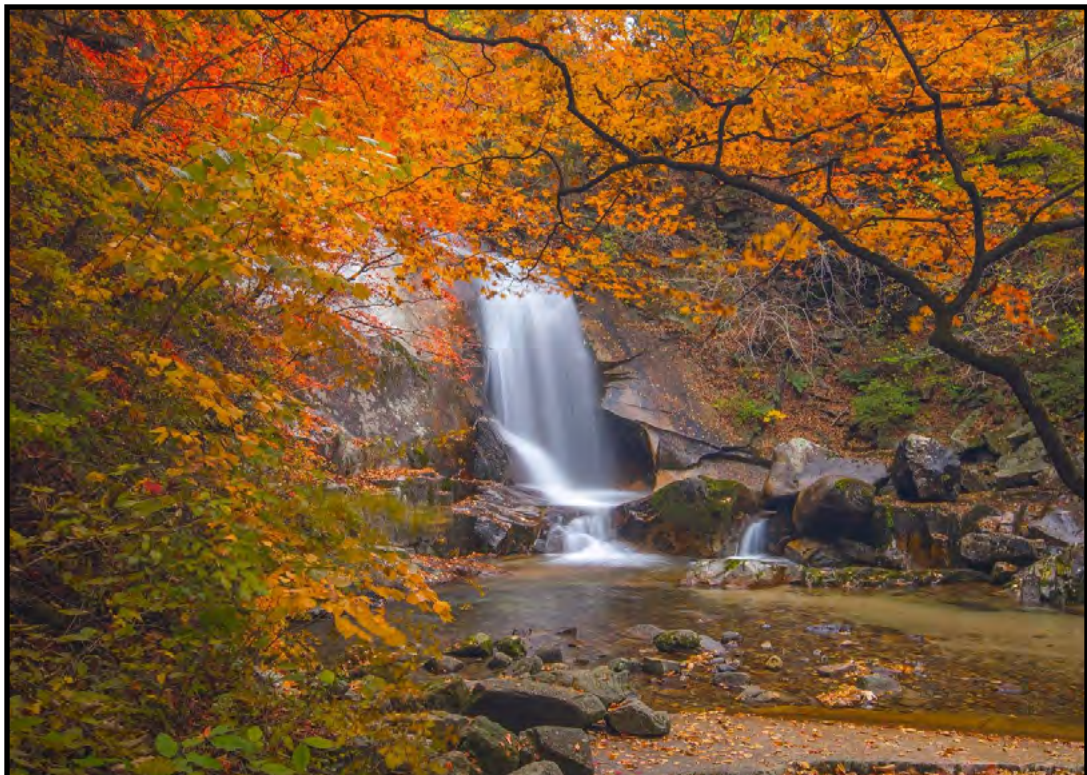
the aforementioned Cyril Scott, had been inspired to him by the “Higher Ones.”

From this perspective, the presence of water as a central figure in so many of Debussy’s creations materializes this impregnation of the element in the foundations of music. Water no longer appears as a pictorial, framed notion of which the music merely “speaks,” but becomes the very substrate, the very materiality of musical language. It is worth noting the symmetry of this approach with that proposed by François Jollivet-Castelot, an alchemist and Rosicrucian who gravitated in the same convivial circle as Debussy and who drew a parallel between the knowledge of matter and the spiritual path.

Debussy glimpsed, or at least felt in his core, this immaterial nature of music, or this latent capacity to transpose, at least in part, a Music with a capital “M” from a more subtle, suprasensory reality. In a letter to his publisher Jacques Durand, the composer stated: “I am becoming more and more convinced that Music, by its very essence, is not something that can flow into

a strict, traditional form. . . . It’s a very young art, both as a means and as ‘knowledge.’” This expansion of the formal boundaries of music was inevitable, but it required the existence of a genius like Debussy’s. His choice of the verb “to flow” (*couler*, in the original French) also leaves a hint of slyness in the statement. Michel Imberty, a French scholar specializing in the psychology of music, notes: “Debussy’s water becomes the authentic dynamic of his work. Water possesses a material evidence of sound which, for him, is a fundamental archetype from which all other transformations, changes, and forms proceed.”

Cyril Scott, in his thought-provoking *Music and its Secret Influence Throughout the Ages*, argues that it is precisely this aesthetic reorientation that makes Debussy above all others the musician able to recreate, in the earthly form of music, its spiritual counterpart, and also advocates that further proof of this aptitude—or openness to another form of manifestation, we might say—is the way in which this “new music,” though revolutionary, imposed itself through





Hokusai, The Great Wave off Kanagawa, 1831. Japanese prints were one of Debussy's main sources of inspiration.

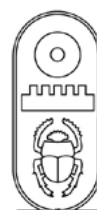
subtlety, not through rupture or harsher contrasts with the musical production in force until then, characteristics that would become those of later musicians such as Stravinsky or Bartók, all tributaries in some way of the author of *La mer* (*The Sea*).

Debussy himself spoke of music as “a dream from which the veils have been lifted,” and that one should have “the courage to go on living in one’s dream, and the energy to go on searching for the Inexpressible, which is the ideal of all art.” These are two ideals dear to the adept of mysticism. The capital letter itself in “Inexpressible” makes us think of a level of reality that cannot be accessed through objective and banal means. But let us return to the Debussyan water.

Reflections in the Water (Or Rather, from the Water)

In another letter to Durand, Debussy evokes a suggestive childhood memory of Cannes, where the train tracks seemed to emerge from the sea, or submerge in it. This is a curious analogy of the

interpenetration of two worlds, for whose achievement he would be the high priest. His compositions marked by the sign of water are numerous. Several of the famous *mélodies* (such as “Il pleure dans mon Cœur” (“Tears Fall in My Heart”), “Le jet d’eau” (“The Water Jet”), and “La mer est plus belle” (“The Sea is More Beautiful”)) stand out, dating from the period of his closest contact with Joséphin Péladan and the Rosicrucian Order of the Temple and the Grail, but the aquatic element is also lavish in his output for the piano. For this instrument, he wrote works that have become staples of the repertoire, such as “Poissons d’or” (“Golden Fish”), a delicate and ingenious figuration with an Asian flavor; “Jardins sous la pluie” (“Gardens in the Rain”), a masterful representation of Parisian gardens in the rain; “The Snow is Dancing” or the *Ondine* from *Préludes*—in which a mythological aquatic figure is evoked in a hauntingly realistic way; and *Des pas sur la neige* (*Footsteps in the Snow*), a notable exception in which Debussy deliberately indicates in writing on the





score the association of the rhythmic figure with a wintry landscape: Water in its glacial state!

In Debussy's universe, however, water itself is subject to ambiguity. The title *Voiles*, the second prelude of the first series, is disconcerting for its duplicity, as it can mean either "veils" or "sails." Its little more than static pulsation suggests, if we think of the sails of a boat, a seascape lightly touched by the breeze. The marine association seems to prevail among performers and scholars, a notable exception being Siglind Bruhn, who in her remarkable *Images and Ideas in Modern French Piano Music*, argues that the composer Edgard Varèse claimed that Debussy was actually inspired by an American dancer who was very fashionable in Paris at the time and who performed in her numbers wearing tulle veils.

It is in this imprecision—or rather, in these illimitable possibilities—that lies the very key to the greatness of musical language, as well as to its accessibility. Each person receives the musical message with their own sensitivity, with the capacity of the spirit that animates them, and absorbs it, incorporates it, re-signifies it, and through it builds new phases of perception and experience. It is precisely this dynamic

capacity that determines the endurance of musical discourse.

Among the *Préludes*, *La cathédrale engloutie* (*The Submerged Cathedral*) occupies a key position. This marvellous page of the Debussyan repertoire—much more symbolist than impressionist, by the way—offers significant aural sensations to even the least prepared listener. According to British pianist Paul Roberts, an authority on Debussy, we have here the evocation of "a potent image of water as a symbol of interior experience, of the subconscious (submerged) impressions of a dream." It evokes the mysterious waters and the experience of the supernatural. In "Reflets dans l'eau" ("Reflections in the Water"), on the other hand, we have a somewhat nocturnal pianism, in which the interaction between water and image is mainly descriptive, through the compositional mechanisms to which we alluded earlier.

Compositions like *La cathédrale engloutie*, however, suggest rather than depict ideas and realities—landscapes that are more interior than material and pictorial. Everything remains "liquid," never explicit, never fully conscious, because it must be apprehended subconsciously. Odilon Redon, a painter friend of Debussy's who participated in the Salons de la Rose-Croix,



A page from the “Sirènes” manuscript. The wordless chanting of the mermaids bonds the feminine to the aquatic universe.

left in this regard a reflection on his own work that echoes this artistic conception, as quoted in Paul Robert’s *Images: the piano music of Claude Debussy*: “My drawings are not intended to define anything: they inspire. They make no statements and set no limits. They lead, like music, into an ambiguous world where there is no cause and no effect.”

Beyond the confines of the eighty-eight ebony and ivory keys, *La Mer* (*The Sea*), three symphonic sketches for orchestra, is the most powerful musical translation of water produced by Debussy’s pen. But it is interesting to note that two other elements are also present here: fire, represented by the midday sun in the first part, “De l’aube à midi sur la mer” (“From Dawn to Noon on the Sea”); and air, in its cinematic manifestation, the wind, in the third part, “Dialogue du vent et de la mer” (“Dialogue of the Wind and the Sea”). The French philosopher and musicologist

Vladimir Jankélévitch states: “[*La Mer*] is the immemorial dialogue between the elements, in which everything is placed on a cosmic scale and where only the voice of primordial nature resounds”.

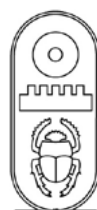
With regard to the three *Nocturnes* for orchestra, the same Jankélévitch argues that Debussy celebrates three of the elements in them: air in “Nuages” (“Clouds”), fire in “Fêtes” (“Festivals”) and, of course, water in “Sirènes” (“Mermaids”), where we once again have a mythical-peripheral association with the liquid element, concluding that of all the elements, earth is the least Debussyan of all. We couldn’t agree more.

Finally, the action of his only opera, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, takes place entirely in the vicinity of a sinister sea that foreshadows storms and departures. The microcosmic counterpart to this sea is a well of shallow, dormant water, which in the plot is said to restore sight to those who cannot see.

Dormant Waters, Deep Waters

Between 1903 and 1905, a period that coincides with the composition of *La Mer* and “Jardins sous la pluie” (“Gardens in the Rain”), among others, Debussy lived his own personal *solutio*, beginning with the crisis and dramatic end of his first marriage and ending with the birth of his only daughter, Chouchou. It is during this same period that he composed “L’isle Joyeuse” (“The Joyful Island”), a projection of a chimerical paradise of ecstasy and consummation that makes us wonder of the ideal whereabouts in which he rested his artistic-prophetic vision when he crossed to the other shore of the mercurial waters.

For Debussy, according to Jankélévitch, “water is not transparent, but reflective; it is not a diaphanous crystal, but a mirror that restores to man his image and to his attentive self-awareness his concerns.”



Water is an element that cannot be retained, that is fleeting, but whose traces are indelible. These are adjectives that apply to Debussy's work, which itself overflows its zeitgeist and is, in a certain sense, ephemeral in its originality, since it has never been reproduced by any composer in any temporal window, but has only been derived, quoted, and produced digressions. Yet his work is perennial by the very mark it has managed to chisel in the course of music since his time.

Rosicrucian philosophy advocates harmony between human beings and the universe. This search for a deeper connection with nature and the cosmos is mirrored in Debussy's work, which often reflects a subtle interaction with natural elements. Just as Rosicrucians seek inner understanding and spiritual evolution, Debussy explored complex emotions and sensations in his music, creating soundscapes that can be interpreted as introspective journeys.

In addition to the next generation of classical composers, it is in jazz that his

footprint has been most fully amalgamated and metabolized. Born under the sign of fire, he will have reached the zenith of his genius sublimated by the complementary force of water, operating the mystery of the conjunction of opposites in such a masterly way that his pulse, his essence, and his mystique can still be felt today, more than a century after his transition.

Further Reading

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Claude Monet, Impression, Sunrise, 1872.

THE ALCHEMICAL WIZARD OF OZ

Timothy J. Ryan, FRC

L. Frank Baum's classic fairytale, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, written in 1900, may be one of the most beloved children's stories of the modern era. It may also, in fact, be an allegory of the mystic's journey, using classic alchemical symbols and operations as Dorothy sojourns along the golden path toward reintegration and the discovery of the Philosopher's Stone. The Emerald City at the center of Oz, for example, is a likely allusion to the Emerald Tablet of Hermes Trismegistus. But either by extreme coincidence or hidden intent, Oz closely parallels the seven operations of Azoth alchemy, which Baum would have been familiar with as a Theosophist and student of occultist Madame Blavatsky. This article offers both the student of alchemy and general Oz enthusiast an entirely new way to read *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.

The Wizard of Oz is one of the most-watched movies of all time.¹ But before the 1939 MGM classic turned Judy Garland into a household name, the book that the film was based on—L. Frank Baum's illustrated picture book, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*—was a smashing success in its own right. Published in 1900 and considered the first truly American fairy tale,² Oz was a bit of a sensation even before Hollywood got ahold of it, selling 90,000 copies in the first two years and quickly selling out each of its first four printings.³ Another three million copies were sold over the next few decades,

and it turned Baum into a celebrity who went on to write several Oz sequels. One hundred twenty years later, the Land of Oz still continues to capture our imagination in pop culture references, and even as a hit Broadway musical-turned-movie, *Wicked*.

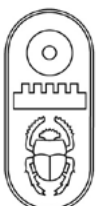
One popular interpretation of Oz is that it's a story about the plight of the Midwest farmer, William Jennings Bryan, and the gold standard. This was a hypothesis put forward by a high school history teacher named Henry Littlefield, who, in the 1960s, argued that *The Wizard of Oz* was really an allegory for the nineteenth-century American populist movement.⁴ Littlefield's hypothesis, however, has been hotly debated by scholars,⁵ and even Littlefield later acknowledged in a letter to *The New York Times* that "there is no basis in fact to consider Baum a

supporter of turn-of-the-century Populist ideology."⁶ While it is likely Baum could not resist a few jabs at the establishment here and there, I do not believe he intended the story to be political satire.

Was *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, then, just a fantastical story, as Baum implores us to believe in his prologue, "written solely to please children of today?"⁷ Or is something else going on below the surface of Dorothy's jaunt along the yellow brick road? While we can't be certain Baum intended the story to be more than a simple fable, there is sufficient evidence to suggest



The cover of the first edition of The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, 1900.





L. Frank Baum with a group of children, ca. 1914.

that, by design or inspiration, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* is a story about the mystic's path, from birth to rebirth, using well-worn alchemical symbols to show the way toward reintegration and the discovery of the *Occultum Lapidem*, or Philosopher's Stone.

A Modern Myth

Some of the most popular stories, even among adults, are those with adolescent heroes who must learn their place in the world. *Harry Potter*, *The Hunger Games*, *Star Wars*, and the entire Disney canon are but a few recent examples of how much the "Hero's Journey"⁸ resonates with audiences of all ages. One could argue that as older religious myths lose their cultural foothold, they are being replaced with modern myths, sometimes in the form of young adult fiction.⁹ Where adult stories focus on the physical and tangible struggles of life, children's stories can be a nonthreatening way to dive deeper, to go to that wellspring in the abstract, using symbols and allegory to explore the essence of who we are and of our purpose. Old religions may disappear, for good or ill, but the desire to understand our sublime nature endures.

Thus, even in a predominantly agnostic and science-focused age, stories and myths remain a popular medium to help us grasp the unfathomable.

L. Frank Baum probably understood this when he wrote *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, creating a new guidebook for a young country in 1900 on the precipice of modernization. As he states in his prologue to *Oz*, the fairytales of Grimm and Anderson are historical, and "the time has come for a series of newer wonder tales."

Before turning to the exegesis to see where Baum might be leaning on alchemical symbols, a few biographical notes will support this hypothesis. L. Frank Baum was married to Maude Gage, who was the daughter of one of the most important feminists and suffragettes in American history, Matilda Joslyn Gage. Historians have largely overlooked her importance in the suffrage movement, but it was Matilda Gage, not the more famous Susan B. Anthony or Elizabeth Stanton, who chiefly penned *History of Woman Suffrage*¹⁰ and who did as much or more to advance the rights

of women in nineteenth-century America as any other, according to Baum biographer Evan Schwartz.¹¹ Truly an avatar ahead of her time, Matilda Gage was a women's suffragist, a Native American rights activist, an abolitionist, a freethinker, and a prolific author, who was "born with a hatred of oppression."¹² It was also Matilda Gage who introduced her daughter and son-in-law to the ideas of the newly formed Theosophical Society, of which she was a member.

Founded in 1875 by famed occultist Madame Blavatsky, Henry Olcott, and William Quan Judge, the Theosophical Society had three objectives: (1) to form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or color; (2) to encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy, and science; and (3) to investigate the unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in humankind.¹³ Records show that Frank and Maude Baum were officially admitted into the Theosophical Society on September 4, 1892, which would have required them to study and become proficient in the Society's teachings and win the respect of a mentor who would recommend their admittance.¹⁴

That L. Frank Baum was a student of Blavatsky's and keenly familiar with esoteric teachings in the years prior to writing *Oz*, having likely read both *The Secret Doctrine* and *Isis Unveiled*, is worth considerable attention. It is also worth pointing out that Baum believed such teachings could be successfully transmitted through works of literature. In a newspaper column he wrote in 1890 for the *Aberdeen Saturday Pioneer*, he argued:

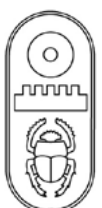
There is a strong tendency in modern novelists towards introducing some vein of mysticism or occultism into their writings. Books of this character are eagerly bought and read

by the people, both in Europe and America. It shows the innate longing in our natures to unravel the mysterious: to seek some explanation, however fictitious, of the unexplainable in nature and in our daily existence. For, as we advance in education, our desire for knowledge increases, and we are less satisfied to remain in ignorance of that mysterious fountain-head from which emanates all that is sublime and grand and incomprehensible in nature.¹⁵

Did Baum ladle hidden, mystical lessons he had learned the previous decade into his own writings? In 1996, University of Georgia professor and Theosophist John Algeo argued as much when he wrote a short piece for the Theosophical Society postulating that *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* is filled with theosophical teachings, including astral projection, which he argued is what Dorothy experiences when she is lifted from Kansas by a cyclone and placed in the curious land of Oz.¹⁶



Dorothy catches Toto by the ear as their house is caught up in a cyclone. First edition illustration by W. W. Denslow.



Others have argued that the yellow brick road is an allusion to the Golden Path in Buddhism and represents the soul's path to illumination.¹⁷

But a more thorough examination on the origins of Oz is offered in *Finding Oz: How L. Frank Baum Discovered the Great American Story*. Biographer Schwartz draws connections between real events in Baum's life and those that take place in his stories, and agrees that Theosophy and other esoteric teachings probably influenced Baum's creative output.¹⁸

Taking that idea a step further, there is convincing evidence that Baum intended his story to be a more specific allegory; in fact, one that directly follows the seven stages of Azoth alchemy. To examine this hypothesis more closely, let's turn to the text to see what alchemical symbolism may be identified in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.

Kansas—The *Prima Materia*

Before beginning the magnum opus, the alchemist starts with *prima materia*, or first matter—that ubiquitous but subtle substance that will be transformed into the Philosopher's Stone and life elixir. Dorothy's journey begins on a colorless, drab Kansas farm, and to drive the point home, Baum uses the word *gray* ten times in the opening pages of his magnum opus:

Dorothy stood in the doorway and looked around, she could see nothing but the great gray prairie on every side. . . . The sun had baked the plowed land into a gray mass, with little cracks running through it. Even the grass was not green, for the sun had burned the tops of the long blades until they were the same gray color to be seen everywhere. Once the house had been painted, but the sun blistered the paint and the rains washed it away, and



A still from an early scene in the 1939 movie The Wizard of Oz. Taking its lead from the book, the movie remained colorless until Dorothy lands in Oz.



In this scene in the 1939 movie, Dorothy lands in Oz and sees the yellow brick road for the first time. It is also the first time the movie bursts with bright color, which startled audiences on its release.

now the house was as dull and gray as everything else. (p. 12)

In the first operation of alchemy, the beginning substance is reduced to ashes using fire and intense heat, and since ashes are gray, it is possible Baum is hinting at the first stage, here. But more than likely, he is using Kansas as a metaphor for the actual prima materia. On the outside, it may appear to have little life in it, but there is latent power hidden within that gray, Kansas soil. It is in Kansas where Dorothy's story begins, and where it ends. Indeed, her story is the prototypical hero's journey—an orphan who must leave her flawed and colorless home, face many difficult trials, find the treasure she seeks, and return home, transformed.¹⁹ That's the alchemist's journey, also.

In the Merry Old Land of Oz

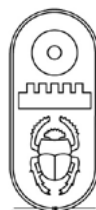
After Dorothy and Toto are swept up by a cyclone, they land in Oz, in the east. East is the cardinal direction most often symbolic of birth and rebirth, since this is where the sun is “reborn” each morning. In the original book version, Dorothy is given magic silver slippers (not ruby as in the movie version) for killing the Wicked Witch of the East. Baum biographer

Schwartz, believed that the silver slippers have a significant esoteric meaning: “In Theosophy, one's physical body and one's Astral body are connected through a ‘silver cord,’ a mythical link inspired by a passage in the Old Testament that speaks of a return from a spiritual quest. ‘Or ever the silver cord be loosed,’ says the book of Ecclesiastes. ‘Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God [the Divine] who gave it.’”²⁰

As noted earlier, the yellow brick road might represent the golden path in Buddhism that spirals outward, symbolic of the spiritual journey on which Dorothy is about to embark. Once on the yellow brick road, her alchemical work is underway and we start to see a pattern that follows the seven operations of alchemy.

First Alchemical Operation: Calcination (*Visita*)

Using Dennis William Hauck's scholarship on Azoth Alchemy as a guide²¹—a system used by noted alchemists such as Basil Valentine, Paracelsus, and Isaac Newton—there are seven operations to be undertaken to produce the Philosopher's Stone. The word “Azoth” is derived from the first and last letter of the alphabet, A–Z, symbolizing totality and completeness (note the similarity to O–Z). The first of the seven operations is called “Calcination,” a laboratory process that uses fire to reduce the prima materia to ash. The symbols most often associated with Calcination are the metal lead, a skull, death, blackness, and crows or ravens. Perhaps not coincidentally, the first thing Dorothy encounters on the yellow brick road is the Scarecrow, signaling that we may be in the realm of Calcination. It is also significant that the Scarecrow seeks a brain. Before beginning the alchemical work, the philosopher's first task is to study and learn. So, likewise, the first thing Dorothy must acquire before she gets to the Emerald City is “right thinking.” Of



course, throughout the story we see that the Scarecrow really does, in fact, have a brain and uses it more than his companions. It turns out he has everything he needs and just doesn't realize it yet. That is true of the alchemist, also, who already possesses all he or she needs and has on only to put in the work to discover and refine it.

Baum throws in another hint that we are in the Calcination stage when the Scarecrow remarks to Dorothy that he isn't afraid of anything, except "a lighted match" (p. 40). Thus, as will be repeated throughout the story, the Scarecrow is closely tied to the fire of Calcination.

Second Operation: Dissolution (*Interiora*)

The second stage of alchemy is Dissolution, where water is added to dilute the ashen matter from Calcination. Where lead is the metal of Calcination, tin is the metal most often associated with Dissolution, and so Dorothy's second encounter on the yellow brick road is the Tin Woodman. Transitioning from fire (Calcination) to water (Dissolution), Dorothy discovers the Tin Woodman's joints are rusted shut, for he got stuck in a rainstorm. And just like the Scarecrow, who is afraid of fire, the Tin Woodman must be mindful of water. "And as [the Tin Woodman] walked along he wept several tears of sorrow and regret. These tears ran slowly down his face and over the hinges of his jaw, and there they rusted" (p. 71).

The Tin Woodman serves another purpose, also, in that his search for a heart represents feelings. Dorothy, having already acquired right thinking, must also have right feeling. It takes compassion to be a true philosopher, which the Tin Woodman represents.

Third Operation: Separation (*Terra*)

The third stage of alchemy is Separation, which requires the alchemist to keep the

usable parts while removing the rest. As the Emerald Tablet instructs, "Separate the earth from the fire, the subtile from the gross." This third stage is often represented by the planet Mars and the metal iron and frequently with illustrations of two white birds picking at the material to take its most useful parts.²² This is the stage that takes a great amount of effort, according to noted alchemy historian Dennis William Hauck: "At this stage, the saved elements are pure but opposite and were often seen at war or struggling with each other. It can be a tortuous time that demands will and determination."²³ In other words, it takes courage. The third companion Dorothy meets is the Lion, in need of some will and determination of his own. The alchemist may have intellect and compassion, but she or he will also need courage to act. In addition to right thinking and right feeling, Dorothy will need right action, and this may be what the Lion represents.



Dorothy meeting the Cowardly Lion. First edition illustration by W. W. Denslow.



A still from the 1939 Oz film. From left to right: the Tin Man, Dorothy, the Scarecrow, and the Cowardly Lion.

There is another, different, interpretation worth exploring, which is that Scarecrow, Tin Woodman, and Lion represent salt, mercury, and sulfur. In his monumental work, *The Secret Teachings of All Ages*, Manly P. Hall explained:

In alchemy there are three symbolic substances: mercury, sulphur, and salt. To these was added a fourth mysterious life principle called Azoth. . . . Salt, sulphur, and mercury each has a triune nature, for each of these substances contains, in reality, also the other two substances, according to the secret arcanum of the wise. . . . These nine divisions—3 times 3, plus Azoth (the mysterious universal life force)—equals 10, the sacred decad of Pythagoras.²⁴

<i>World of</i>	<i>Father</i>	<i>Child</i>	<i>Mother</i>
Humans	Spirit	Soul	Body
Elements	Air	Water	Earth
Chemicals	Sulphur	Mercury	Salt

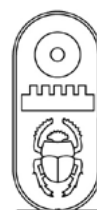
This triune nature, according to Paracelsus, can be seen in the chart below.²⁵

It is possible that Baum used Dorothy's companions as a metaphor for these three elements where Scarecrow is fiery sulfur, Tin Woodman is volatile mercury, and Lion is salt of the Earth. There is an argument to be made, as well, that spirit, soul, and body closely follow intellect, heart, and courage. On the other hand, in alchemical symbolism, lions are more often associated with fire and sulfur than with salt.

In any case, Dorothy at this stage is now armed with intellect, purity, and courage, and ready to pass the initiatory stages, the "lower work." Madame Blavatsky famously penned: "There is no danger that dauntless courage cannot conquer; there is no trial that spotless purity cannot pass through; there is no difficulty that strong intellect cannot surmount. For those who win onwards there is a reward past all telling – the power to bless and save humanity; for those who fail, there are other lives in which success may come."²⁶

Fourth Operation: Conjunction (*Rectificondo*)

Conjunction, the recombination of the saved elements from Separation into



a new substance, is the midway point of the seven alchemical operations. It is associated with the metal copper and the planet Venus, or sometimes gold and the Sun. So important was this stage, alchemists regarded Conjunction as the invisible eighth operation, as Hauck wrote:

In the horizontal orientation of left and right, the Conjunction is an attempt to balance the masculine consciousness of the King with the feminine consciousness of the Queen. . . . Conjunction marks [a] balancing point between the forces of the Anima (Soul) on the alchemist's right side to the forces of the Spiritus (Spirit) on the alchemist's left side. In fact, it is the alchemical crucifixion at the center of the vertical and horizontal realities that makes Conjunction the most significant operation in alchemy.²⁷

Dorothy's next stop along the yellow brick road is the Emerald City. In the topography of Oz, the Emerald City is located directly in the center of the map, at the midway point between East–West (the horizontal and physical plane of the two wicked witches) and North–South (the

vertical and spiritual plane of the two good witches). The Emerald City, like the fourth operation of alchemy, is the symbolic rose at the center of the cross. L. Frank Baum would have been familiar with the Emerald Tablet, a translation of which was given by Madame Blavatsky in *Isis Unveiled*:

What is below is like that which is above, and what is above is similar to that which is below to accomplish the wonders of one thing. As all things were produced by the mediation of one being, so all things were produced from this one by adaptation. Its father is the sun, its mother is the moon. It is the cause of all perfection throughout the whole earth. Its power is perfect if it is changed into earth. Separate the earth from the fire, the subtile from the gross, acting prudently and with judgment. Ascend with the greatest sagacity from the earth to heaven, and then descend again to earth, and unite together the power of things inferior and superior; thus you will possess the light of the whole world, and all obscurity will fly away from you. This thing has more fortitude than fortitude itself, because it will overcome every



The Emerald City. First edition illustration by W. W. Denslow.

subtile thing and penetrate every solid thing. By it the world was formed.²⁸

As mentioned before, the Emerald City could certainly be a nod to the Emerald Tablet. In any case, it is important enough for Baum to have placed it at the very center, or heart, of Oz.

An interesting scene in the book that was excluded in the film version is the four manifestations of the Wizard. In the book, Dorothy, Scarecrow, Tin Woodman, and Lion each visit the Wizard individually, on successive days, to make their requests for a brain, heart, and courage. To Dorothy, the Wizard appears on a green throne as a giant, hairless male head. Seeing that Dorothy has both the silver slippers and the mark of the Good Witch of the North on her head, the Wizard instructs her that before he can grant her wish to return home she must first kill the Witch of the West (her journey to transcend the physical, horizontal plane is only half complete, having only killed the Witch of the East).

The following day, the Scarecrow visits the Throne Room to ask for a brain. This time, the Wizard is a woman in a flowing green dress (mother-in-law Matilda Gage would have approved and one can only speculate why MGM took this part out). To the Tin Woodman, the Wizard appears as a terrible beast with “five eyes in its face . . . five long arms . . . and five long, slim legs,” (p. 132), perhaps alluding to the five-pointed crown and quintessence (fifth element) commonly associated with this Conjunction stage. To the Lion, the Wizard appears as a giant ball of fire. In the Wizard, these four manifestations represent two dual natures—the king and queen of opposite polarities, and also as body and spirit (beast and fire). Hauck wrote: “The alchemists often referred to the Conjunction as the ‘Marriage of the Sun and Moon,’ which symbolized the two



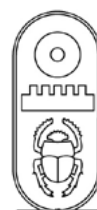
Dorothy meeting the Wizard. First edition illustration by W. W. Denslow.

opposing ways of knowing or experiencing the world.”²⁹

Another aspect of the Wizard, which is not revealed until later in the story, is that the Wizard is nothing but a “humbug,” a fraud, or even a trickster. Imagery from the Conjunction stage often shows Hermes with a wry smile. Hauck wrote: “Conjunction is really a good-natured ruse by the notorious trickster, who knows that both the King and Queen must die or sacrifice their identities in the marriage to produce the Child of the Philosophers, which is all Hermes really cares about.”³⁰ After Dorothy ventures west and kills the wicked witch, she will come back to the Emerald City and discover the Wizard is just a humbug. More importantly, she’ll discover her latent power already within.

Fifth Operation: Fermentation (Invenies)

Where the first three operations of the Emerald Tablet focused on “what is below is like that which is above,” in the fifth



operation the alchemist is now channeling “what is above is similar to that which is below.” This is the beginning of the “higher work.” At this stage, Hauck wrote that a milky substance that can be described as yellow or golden in color emerges from the material: “Finally, out of the utter blackness of Putrefaction comes the yellow Ferment, which appears like a golden wax flowing out of the foul matter. Chinese alchemists called this substance the Golden Pill, which marked their intermediary Yellow Phase, an alchemical transition also recognized by Alexandrian alchemists.”³¹

Coincidentally, at this stage Dorothy and her friends travel to the “Yellow Land of the West,” where they meet the yellow Winkies, who live in the Yellow Castle surrounded by “buttercups and yellow daisies.” As he did in making sure the reader knows Kansas is gray, Baum goes to great lengths to show that yellow is the domain of the Wicked Witch of the West. Gold also features prominently here as Dorothy takes possession of a Golden Cap that belongs to the witch. Later in the story, this Golden Cap will help Dorothy summon the winged monkeys who will carry her back to the Emerald City. Likewise, Scarecrow, Tin Woodman, and Lion are all given gifts of gold: “The Winkies gave Toto and the Lion each a golden collar . . . to the Scarecrow they gave a gold-headed walking stick, to keep him from stumbling; and to the Tin Woodman they offered a silver oil-can, inlaid with gold and set with precious jewels” (p. 162).

It is in the West that Dorothy finally overcomes the physical, horizontal plane, melting the Wicked Witch of the West with a bucket of water and returning to Oz to claim her treasure.

Sixth Operation: Distillation (*Occultum*)

After returning to Oz, Dorothy learns the Wizard is really just a humbug, unable to help her get back home. This is an important lesson, as Algeo explained, “Reliance on a teacher, on a guru, must inevitably end in disappointment. All teachers are humbugs, save one—the Teacher Within.”³² Dorothy must find the hidden stone within, which is the final goal of the alchemist. The



Dorothy and the Wizard of Oz prepare to take off in his hot air balloon, in a still from the 1939 film.

Wizard devises a plan to take Dorothy back to Kansas in a hot air balloon, but she misses the ride because her dog, Toto, runs away. Toto is also the reason Dorothy gets swept up in a cyclone in the first place and lands in Oz. Some have speculated that Toto represents Dorothy’s inner voice, according to the Vigilant Citizen website: “The balloon ride is representative of traditional religion, with a skinny-legged wizard

promising a trip to the Divine. Toto was right to force Dorothy out of the balloon, otherwise she might never have found her magic. This is a call for us to listen to our intuition, our gut feelings, those momentary bits of imagination that appear seemingly out of nowhere.”³³

Schwartz speculated that the unusual name “Toto” may have come from an important aspect of Theosophical teaching³⁴ regarding The Secret Doctrine. As Madam



The good witch Glinda, in a still from the 1939 film.

Blavatsky explained, “The Eternity of the Universe *in toto* as a boundless plane . . . is like a wink of the eye of Self-Existence.”³⁵ Including characters with the names “Toto” and “Winkies” may have been Baum’s wink to the initiated reader.

“Ascend with the greatest sagacity from the earth to heaven,” the Emerald Tablet says of the Distillation stage. Alchemical images of this operation include bulbous-like vessels such as the alembic, which is a distillation tool that collects condensation, as well as images of flying objects rising into the air. The hot-air balloon could therefore be symbolic of this stage. Psychologically, Dorothy has passed the threshold, having seen the Wizard for what he is. She must now turn inside to find her way home.

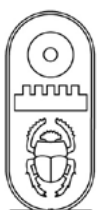
Seventh Operation: Coagulation (*Lapidem*)

The seventh operation of alchemy is Coagulation, which fuses the fermented and distilled material of the previous operations, incarnating and releasing “the *Ultima Materia* of the soul,” more commonly known as the Philosopher’s Stone. Hauck wrote: “Using this magical Stone, the alchemists believed they could exist on all levels of reality. In society, it is the living wisdom in which everyone exists within the same light of

evolved consciousness and knowledge of Truth.”

Dorothy’s final journey before returning to Kansas is to travel south, to the domain of the good witch Glinda, “a beautiful woman, who knows how to keep young in spite of the many years she has lived” (p. 215). In addition to the ability to transform base metals into gold, alchemists are known for creating the elixir of life, a veritable fountain of youth, of which Glinda appears to be in possession. The color that dominates the South is red, which is also said to be the color of the Philosopher’s Stone. “Glinda sat upon a throne of rubies . . . and her hair was a rich red in color” (p. 253). These are all probable clues to let us know we are in the final stage of the Great Work.

Alchemy is fundamentally about transformation: the transformation of the physical, the psychological, and the spiritual, which in Oz is accomplished with three clicks of the heels. Says the Good Witch of the South, “The Silver Shoes . . . have wonderful powers. And one of the most curious things about them is that they can carry you to any place in the world in three steps, and each step will be made in the wink of an eye” (p. 257). Again, Baum appears to



be borrowing directly from Blavatsky here (“the Universe *in toto* . . . is like the wink of an eye in Self-Existence”).

What Oz Teaches Us

After her journey through Oz, Dorothy is finally able to return home. Kansas is still gray, but she now sees it through a different set of eyes.

“My darling child!” [Aunt Em] cried, folding the little girl in her arms and covering her face with kisses. “Where in the world did you come from?”

“From the Land of Oz,” said Dorothy gravely. “And here is Toto, too. And oh, Aunt Em! I’m so glad to be at home again!” (p. 261)

Alchemy’s ultimate aim is not riches or longevity or escape, but rather a return to the Garden of Eden (Kansas), only this time transformed, on a higher level and more in tune with the Divine. One of the more vexing aspects of our existence is that we must experience pain, and struggle, and separation from the Divine. No one can hand us the Philosopher’s Stone; there is no treasure map that will take us to its location, nor can we steal it from anyone else. It requires a great deal of individual effort and, sometimes, pain, but experience on the physical plane is necessary for

growth and understanding. I believe this is what Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, the eighteenth-century French philosopher, meant when he wrote, “The ordeals and oppositions which we undergo become our crosses when we remain beneath them, but they become ladders of ascent when we rise above them.” We endure a cycle of birth, struggle, and rebirth, but toward a higher end, and it is possible that this is what Baum was ultimately trying to convey. In a brief exchange at the end of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, he gave us a final clue, with a bit of blunt force:

“Your Silver Shoes will carry you over the desert,” replied Glinda. “If you had known their power you could have gone back to your Aunt Em the very first day you came to this country.”

“But then I should not have had my wonderful brains!” cried the Scarecrow.

“And I should not have had my lovely heart,” said the Tin Woodman.

“And I should have lived a coward forever,” declared the Lion.

“This is all true,” said Dorothy, “and I am glad I was of use to these good friends. But now that each of them has had what he most desired . . . I think I should like to go back to Kansas.” (p. 257)



In the 1939 film, Dorothy's slippers are ruby red instead of silver like in the book.



Dorothy wakes up in Kansas, in a still from the end of the 1939 film.

Dorothy's journey ends where it started, but everything is different because of her knowledge and experience and great effort to return home. If the return to the source is not the ultimate aim of the alchemist, what is?

The Master Behind the Great Work

When asked how he came up with the story of Oz, L. Frank Baum admitted, "It came to me right out of the blue. I think that sometimes the Great Author has a message to get across, and He [It] has to use the instrument at hand. I happened to be the medium, and I believe the magic key was given to me to open the doors to sympathy and understanding, joy, peace, and happiness." But it was the great suffragette and Theosophist Matilda Joslyn Gage who convinced Frank Baum to start writing stories in the first place. She had seen an ad in the newspaper calling for children's stories, for which the publisher would pay up to \$500, and had recalled the delightful tales Baum made up for his children after a long day at work.³⁸ Gage wrote to her son-in-law, urging him to reply to the ad. "If you could get up a series of adventures or a Dakota blizzard adventure where a heroic teacher saves children's lives," she wrote, "[or] bring in a cyclone . . . from North Dakota." In the same letter, Gage urged

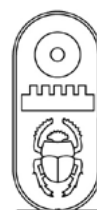
Baum to write stories "which comes with a moral, without however any attempt to sermonize."³⁹

A few months after writing her letter, Matilda Gage went through transition. It was then that the idea for the Wizard of Oz came to L. Frank Baum in a flash. In his biography, Schwartz observes: "While the spirit of Matilda Joslyn Gage was ascending to a different realm, Frank experienced a singular moment unlike any other in his life. 'Suddenly,' [Frank later told his publisher] 'this one [story] moved right in and took possession.'"⁴⁰

It's impossible to know if the many references to alchemy and theosophy were intentional, inspired, or just some happy coincidence. Baum certainly intended Oz to be both entertaining and commercially successful, but it appears he also used it as a tool to convey a great metaphysical lesson. In this context, then, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* may be one of the most important works of early American literature, and perhaps one of the great esoteric texts of our modern age.

Endnotes

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⁶ Henry Littlefield, "Letters to the Editor," *The New York Times*, February 7, 1992, <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/02/07/opinion/1-oz-author-kept-intentions-to-himself-526392.html>.

⁷ L. Frank Baum with Pictures by W.W. Denslow, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (Chicago: George M. Hill, 1900), Introduction. All page references in the text are to this edition.

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⁹ Tom Collins, "Mythic Reflections, An Interview with Joseph Campbell," *In Context* (Winter 1985/86). Or, see "Jediism," a term used for those who identify with the Jedi religion.

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¹¹ Evan I. Schwartz, *Finding Oz: How L. Frank Baum Discovered the Great American Story* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009), 41.

¹² "About Matilda Joslyn Gage," *The Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation*, <https://matildajoslyngage.org>.

¹³ Bruce F. Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived: A History of the Theosophical Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 78.

¹⁴ Schwartz, *Finding Oz*, 207.

¹⁵ L. Frank Baum, *Aberdeen Saturday Pioneer*, February 22, 1890.

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¹⁷ "The Occult Roots of the Wizard of Oz," *The Vigilant Citizen*, <https://vigilantcitizen.com/moviesandtv/the-occult-roots-of-the-wizard-of-oz/>.

¹⁸ Schwartz, *Finding Oz*, 201–211.

¹⁹ Campbell, *The Hero with A Thousand Faces*.

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²⁶ H.P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, Volume 13, 1891, 219.

²⁷ Hauck, Azoth Alchemy.

²⁸ H.P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled* (New York: J.W. Bouton, 1877), 507.

²⁹ Hauck, Azoth Alchemy.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid

³² Algeo, "The Wizard of Oz: The Perilous Journey."

³³ "The Occult Roots of the Wizard of Oz," *Vigilant Citizen*.

³⁴ Schwartz, *Finding Oz*, 208.

³⁵ H.P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* (London: The Theosophical Publishing Company, 1888), 16.

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³⁹ Ibid, 252.

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The last page of the first edition of The Wizard of Oz, 1900.

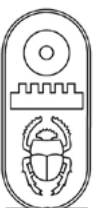
AS YOU GO THROUGH LIFE

Ella Wheeler Wilcox, SRC
(1850-1919)

Don't look for the flaws as you go through life;
And even when you find them,
It is wise and kind to be somewhat blind
And look for the virtue behind them.
For the cloudiest night has a hint of light
Somewhere in its shadows hiding;
It is better by far to hunt for a star,
Than the spots on the sun abiding.

The current of life runs ever away
To the bosom of God's [the Divine's] great ocean.
Don't set your force 'gainst the river's course
And think to alter its motion.
Don't waste a curse on the universe –
Remember it lived before you.
Don't butt at the storm with your puny form,
But bend and let it go o'er you.

The world will never adjust itself
To suit your whims to the letter.
Some things must go wrong your whole life long,
And the sooner you know it the better.
It is folly to fight with the Infinite,
And go under at last in the wrestle;
The wiser man [person] shapes into God's [the Divine's] plan
As water shapes into a vessel.



HAND IN HAND

Michael Shaluly, FRC

Hand in hand they went to the top
Of a hill overlooking a valley's drop
A father and daughters out to see
A sunset's colorful dive to the sea.

The sun was settling in orange hues
Nudging the young girls as if on cue
To ask their father who they must pay
To witness such beauty to end the day.

He answered it's yours from the day you were born
And will remain as yours after life is well-worn.
Now raise your hands and touch your gift
To the heavens above send a thank you kiss.



The above poem is a selection from the poetry book Upon a Quiet, by longtime Rosicrucian Michael Shaluly. The book is available for download [here](#).

Below is the Introduction to the book, which provides us with fascinating insights into the poet's thoughts and process.

Consciousness has confounded humanity perhaps ever since we gained self-awareness. We find ourselves immersed in a fascinating display of the workings of the universe, yet it is still puzzling as to why the universe even exists, why we are here to experience it as we do, and what our conscious awareness actually is. It is when we grant a moment's tarry to contemplate our material, "outer" existence that we

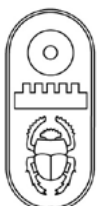


begin to discover an invisible, “inner” existence that is guiding us and speaking to us constantly. Just as our wandering desires are drawn outward to the subtle lights in the night sky, so too is our mortal mind drawn inward to that subtle “light” within us that nudges us to wonder. It is this light, that desire to discover, that drives humanity forward in an effort to explain itself. We could say that light is behind our ambitions, though it is hidden from us as we work and struggle in the shades of time gifted to us in this world. Certainly, light finds us in the form of inspiration from time to time, spurring us on through various expressions of beauty and wonder, both natural and manmade, that we attach to. Poetry can be such an expression and is a wonderful way to probe the boundaries of thought and roam around within this mystery of consciousness.

When we find that spark of inspiration, it is the start of an inner and outer journey to discover more about ourselves. Looking outward at our place on Earth forces us to look inward to marvel and wonder not only about nature herself but also at how we perceive her. Trails of light leave clues for us to follow the history of our universe, the home of our awareness. From the earliest moments of creation, the cosmos began a journey of expansion, and the movement of light reflecting from galaxies and gasses gives us a glimpse into the beginnings of the physical universe.

By measuring the distance and speed of galaxies, and calculating our way backwards, we can get a hint of what may have been the first speck of time. But what do we really see when we gaze out into the cosmos searching for answers? We are looking at reflections of light that tell us not only about physical things, but also about our own evolution. We are looking at, and participating in, our consciousness within a universal consciousness unfolding and continuing to be. We are, in essence, looking at ourselves, and our own history of being, for every aspect of us is part of the same cosmic matter that is everywhere. Human beings focus on physical events, yet within the framework of all things that we know lies the evolution of consciousness. When light came into being, we came into being, and we have been translating light through every thought, every word, and every action that we take.

This book is a contemplation upon that same light that animates this journey of life that we all share. Through the written words here, it is hoped that you might be led to find that meditative space within you and listen to what the quiet has to share. Each poem has its own rhythm and meaning. Grant them the time they need to formulate a meaning and lesson for you, and perchance you may glance at that wondrous spark of light within you that is always striving to be!



THE SACRED CIRCLE DANCE AND THE NUMINOUS

Luiz Eduardo V. Berni, FRC



Chuvash ritual round dance around the sacred kiremet tree.

The Sacred Dance Movement is quite important in many countries. Bernard Wosien discovered the power of folk dancing (usually dancing in a circle) and began researching and collecting *Heilige Tänze* (Sacred Dances) because of their holistic power to heal people, transport people to a meditative level of consciousness, and connect with the Sacred (as Rudolf Otto describes it). In 1975, he began to work with the Findhorn sacred dancers in Scotland. Thus, the Sacred Dance Movement began with important foundations in Scotland and Brazil, and connections with the United Nations. To improve cooperation between all people, Brazilian Sacred Dance has been increasingly used in both educational and business venues.

This article presents an introduction to Sacred Circle Dance. My first contact with this practice was in 1995 during an important Holistic Conference held in Brazil: “The Imaginaria.”

The event gathered many important speakers such as Edgar Mitchell, the

American astronaut; Amir Klink, the Brazilian navigator and writer; many scientists; Brazilian natives from different Xingu Nations; Semu Huaute, the North American Indian Grandfather of the Chumash people; and many others such as Craig Gibsone, an elder from the Scottish Spiritual Community of Findhorn.

The conference began with a ritual to open the gates to all four directions. After that, we sang and danced the Sacred Dance. That was a magical moment in my life, because in that simple dance, a deep connection with the Sacred could be felt, a connection that I had previously felt only in a Rosicrucian Lodge Convocation. That night, in my sleep, my dreams were of dance. After that experience, I became a practitioner of the Sacred Dance.

In 1996, with a Brazilian group of sacred dancers, I visited Findhorn to take part in the “Sacred Dance—20th Year Festival.” Then, I began teaching Sacred Dance. And in almost all those occasions, the dancers—sometimes crying,

sometimes laughing—reported some kind of connection with the Sacred.

In 1997, that enthusiastic group of sacred dancers and I published the first Brazilian book on this subject: *The Sacred Circle Dance as a Tool for Educational and Healing Works*. At that time, sometimes we named the dances “Sacred Dances” and sometimes “Circle Dances.” I taught those dances in schools, in business meetings as a warm-up activity, and at Human Resource Conferences. In many of these gatherings, people reported some kind of connection with the Sacred. After that, in 2000, I decided to study those dances deeply and earn a Master’s degree in “Science of Religion” at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica (PUC-SP) in São Paulo, Brazil. This article is a part of the research carried out for that degree.

The Primal Dance: A Gateway to Other Levels of Reality

Thinking about the dance brings an oncoming sensation of acquaintance, because even those who have never danced in their lives know exactly what dancing is. Among the arts, singing and dancing are the only ones that do not need tools, except the body. “Singing and Dancing are the most ancient species of art every human being has inside them.”¹ Dancing is movement. It is also harmony in a cycle, in a circuit, in a circle.

The most ancient document about dancing refers to the late Paleolithic era and belongs to the cave paintings in the Gabillou Cave, in Dordogne, France. It is called “The Dancer” and consists of “a shamanic figure in dynamic movement. In addition, on the clay floor of one of the caves, the discoverers found footprints in a circular arrangement suggesting that its inhabitants conducted dance.”²

Human beings have danced since the beginning of time. The first type of Circle Dance was without hand contact

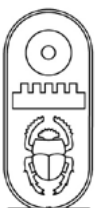
and probably emulating some animal movements or perhaps the movement of the stars in the sky. These forms of dance occurred from 350,000 BCE to 75,000 BCE. Dancing is one of the first creative and symbolic acts that humans have ever produced. According to certain myths, dancing is older than culture, and even older than the myth itself, because the Cosmic was created through dancing.

Maria Gabriele Wosien wrote:

Shiva Nataraja, Lord of the Dance, sends pulsating waves of awakening sound through matter, thereby seducing it to life from lethargy. And matter dances, appearing round about him as an aureole of fiery emanations. Dancing, he creates and sustains the manifold phenomena of the universe; dancing, he destroys by fire all forms and names and gives new rest: his dance form is everywhere, all-pervading. Everywhere, Shiva’s gracious dance is made manifest. He dances with Water, Fire, Wind, and Ether. Thus, our Lord always dances in the court.³



“The Dancer” in Gabillou Cave, France.⁴





Guarani women in Paraguay singing.

The Greek myth of Gaian creation began with an image of the deity whirling out of darkness, wrapped in flowing white veils. The ancient Greek word *khaos* first denoted nothingness, the great void before there was anything material in the universe. There was nothingness, as nothing had been formed, yet the dance of energy that would create order or patterns had begun. Everything on the surface of Earth—oceans and rivers, mountains and fertile fields, forests and flowers, creatures that float or fly or crawl or climb, everything—a planet that covered itself in seas as we have seen and is now ready to go on with its dance of life.⁵

In the male dance of Shiva or in the female dance of Gaia, the Cosmic Sacred Dance comes to people, showing itself.

In traditional societies like that of Brazilian natives and Africans, it is still possible to find many emulating dances today. The nature of this dance is magical, that is, its aim is to connect the spirit or the soul of the dancer with the soul or the spirit of Nature or, in this case, the animal. The purpose of this shamanic technique is to empower the dancer with the skills of

the animal before hunting it. Dancing this sacred dance allows the dancer to access other levels of reality.

Indeed, to access the soul of the animal is to connect with the sacred. Bartolomeu Meliá wrote: “The Guarani natives do not know any dances or chants that are profane, for dancing, singing, and praying are synonymous. A chant is a chanting prayer, and a dance is a dancing prayer.”⁶ There is a sacred equality in the functions of dancing and chanting. Together, they form an integrate concept called the “Chant-Dance-Prayer.” Kaká Werá Jecupé wrote:

There is an understanding that the Universal Soul is the same as music: a sacred speech (*nêmporã*) manifested in the human body that is like a flute (*umbau*), a vehicle through which the ‘being-light-sound-music’—or human soul (*avá*)—expresses itself. This flute (the human body) is made out of four little souls (*angás-mirins*): earth, air, water, and fire. They need to be in tune to express the “avá” to support all the body being. It is because of this that dance (*jeroky*) was created: to put all those little souls in tune.⁷

Thus, dance, continuing since the beginning of time as an art that needed just one element—the body—allows people to have the perception, the sense of inner and outer movement, and thus consciousness of their surrounding reality.

The Sacred (or the Holy) as Numinous

It is difficult to talk about the sacred (or the holy), because just as when talking about dancing, there is for some people a déjà vu sensation in it.⁸

When the Portuguese fleet arrived at the Brazilian coast at the beginning of 1500, the first idea the Portuguese had was to celebrate a Catholic mass. Of course, the natives did not speak any

Portuguese and had never taken part in a mass before, but they could feel that that was a sacred moment. This can be read in Pero Vaz de Caminha's letter to the king of Portugal—a letter known in Brazilian history as “Brazil's Birth Certificate.” In that document, we can read the following about the first mass held in Brazil: “The natives were singing and dancing loudly on the beach, with their bows and arrows, when we began the mass. At that moment, they stopped and sat down. After the mass finished, they began again their babel of noise.”⁹

Every culture has a word to refer to the “sacred” as a supernatural source inhabiting the world. In Polynesian and Melanesian cultures, the word is *mana*. For Native Americans—specifically the Iroquois people—the word is *orenda*. For the Guarani people from South America, it is *nbanderu*. In Western societies, the etymology of this word comes from the Latin word *sacer*, meaning “dedicated,” or “holy.”¹⁰ Another meaning could be found in the Etruscan word *sac* meaning “carrying out a sacred act.”¹¹ Mircea Eliade wrote: “‘Sacred’ does not imply any belief in the Divine, deities, or spirits. It is the experience of reality and the source of a conscientiousness of existing in the world.”¹²

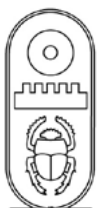
According to Rudolf Otto,¹³ the holy is a complex category of interpretation and valuation peculiar to the sphere of religious or mystic phenomena. Melissa Raphael wrote: “Otto argues that the essential nature of religion is not thinking about the Divine, but a feeling; and the object of that feeling is not called ‘God’ [‘the Divine’] but ‘the Holy.’”¹⁴ Thus, though a *sui generis* aspect, it contains a quite specific element or moment, which sets it apart from the rational.

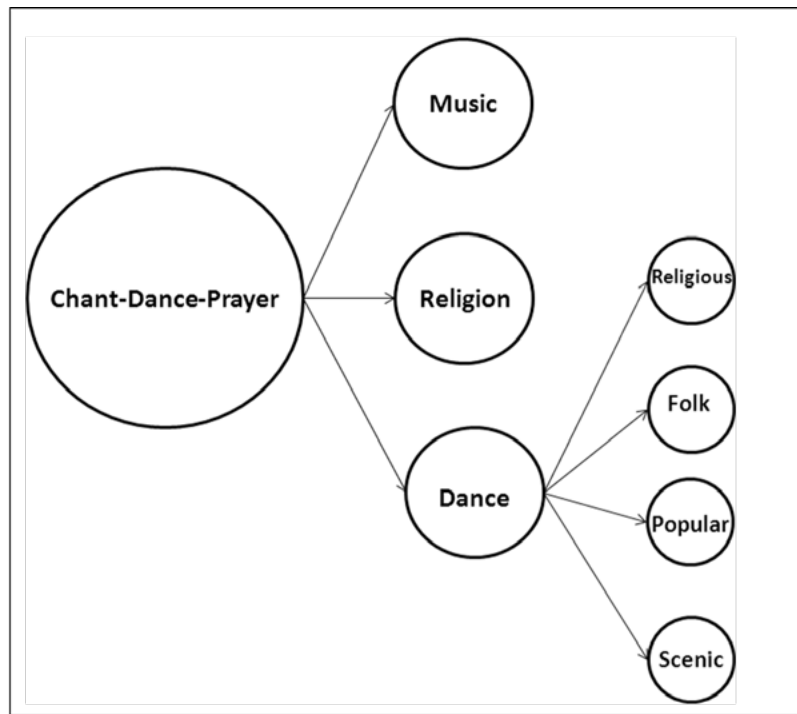
To rescue what he considered to be the original meaning of “the Sacred” as an aspect of the real, Otto adopted a new word coined from the Latin word *numen*, “a deity” or “localized power.”¹⁵ The word is *numinous*. The ontological point of view of the numinous is described by him in detail and is associated with many psychological elements.

After qualifying the sacred as numinous, Otto described the primal feelings associated with it. Basically, there are two kinds of feelings associated with the numinous. They are the feelings of repulsion and attraction. These two feelings create a “gravitational field” around the sacred, the *Mysterium Tremendum*, that is, the fundamental element that keeps religion alive. This mystery actualizes the



The Kecak dance in Bali, Indonesia.





The specialization of dance in Western society.

emotional potential of the human being producing a state of transcendence, with reflections in the body and in the soul, and this can be felt in the dance.

The Circle Dance as a Concept of Dancing

In Western society, even the written form of the word *dance* is similar in different languages. In Portuguese, it is *dança*, in French *danse*, in Spanish *danza*, in Italian *danze*, and in German *tanze*. With the specialization that occurred, the concept of the Chant-Dance-Prayer was disintegrated in at least three specific areas: the Music, the Religion, and, of course, the Dance. The Dance itself could be divided yet in scenic dance, popular dance, folk dance, and religious dance.

Ballet is one of the most well-known scenic dances. It involves strong bodywork to take the dancers to the limit of their technique of movement and strength. The aim of popular dance is to have fun; today, ballroom dancing has many competitive levels. Folk dance usually aims to preserve the culture, or some part of it. In Brazil,

some native groups that lost their religion to Christianity perform certain folk dances in order to preserve a part of their culture. It is quite common to find some folk groups outside of their original region. In Canada, for example, some Celtic dances were very well preserved. The religious dances are connected with some aspect of religion or mystical practice, for example, Sufi dance. The Circle Dance is still classified as a popular dance in Eastern Europe. In some Balkan countries, for example, this is absolutely true.

It is a very common argument that “dance is a language of gestures.” However, dancing is also a dance of encountering, when people can meet one another. This is the basis of the sense of community and a very important one. In circle dancing, people usually stay connected by their hands and they make eye contact. This way the individual is connected in a group. Thus, the circle is more than a form or a kind of dance; it is a concept of dancing. For example, the military march is a kind of Circle Dance, but it does not have a

circular form. We can find Circle Dance in a spiral form, a line form, and so on.

As a concept of dancing, the Circle Dance has a metaphorical sense. First, it is an attempt to reconnect with the primal concept of dance, the Chant-Dance-Prayer. Second, it reflects a kind of dance that brings to the dancers and to the group a strong sense of inner connection and/or cooperation. Besides its aims to be integral, the Circle Dance has three aspects: cultural, spiritual, and health. Regarding these aspects, in my research, I was able to find this conception of dance in four movements:

- a. The Folk Dance—as an attempt to preserve a particular culture;
- b. The Biodance—from the Chilean psychiatrist Rolando Toro Araneda (1924–2010), as an attempt to preserve or recover both mental and physical health;
- c. The Dance of Universal Peace—from the American mystic Samuel Lewis (1896–1971), as an attempt

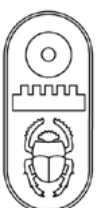
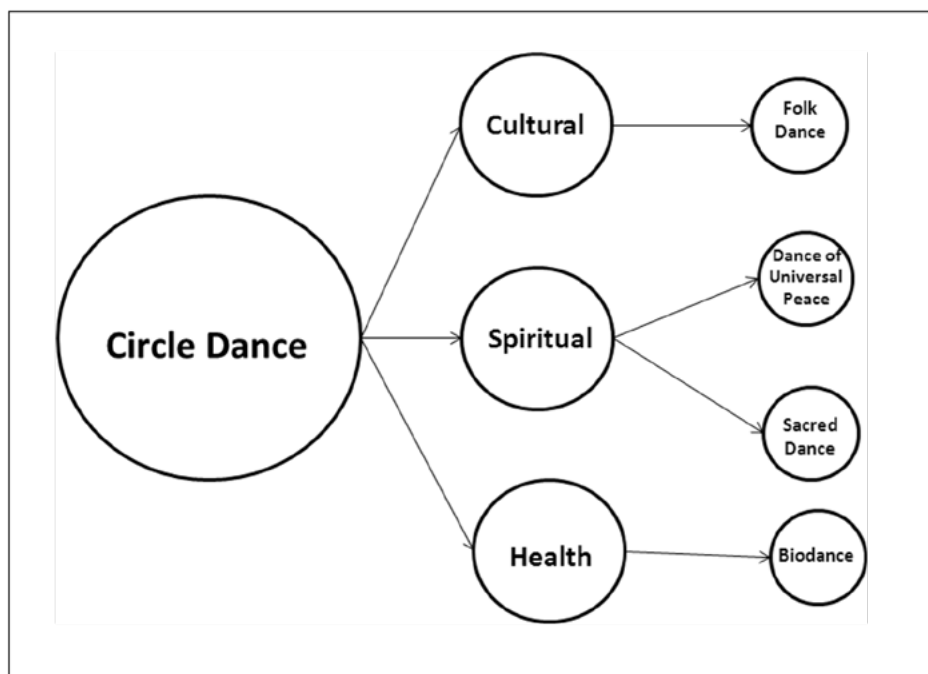
to establish a spiritual connection with the Sacred;

- d. The Sacred Dance—from the German dancer Bernhard Wosien (1908–1986), and the Scottish Spiritual Community of Findhorn, also as an attempt to establish a spiritual connection.

As we can see, it is the spiritual dimension of Circle Dance that interests us. This dimension is deeply connected with the New Age Movement that is a part of Western esotericism.

The Sacred Dance Movement

Bernhard Wosien, the son of a priest, Louis Wosien, and the Baroness of Buttler-Ponarth, Antionett-Linda, was born and brought up in Masuen, East Prussia, during the period marked by the end of the German Empire and the beginning of the Republic. He lived in one of the most bewildering periods of German history and even of humankind: during the First and the Second World Wars.





A postcard from Skopje, Macedonia, from the 1930s showing a Kolo dance.

At that time, he was supposed to begin his university studies, however he took up both ballet in the Breslau Opera House and theology at the University of Breslau instead. His family was very unhappy with his choice. Thus, as a compromise for this family conflict, he traded those studies for an initiation in the Art Academy of Breslau to become an artist. However, this never happened because this project was stopped by the Nazis. Thus, he went back to ballet and, in 1939, he was the first dancer in the Berlin Theatre.¹⁶

In Dresden, in the early 1950s, he discovered the potential of folk dance when he watched a performance of a Yugoslavian folk dance group called Kolo. He said: "They are an enthusiastic group completely connected to one another by joy, love, and happiness. What I saw there was the strong power of Circle Dance."¹⁷ After that, Wosien got involved with many folk dance groups in Serbia and Greece. Wosien said: "In that ancient form of folk dance, I found the path to silence with meditative dance."¹⁸ Time passed and Wosien began to collect some folk dance choreographies under the name of Heilige Tänze. He said: "In German, *heilige* means 'holy' or 'sacred'; it also has connotations of healing and wholeness. The English

translation of sacred is inadequate and we have no single word to cover the multiplicity of meaning of the German word."¹⁹

In 1975, Bernhard and his daughter Marie-Gabriele Wosien met Peter and Eileen Caddy, the founders of Findhorn Community in Tanus, close to Frankfurt. Marie-Gabriele Wosien said: "The moment was magical. We were in a special place. My mother and some friends were also there. It was a meeting with a strong spiritual power. We danced, sang, and prayed and exchanged many ideas. It was then that Peter and my father met and began to make plans together."²⁰

The Findhorn Community was founded in 1962 by Peter and Eileen Caddy and Dorothy Maclean. All three had followed disciplined spiritual paths for many years. They first came to northeast Scotland in 1957 to manage the Cluny Hill Hotel in the town of Forres, which they did remarkably successfully. Eileen received guidance in her meditations from an inner divine source she called "the still, small voice within," and Peter ran the hotel according to this guidance and his own intuition. In this unorthodox way—and with many delightful and unlikely incidents—Cluny Hill swiftly became a

thriving and successful four-star hotel. After several years, however, Peter's and Eileen's employment was terminated, and with nowhere to go and little money, they moved with their three young sons and Dorothy to a caravan in the nearby seaside village of Findhorn. Feeding six people on unemployment benefits was difficult, so Peter decided to start growing vegetables. The land in the caravan park was sandy and dry but he persevered. Dorothy discovered she was able to intuitively contact the overlighting spirits of plants—which she called angels, and then devas—who gave her instructions on how to make the most of their fledgling garden. She and Peter translated this guidance into action with amazing results. From the barren, sandy soil of the Findhorn Bay Caravan Park grew huge plants, herbs, and flowers of dozens of kinds, most famously the now-legendary forty-pound cabbages. Word spread, horticultural experts came and were stunned, and the garden at Findhorn became famous.²¹

In the fall of 1969, after a BBC program about the community, six hundred people visited the place and, in a short time, two

hundred people were living in Findhorn as resident guests.

In 1976, Bernhard Wosien introduced to Findhorn his Heilige Tänze, “Dance Meditation,” as well as traditional European folk dances. Like people who lived there, he felt committed to the ideals of “One Earth” and “One Humanity.” Under a New Age spirit, the community grows.²²

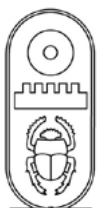
In 1997, the community was accepted as a member of the UNESCO Planet Society Network. Every year, in July, the community holds its Sacred Dance Festival, “bringing together traditional dances from around the world and contemporary choreographies, focusing on both the individual and group experiences.”²³

Sacred Dance Dimension in Brazilian Culture

Although Findhorn is an important international center of Sacred Dance, there are no rules on this, which is a very common characteristic of the New Age Movement. To understand the Sacred Dance dimension in the Brazilian culture, a survey was conducted with the first



Findhorn community members perform a sacred circle dance in 2019. Photo courtesy of Peter Vallance.





Samba de Roda in Cachoeira, Brazil.

Brazilians facilitators²⁴ who worked in nine state capitals.

As a result, it was possible to know that the Brazilians understand that, to be a facilitator in Sacred Dance, the person must be able to care for both the dance and the dancers. They have to facilitate the connection with the sacred.

There is complex inner work prior to beginning a group session of dance. Some people meditate and some attune with higher energies asking for inspiration; others only observe silence. The preparation of the environment is another important point. Not only is cleansing the mental field very important but also the physical one. If it is possible, they set a central point with some flowers and a lit candle. Incense may be used as well.

One session of dance has three moments: (a) an overture with some kind of attunement with higher energies and the master within the dancers; (b) a session of dance itself; and (c) closure with a sharing moment between the dancers, or just a prayer of thanks.

Each facilitator has his or her own collection of dances; some traditional, and some contemporary. It depends on their background. Some sing and play, while

others use only recorded music. The way dances are taught is very diverse as well.

Today, the Sacred Dance Movement is very strong in many countries. Bernard Wosien died in 1986, but his daughter Marie-Gabriele is still researching and teaching Heilige Tänze (Sacred Dances) across the world. The Findhorn Community is still promoting its Sacred Dance Festival and training people from different nations. Thus, as a movement, Sacred Dance is practiced today in many countries around the world and in different situations in schools and business. Since 2002, Brazil has had a National Festival of Sacred Circle Dance that is held in São Paulo. This is a prime example of how an esoteric practice hidden in plain sight has impacted our world for the better.

***Note:** This article was written with information contained in my M.A. Dissertation in Science of Religion, The Sacred Circle Dance and The Sacred: An exploratory study about the historical and practical dimension of New Age movement and the search for its numinous and hierophanic aspects, Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo (PUC-SP), Brazil (2002).*

Endnotes

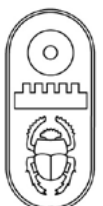
¹ Maribel Portinari, *História da Dança* (Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1989), 11.

² Stanislav Grof, *The Cosmic Game: Exploration of the frontier of the human consciousness* (Albany: University of New York Press, 1998), 258.

- ³ Maria Gabriele Wosien, *Danças Sagradas: El Encuentro con los Dioses* (Madrid: Debate, 1996), 7.
- ⁴ Joseph Campbell, *The Way of the Animal Powers* (Harper and Row, 1989); Apud Stanislav Grof, *The Cosmic Game: Exploration of the frontier of the human consciousness* (Albany: University of New York Press, 1998), 258.
- ⁵ Elisabeth Sathouris, *Gaia do Caos ao Cósmico*. (São Paulo: Integração, 1991), 21–22.
- ⁶ Bartolomeu Meliá, “A Experiência Religiosa Guarani” (In MARZAL, Manuel org. 1989), 318–319.
- ⁷ Kaká Werá Jecupé, *A Terra dos Mil Povos* (São Paulo: Fundação Peirópolis, 1998), 24.
- ⁸ Unlike German and Portuguese, English has two words to express this concept (or idea): *holy* and *sacred*. *Holy* could be understood as a participant religious term, while *sacred* will be regarded as a phenomenological term that can be used descriptively by those outside a given religious community as well as confessionally. *Holy* comes from the Old English *hālig*, where *hāl* means “whole.” However, since this study was first written in Portuguese, I will use the word *sacred* instead of *holy* to express the idea of holiness. {See Oxtoby’s discussion of this issue, “Holy, Idea of the,” 434–6. See also idem, “Holy [the Sacred], in P. Wiener (ed), *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* (New York, C Scribner’s Sons,” 1973), 511f.; Davies, *Every Day God*, 123–6, ROR 8i, P. S. Minear, “The Holy and the Sacred,” *Theology Today*, 47 (1990), 5–7, H. W. Turner, Rudolf Otto; *The Idea of the Holy* (Aberdeen: H.W. Turner, 1974), 9. In Melissa Raphael, *Rudolf Otto and the Concept of Holiness* (N.Y: Oxford, 1997) 26.
- ⁹ José Augusto Valente, *A Certidão de Nascimento do Brasil: A Carta de Caminha*. (SP, Ed. Fundo de Pesquisa do Museu Paulista da USP, 1975), 5.
- ¹⁰ Bassarab Nicolescu, *Manifesto da Transdisciplinaridade* (São Paulo: Triom, 1999), 127.
- ¹¹ José Mardones, *As Nova Formas de Religião* (Coimbra: Editorial Verbo Divino, 1996), 21.
- ¹² Mircea Eliade in Bassarab Nicolescu, “Levels of Reality and Sacred” (International Conference Foundation of the Ontological Quest: Prospect to the New Millennium, (Vatican: Pontificias Universitas Lateraneanis, January, 2002).
- ¹³ Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of Holy: An inquiry into the non-rational factor in the idea of the Divine* (London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1926).
- ¹⁴ Melissa Raphael (1997), Op. cit. 61.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Bernhard Wosien, *Dança: Um Caminho para a Totalidade* (São Paulo: Triom, 2000).
- ¹⁷ Bernhard Wosien (2000), Op. cit. 106.
- ¹⁸ Ibid, Op. cit. 117.
- ¹⁹ Lynn Frances and Richard Bryant-Jefferies, *The Sevenfold Circle: Selfawareness in dance* (Findhorn: Findhorn Press, 1998) 40.
- ²⁰ Unpublished Interview conducted by the author with Marie-Gabriele Wosien in August 2001.
- ²¹ Findhorn Foundation (<https://www.findhorn.org/history>).
- ²² Marie-Gabriele Wosien. (http://www.sacreddance-wosien.net/Sacred-Dance/sacred_dance.html).
- ²³ Findhorn Foundation, Sacred Dance Festival <https://findhornsacreddance.com/>.
- ²⁴ According to Alex Walker in his book talking about Findhorn, focalizer is not the same as a leader, in a sense, that is someone who gives orders, but is a respected person who is able to be attuned with the necessity of all. Alex Walker, *A Verdade Interior* (Sao Paulo: Triom, 1998) 169. English version *The Kingdom Within*, (Findhorn Press, 1994).



Native American children dancing in a circle.



CLEMENCE ISAURE: THE ROSICRUCIAN GOLDEN ISIS

Grand Master Julie Scott, SRC



*Henri Martin, The Appearance of Clemence Isaure to the Troubadours (detail).
Reprinted with the permission of the Capitole, Toulouse, France.*

In 1909, a young H. Spencer Lewis stood before the painting *The Appearance of Clemence Isaure (the Golden Isis) to the Troubadours*. He was contemplating its mystical meaning when the Grand Master of the Rosicrucians of Toulouse presented himself and directed H. Spencer Lewis to the next step in his initiation into the Rosicrucian tradition, which eventually led to the founding of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC.

Why in this place, the Hall of the Illustrious in Toulouse's Capitole (city hall), and before this painting, did the Grand Master choose to present himself to the American mystic who would later re-establish the Rosicrucian tradition in America as the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis? The answer goes back to the

ancient mystery traditions, perpetuated by our Order and so beautifully symbolized in this painting.

Who Was Clemence Isaure?

The name *Clemence* means "clemency" or "mercy," and *Isaure* means "Isis of gold," or "Golden Isis." Several sources describe Clemence Isaure as an actual person who lived in the Territory of Oc in the late 1400s and early 1500s, whose beauty and talent were rare and inspiring. Others say that she was a fictional character created to perpetuate the feminine traditions of earlier times.

According to legend, following the death of her troubadour love who praised her through his beautiful songs and whom she adored, Clemence Isaure took a vow

of chastity and silence. Before doing so, however, she established an endowment for the city of Toulouse to re-establish the poetry contests of the Gai Savoir, a poetry society established in 1323 through a new group called the Jeux Floraux.

Clemence Isaure symbolized noble action, beauty, and wisdom inspired through poetry. Above all, she represented the perpetuation of the ancient mysteries, especially those associated with the feminine and particularly with the deity Isis.

The Mysterious Territory of Oc

In the Middle Ages, the southern half of what is now France, parts of Spain, and Monaco were called Occitania or the Territory of Oc. Today, this region is referred to as the Languedoc (the language of Oc) or L'Occitanie. The vibrant Occitan culture allowed equal rights for everyone, encouraged understanding and dialogue between all faiths, provided excellent education for its citizens, and was very peaceful and prosperous.

Drawing heavily on older mystical traditions, the first versions of Kabbalah emerged from this area in the early twelfth century. The Cathars, a sect of Christian mystics whose beliefs most likely originated from the traditions of Old Europe and Manichaeism (Persian Gnosticism), also lived in the Languedoc and other parts of Europe beginning in the eleventh century.

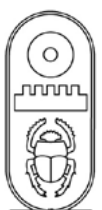
The kings of northern France (a separate country at the time) and the Roman Catholic Church wanted the wealth, land, and converts of the Languedoc, especially of the Cathars. These two powerful forces plotted against the people of Oc, resulting in their persecution and the near extinction of the Occitan traditions, or at least their public presence, in the 1200s. As many as 500,000 people of the Languedoc,

including Christians, Jews, and other mystics may have been murdered during the twenty-year Albigensian Crusade and the century-long Inquisition that followed.

The troubadours, who sang in the language of Oc, found a veiled way to perpetuate the Occitan traditions and their source, the ancient mysteries, through poetic symbolism. While the troubadours appeared to be singing about the love of a man for a woman, they were really referring to the laws of spiritual love. They were expressing the bliss of union with the Divine and the peace that results from this communion. One of the symbols that the troubadours used to represent the inner desire of the soul for this mystical union was the rose.



The Troubadour Singing to His Love (detail). The Hall of the Illustrious in Toulouse's Capitole displays a series of three murals depicting a troubadour singing to his Love—as a young man, as a middle-aged man (as illustrated here), and as an elderly man. The woman, representing the eternal tradition, remains forever young in the series. Photo from the Rosicrucian Archives.





The First Meeting of the Jeux Floraux, the Very Joyful Company of the Seven Troubadours, May 3, 1324, by Jean-Paul Laurens, 1912. Exhibited on the Grand Staircase leading up to the Hall of the Illustrious in the Capitole, Toulouse, France.

The Gai Savoir and Jeux Floraux

Following the intense persecution in the area, seven individuals in Toulouse, known as the seven troubadours, founded a mystical society in 1323 called the Gai Savoir, meaning “happy knowledge.” The exoteric mission of this society was to make the world a happier and better place through poetry. Though veiled, the esoteric meaning of their poetry was clear for those with eyes to see.

The seven troubadours circulated a letter to all of the poets in the Languedoc, inviting them to present their poetry at a contest the following May (1324). The panel of seven judges chose the winners who were awarded a violet (its color symbolic of the highest mystical degree), a marigold (representing the philosophical gold), and the wild rose.

The Gai Savoir operated as an order, with a philosophy and rules that they called “the laws of love.” They gathered together the ancient mystical traditions that had been scattered over the centuries,

preserved, and discreetly perpetuated them.

During the Wars of Religion in France during the 1500s (a century of horrible wars between the French Catholics and Protestant Huguenots), the Gai Savoir became dormant. The group later reappeared in the form of the Jeux Floraux with the allegorical discovery of a tomb, similar to the way in which Christian Rosenkreuz’s tomb was found and opened.

The tomb, which was discovered in Toulouse, was that of Clemence Isaure, the allegorical founder of the Jeux Floraux. Flowers were also found in this tomb, alluding to the floral prizes earlier awarded by the Gai Savoir. The basilica where the tomb is said to be located, called La Dourade, is on the site of the first Visigoth temple in Gaul, a previous temple to Minerva (Isis). Today, it is dedicated to “the black Madonna” with a beautiful statue of her overlooking the main chapel.

The Rosicrucians Announce Their Presence in France

In 1623, following the publication of the three Rosicrucian manifestos in 1614, 1615, and 1616, the Rosicrucians announced their presence in France by plastering the walls of Paris with mysterious and intriguing posters with the following text:

We, the Deputies of the Higher College of the Rose-Croix, do make our stay, visibly and invisibly, in this city, by the grace of the Most High, to Whom turn the hearts of the Just....

He who takes it upon himself to see us merely out of curiosity will never make contact with us. But if his inclination seriously impels him to register in our fellowship, we, who are judges of intentions, will cause him to see the truth of our promises; to the extent that we shall not make known the place of our meeting in this city,

since the thoughts attached to the real desire of the seeker will lead us to him and him to us.

Following this and the influence of the Enlightenment, Napoleon and Egyptosophy, Freemasonry, Martinism, Theosophy, Magnetism, and other traditions, the last half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century witnessed a flowering of Rosicrucian orders in France. These included the Rose+Croix of Toulouse (in the Languedoc) and the Rose+Croix of France.

Clemence Isaure: The Painting

From 1892 to 1897, under the direction of Joséphin Péladan (who had strong ties to the Jeux Floraux and the Rose+Croix of Toulouse), the Rose+Croix of France organized the Salons of the Rose+Croix in Paris. These salons, which hosted tens of thousands of guests each year, presented music and Rosicrucian ritual as well as art. Well-known composer and Rosicrucian Erik Satie was named the musical director of the Order of the Rose+Croix in the early 1890s. Claude Debussy, Satie's friend and one of France's greatest composers, was also influenced by Rosicrucianism.

The Rosicrucian Salons exhibited the works of many painters of the Symbolist movement, including Henri Martin from Toulouse, whose paintings were exhibited in 1892. That same year, Martin was commissioned to create a number of paintings for the Hall of the Illustrious in Toulouse's Capitole. He chose the Jeux Floraux as his theme.

One of these paintings is *The Appearance of Clemence Isaure to the Troubadours*. In it, Clemence Isaure shows the seven troubadours the charter of the Jeux Floraux, which includes the rose and the cross. She is accompanied by three Muses and the deity Minerva, the Egyptian Isis.

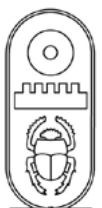


Henri Martin, The Appearance of Clemence Isaure to the Troubadours.

H. Spencer Lewis and The Appearance of Clemence Isaure to the Troubadours

In 1908, twenty-four-year-old H. Spencer Lewis had a mystical experience in which he was directed to seek out the Rosicrucians in France. Not knowing exactly where to begin, he wrote to a Parisian bookseller who had recently sent him a catalog of mystical books to ask if he might be able to help him in his quest. The bookseller suggested that H. Spencer Lewis come to Paris.

Following many synchronistic events, H. Spencer Lewis was able to travel to Paris a year and a half later. After meeting with the bookseller and passing many tests and trials through many cities in France, H. Spencer Lewis was mysteriously handed a note directing him to go to the Hall of the Illustrious in the Capitole of Toulouse at





H. Spencer Lewis, 1915.

a particular time. He was to speak of this to no one.

There he silently stood on that day, before this painting, contemplating its mystical meaning. A man in the gallery made a sign (a Rosicrucian sign) that he had seen at other points on his journey. H. Spencer Lewis said to him, "Pardon, Monsieur, but I believe I am addressing a gentleman who has some information for one who is seeking Light."

The man replied "yes" in French, and then asked him why he chose to study this painting in particular. H. Spencer Lewis replied, "Because, Monsieur, it seems so beautiful, so wonderful, and expresses what I believe. I see in it a very mysterious meaning, a symbol of..."

Satisfied with this answer, the man then handed H. Spencer Lewis a note with instructions on how to proceed. This man was the Grand Master of the Rose+Croix

of Toulouse, who was probably Clovis Lassalle, a well-known photographer (of historic buildings and archival documents) and mystic of Toulouse. Through the Rose+Croix of Toulouse, the Jeux Floraux, and the Archaeological Society of Midi, Grand Master Lassalle was associated with those who had directed H. Spencer Lewis on his initiatory journey, including the Parisian bookseller and those who would later initiate H. Spencer Lewis into the Rosicrucian tradition.

At midnight on August 12, 1909, H. Spencer Lewis received his mystical initiation into the Rosicrucian Tradition in a Rosicrucian Lodge in an ancient chateau outside of Toulouse. Here he also accepted the charter to re-establish the Rosicrucian tradition in America, thereby perpetuating the ancient mysteries that so significantly contributed to it, beautifully symbolized by the inspiring image of Clemence Isaure, the Rosicrucian Golden Isis.

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THE MYSTICAL ART OF NICOMEDES GÓMEZ: PEACE ON EARTH AND GOODWILL TO ALL

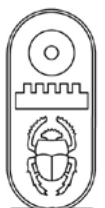
Hugh McCague, FRC



*Nicomedes Gómez, Paz en La Tierra a Los Hombres de Buena Voluntad
(Peace on Earth to People of Goodwill or Peace on Earth and Goodwill to
All), 1967.*

Nicomedes Gómez

Nicomedes Gómez was a highly productive, dedicated, and ardent artist and illustrator throughout his life (November 16, 1903-August 3, 1983). His beloved homeland was Spain, though he lived part of his life in France. In December 1956, he became a devoted and influential student of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC.¹



The Esoteric Paintings Series

The sacred can be expressed in art both implicitly and explicitly. Explicit conveyances can be symbols such as a temple and altar. Implicit conveyances can take many forms such as expansive views of the sky and the universe. Gómez was quite adept at both approaches which he combines well in individual paintings.

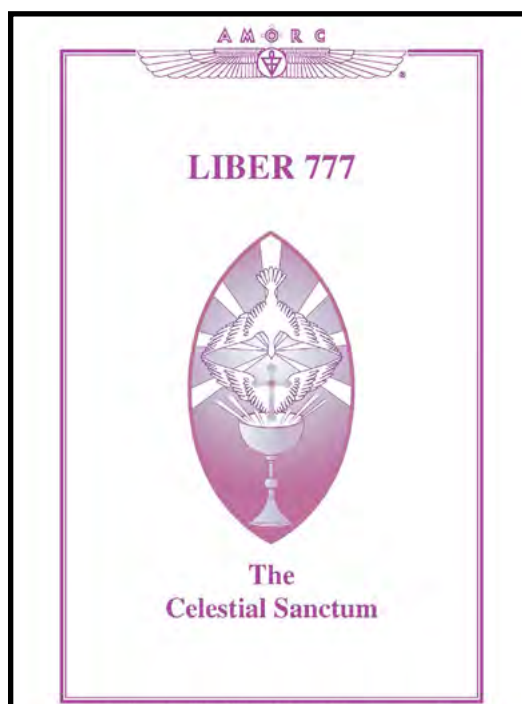
Between 1959 and 1976, while the artist was a Rosicrucian student, he created a series of artworks known as his esoteric paintings.² Most of these paintings have common design elements that are immediately recognizable. Rays of light emanate from a high center point with concentric circles radiating outward. The center point is i) a high focal point that draws our attention immediately and ii) a vanishing point for a one-point perspective that guides the painting's overall design. The rectangular panels used for the painting surface have a smaller width than height which gives a vertical emphasis pertaining to spiritual ascent and descent.

The esoteric painting series arises from the artist's experiences during meditation, specifically his contacts with the Cathedral of the Soul, also known as the Celestial Sanctum. Indeed, *The Cathedral of the Soul*, dating from 1963, is the title of one of the paintings in the esoteric series.³ The AMORC meditation booklet *Liber 777*⁴ describes how to rise into the Celestial Sanctum and attune with the Cosmic Mind as shown in these esoteric paintings. During this meditation exercise, the aspirant ascends and descends to and from the Celestial Sanctum. In the resulting Cosmic contact and inspiration, the aspirant is then obligated to emulate the Cosmic Mind in service to spiritualize the Earth and themselves and assist others in their healing and evolution. The *Liber 777* booklet is even shown at the bottom center of the painting *Life-Light-Love (III)*⁵

which befittingly depicts a Home Sanctum where Rosicrucian students study their weekly monograph lessons, pray, meditate, visualize, and perform other exercises.

The dove descending motif appears in some of the paintings in the esoteric series: *The Cathedral of the Soul*, *Life-Light-Love (II)*, *Life-Light-Love (III)*, *The Temple of Man [Humankind] or Know Thyself*, *The Divine Ark*, and *Peace on Earth and Goodwill to All*. An important source for this motif is, of course, the description of the Divine Spirit as a dove descending during the baptism of Yeshua by John the Baptist in the Jordan River given in the four Gospels. Like those biblical descriptions, the esoteric paintings depict the heavens opening and the Divine Spirit being realized.

The Sephiroth of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life is another motif that appears in some of the paintings of the esoteric series: *The Divine Ark*, *The Cosmic Keyboard*, *Life-Light-Love (I)*, and *Peace on Earth and Goodwill to All*. This profound symbolism adds to the structure of the paintings and the comprehensive realization of Cosmic Consciousness expressed in the paintings.



Peace on Earth to People of Goodwill

We will focus on the esoteric painting *Paz en La Tierra a Los Hombres de Buena Voluntad* (*Peace on Earth to People of Goodwill* or *Peace on Earth and Goodwill to All*), which was made with gouache and pen on panel with dimensions 60 inches by 47 inches (152 cm by 120 cm) (see page 53). The painting is signed “Gómez 1967” in the lower right corner. The title references the Gospel passage of Luke 2:14 on the coming of Yeshua. That passage esoterically alludes to the birth of the Christ Consciousness or the onset of Cosmic Consciousness.

The reddish hues of the lower register of the painting contrasts with the bluish hues of the upper register. Concentric circles emanate from the heart above and the Earth below. The red coloring lightens as we proceed outward from the Earth to gray and then black in outer space. The swirling red dragons suggest the trials and tests of humanity as it matures and evolves in learning the great lessons of life. The dove descends drawing us into the Divine as practiced in the Celestial Sanctum meditation exercise of *Liber 777*. The descent of the dove is highlighted by the bird’s wings shown flapping in six “frozen” moments resulting in twelve individual wings depicted on the left and right. The Celestial Sanctum is the high plane of consciousness that we can attune with for our general enlightenment and the realization of much more as depicted in this painting. Great beams of light and wisdom radiate from

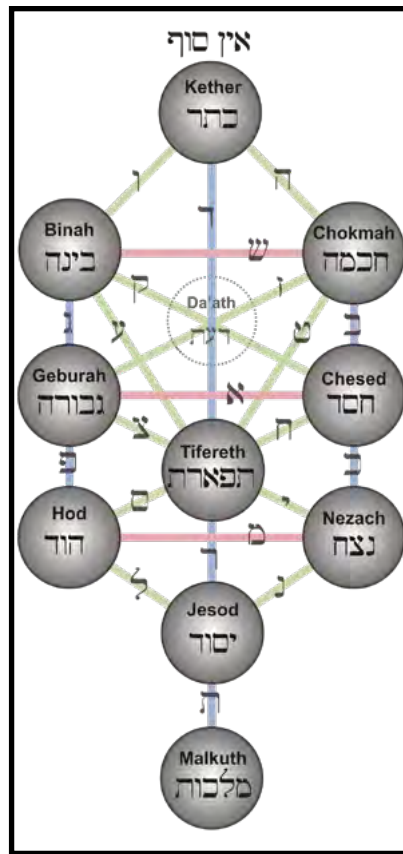
the heart center dispelling the darkness and ignorance.

A pillar-like beam of the seven colors connects Earth and the heart. These beams also rise above the heart but with their order reversed left to right. Additionally, these beams reach out from the heart to form a cross and have their order switched on the left and right sides of the heart. A great Rose Cross is implied. Intriguingly, the vertical beam takes a triangular shape coming to a vertex or point in the center of the depicted Earth. This pointed base is the stake of the Rose Cross firmly fixed or rooted in the Earth. Humanity can rise through the Rose Cross to enlightenment.

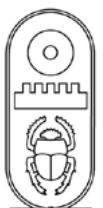
This ascent also involves rising through the Sephiroth of the Tree of Life. The Sephiroth Kingdom is at the Earth and the Sephiroth Crown is at the great heart center. A shape partly like a rectangle but with a curved bottom appears immediately above the Earth. It forms a background for the Tree of Life.

Stars and planets appear around the painting. For example, Saturn with its rings appears quite distinctly in the mid-right side. These celestial bodies emphasize that we are in the presence of the Cosmos, the macrocosm.

At the heart and rose center, thirty-two rays emanate encompassing the universe. Befittingly, the thirty-two rays and the one center total thirty-three. This number has various sacred meanings including the allusion to the thirty-three years up to the close of the earthly ministry of Yeshua. At



The Kabbalistic Tree of Life.





Nicomedes Gómez. Manos (Hands).

that center, two interlaced triangles appear: one ascending from the finite plane and the other descending from the infinite plane, like unto the Seal of Solomon, marrying the physical and the spiritual. By the law of the triangle or the law of manifestation, a perfect new creation is formed by the intersection of the vertical and horizontal bars of the Rose Cross and by the two interlaced triangles. Strikingly, the spark of creation appears at the intersection. We are welcomed into the Way of the Heart with the emanating rays of the Christ Consciousness or Cosmic Consciousness.

Sacred expression through number and geometry continues in various forms in the painting. Two yellow and congruent squares are rotated half of a right angle (or 45 degrees) around the center of the heart to form an eight-pointed figure (polygon). The number eight, the octad, symbolizes rebirth. Also, three green and congruent equilateral triangles are rotated by 40 degrees around the center of the heart to form a nine-pointed star (polygon). The number nine, the ennead, symbolizes Divine completeness.

By the law of vibration all manifests by vibration. Rosicrucians describe this law through the Cosmic Keyboard, the subject matter of the painting by Gómez *The Cosmic Keyboard*.⁶ An historic way to view this matter is that all phenomena

manifest in an expanded conception of music as described by the Pythagoreans, Augustine of Hippo, Boethius, and others. A consequence is then that the proportions of visual phenomena can partake of the musical proportions. For example, the painting's height of 60 inches (152 cm) and width of 47 inches (120 cm) is in the proportion of approximately 1.267, which in musical terms is very close to the proportion of the Pythagorean scale's major third $81/64 \approx 1.266$. Given the importance of the Pythagoreans to the traditional history of the Rosicrucians, it is befitting to have such a reference.⁷

Quite notable in the artwork is the pair of weathered hands coming forth from the cosmic background. Visual artists are trained to sketch the human body and its parts. This artist even drew such a pair of hands as a work. The gesture with the two hands in the esoteric painting suggests both giving and receiving, warmth and support. Their placement in the cosmic background and setting suggests that they are symbolic of Divine action and reception.

As is common in the esoteric series of paintings by Gómez, this painting is encyclopedic in its sacred symbolism and action. It is well worthwhile and enriching to take an extended viewing period to contemplate the work, see its many parts,

take it in as a whole, and then enter meditation especially using the instructions of *Liber 777*.

Service, Art, and Mission in Life

Through his prolific work in art and illustration, Nicomedes Gómez fulfilled his mission in life. As an on-going act of service, his art portrays and helps awaken within us the inspiration and wisdom that he experienced in undertaking the Great Work. His example is universal. It encourages us in our own chosen career and mission in life. Similarly, as we attune with and emulate the Cosmic Mind, our capacity to masterfully play the keys of the Cosmic Keyboard and to be of service to all increases in the great journey of Mystical Union.

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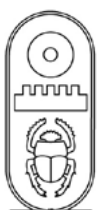


The bust of Nicomedes Gómez in Cartagena City Hall in Spain.

with the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC. Cartagena: Ayuntamiento Cartagena, 2019.

Endnotes

- ¹ Hugo Casas in Luís Artés Ruiz et al., *Nicomedes Gómez: La colección pictórica esotérica del Ayuntamiento de Cartagena* (Cartagena: Ayuntamiento Cartagena, 2019), 26.
- ² Luís Artés Ruiz et al., *Nicomedes Gómez, Diego Ortiz Martínez, Nicomedes Gómez: El Hombre y el Artista* (Cartagena: Imprenta Nicomedes Gómez, 2018).
- ³ AMORC, "A Look at This Year's Cover: Nicomedes Gómez's *The Cathedral of the Soul*," *Rose+Croix Journal* 16 (2022): Front Cover, 7 pages, <https://www.rosecroixjournal.org/archive>.
- ⁴ AMORC, *Liber 777: The Celestial Sanctum* (San Jose, California: Grand Lodge of the English Language Jurisdiction, 2011). <https://www.rosicrucian.org/council-of-solace>.
- ⁵ Luís Artés Ruiz et al., *Nicomedes Gómez*, 54.
- ⁶ AMORC, "A Look at This Year's Cover: Nicomedes Gómez's *The Cosmic Keyboard*," *Rose+Croix Journal* 15 (2021): Front Cover, 3 pages, <https://www.rosecroixjournal.org/archive>.
- ⁷ The approximate observed proportion of 1.267 is also close to the $\sqrt[3]{2}$:1 ratio, proportion approximately 1.260, which is the major third on the 12-tone equal temperament scale. Given that the panel's measurements are stated to the nearest centimeter, either of these proportions for the major third are plausible regarding the panel's proportions. The slightly smaller proportion 1.250, the 5:4 ratio, which is the major third on the Ptolemy scale does not appear to have been applied.



AWAKENING YOUR INTUITION THROUGH ART

Josh Green, FRC



Josh Green, Azoth, 2024.

My experience as an artist has shown me that the greatest value of art lies in self-realization through artistic expression. In other words, art has expanded my self-concept beyond identifying with thoughts, emotions, and societal roles. Discovering my intuition has been a vital part of this expansion and an essential aspect of my creativity. The open and reflective nature of artmaking allows me to experience myself directly on physical, mental, and spiritual levels simultaneously. Through the creative process, I cut through conceptual baggage, leading to these direct experiences. Art offers an esoteric path, and I'd like to share a basic method for awakening your intuition through it. First,

I will define intuition. Next, I will explore how art can help awaken it. Finally, I will provide a practical exercise—no artistic talent required.

Standard definitions describe intuition as a direct perception of truth, independent of any reasoning process. While this definition suffices for our purposes, intuition goes far beyond that. What distinguishes intuition is its immediacy and ease. There is no step-by-step reasoning process—solutions are perceived instantly.

The challenge for contemporary people, living busy and chaotic lives, is having a mind quiet enough to perceive these subtle messages and stable enough

to avoid distorting them. For mystics, the entertainment value or sensationalism of intuitive experiences often get in the way. Intuition works best when you approach it with detachment—perhaps even a bit of boredom.

Cultivating Awareness of Intuition

We all experience intuition regularly, but to become aware of it, we must sensitize our awareness and develop the discernment to recognize it. The challenge lies in sensitizing our awareness to recognize it. Often, as soon as an intuitive insight arises, we rush to interpret or rationalize it, trying to make it conform to our habituated ways of thinking, or questioning its reality. Instead of judging whether an intuitive message is “true,” I encourage exploring its usefulness in the moment. Most people seem to have a compulsion to make everything simple and concrete which is hostile to intuitive experiences. Instead, cultivate openness

and curiosity about your mind to notice what often goes unnoticed.

The Seven Senses and Intuition

Intuitive experiences reach our conscious mind through what I call the seven senses: the five objective senses (vision, hearing, touch, taste, smell) and two subjective senses (emotions and thoughts). For intuition to reach us, these senses must be perceived with little distortion. This means that there are intuitive states of mind more conducive to perceiving intuition without distortion.

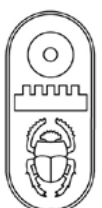
This means intuitive perception depends on both the clarity of our senses and the mental state in which they are received. Developing your ordinary senses can help you discern more subtle intuitive impressions.

Sensitizing Your Senses

Exploring the arts is an excellent way to develop your senses. Some of the ways to do that include:



Josh Green, Recrystallization, 2024.





Josh Green, The Artist's Journey, 2023.

- **Vision:** When looking at something, go beyond your concept of it and truly see it.
- **Hearing:** Listen to music deeply, following the rhythm or melody, or distinguishing individual instruments.
- **Touch:** Take time to deeply touch the textures of the objects around you. If needed, close your eyes.
- **Taste:** When eating, notice the individual flavors.
- **Emotions:** Record your emotional states throughout the day.
- **Thoughts:** Challenge your mind with activities like chess or mental math.

Over time, this practice will make you more aware of your seven senses, enhancing your ability to discern subtle intuitions.

Examples of Intuitive Perception

Intuitive perceptions often manifest as experiences without clear physical explanations:

- Seeing a glow or an aura around a person.
- Hearing a loved one's voice calling your name in a moment of need.
- Smelling a familiar perfume associated with someone who has gone through transition.
- Experiencing a strong gut feeling about a situation or person.
- Picking up on emotions that aren't yours, especially in group settings.
- Knowing something about someone without them telling you.
- Having a precognitive dream about an event that later occurs.

As modern life grows safer and technology increasingly mediates our communication, these subtle senses, once essential for survival, often lie dormant. Reawakening them requires effort and openness.

The Intuitive Mind

According to the Rosicrucian teachings, the subconscious mind is the seat of intuition. This idea divides the mind into the conscious and subconscious. The conscious mind houses our seven senses, while the subconscious governs automatic bodily functions, dreams, and intuitive experiences.

If you can recall your dreams, you can glimpse the processes of the subconscious mind. Our memories are stored in the subconscious. In dreams we can see how the subconscious works with our memories to create elaborate environments and characters. Not only this, but in most dreams we are simply passive observers flowing through a reality and narrative outside of our conscious control. This shows us that the subconscious has an independent will and thinking distinct from the conscious mind.

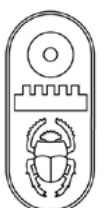
While the conscious mind is focused on becoming (doing, achieving), the subconscious mind is centered on being (observing, experiencing).

This distinction is vital because creativity resides in the subconscious. Many breakthroughs in art and science have emerged from this intuitive space. The famous dream of Mendeleyev in 1869 is a good example. Dmitri Mendeleyev had been struggling to create the Periodic Table of Elements. After days of intense work and study, he fell asleep at his desk and had a dream in which the elements appeared to him arranged in a table that revealed a periodic pattern of properties

when ordered by atomic weight. Mendeleyev said, “I saw in a dream a table where all the elements fell into place as required. Awakening, I immediately wrote it down on a piece of paper. Only in one place did a correction later seem necessary.” Not only this, but the table predicted the properties of elements that had not yet been discovered, such as gallium, scandium, and germanium (Strathern). Some other famous examples of creative breakthroughs from dream experiences are: “Yesterday” by Paul McCartney, *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, DNA’s double helix, the sewing machine, Einstein’s Theory of Relativity, and the structure of benzene.



Josh Green, The Platonic Solids, 2023.





Josh Green, Contemplation of Self, 2023.

Awakening Intuition Through Art

To access intuition, we must make the conscious mind passive so that the subconscious can rise in activity. This balance can be achieved through meditation. This may take some practice to find a balance that works for you.

Exercise in Awakening Intuition

1. Choose a space and time when you can have some peace and quiet. Lower the lighting to maintain a calm, meditative state.
2. Decide what art medium you would like to work in and have the supplies at hand. This technique works for any medium: painting, drawing, music, poetry, dance, etc.
3. Sit upright on a chair, feet flat on the floor, and hands resting naturally on your thighs. Relax your body and let your gaze soften.
4. Focus on your breath. Divide your attention: 25 percent on the breath, 25 percent on internal sensations, 25 percent on external

sensations, and 25 percent on spacious awareness. Feel open and expansive.

5. If your mind wanders, gently return to your breath. Continue for 10–15 minutes until you feel spacious and calm.
6. Once the sense of spaciousness is achieved, begin creating without a plan. Let go of judgment and identity. Move through the process with curiosity and joy, allowing intuition to guide you.

May you discover the vast depths within you.

May this love flow outwards,
igniting the hearts of all beings,
lighting the way to endless dawns.

Your brother in Light,
Josh Green

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COLORING *SECRET SYMBOLS OF THE ROSICRUCIANS*

In the early seventeenth century, as Rosicrucianism began to blossom in Europe, mystical texts and illustrations often of unknown origin frequently circulated in private among interested scholars. An unknown Rosicrucian assembled a collection of these texts and illustrations, and, in 1785, some of them were published in Germany, followed three years later by a second book, under the title *Geheime Figuren der Rosenkreuzer, aus dem 16ten und 17ten Jahrhundert* (*Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians of the 16th and 17th Centuries*).

In 1935, AMORC published a translation with the illustrations from the original in black and white. This is an invitation to readers to color the many illustrations in the books, linked to on the following page and posted on surrounding pages.

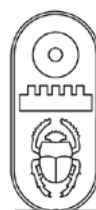
Coloring mandalas has gained attention in modern medicine for its potential mental health benefits. Research indicates that engaging in this structured, repetitive activity can significantly reduce anxiety, enhance mindfulness, and improve overall well-being.

A 2005 study by Nancy Curry and Tim Kasser in *Art Therapy* explored the impact of coloring mandalas on anxiety levels. In this study, 84 participants were subjected to an anxiety-inducing task and then assigned to do one of three activities: coloring a mandala, coloring a plaid design, or free-form coloring on a blank sheet. The results demonstrated that participants who colored mandalas or plaid designs experienced a significant reduction in anxiety, while those engaged in free-form coloring did not show comparable benefits.

Further supporting these findings, a 2012 study by Renée van der Venet and Susan Serice in *Art Therapy* replicated Curry and Kasser's research with 50 psychology students and graduates. Participants were assigned to color mandalas, plaid designs, or engage in free-form coloring. Consistent with previous results, those who colored mandalas reported a more substantial decrease in anxiety levels compared to the other groups. This replication underscores the potential of mandala coloring as an effective tool for anxiety reduction.

Beyond anxiety reduction, coloring mandalas has been associated with increased mindfulness and improved emotional well-being. A 2020 study in *Frontiers in Psychology* examined the effects of individual versus collaborative mandala drawing. The research found that while individual mandala drawing helped ease negative emotions, collaborative sessions significantly enhanced positive feelings and promoted a sense of well-being among participants. These findings suggest that mandala coloring can serve as a conduit for processing emotions and fostering a positive mental state.

Engaging in mandala coloring may also yield physiological benefits. According to Dr. Herbert Benson, a pioneer in mind-body medicine, repetitive activities that focus the mind—such as coloring mandalas—can elicit the relaxation response. This response is characterized by decreased heart rate, lower blood pressure, reduced cortisol levels, and



increased production of feel-good hormones. These physiological changes contribute to a state of relaxation and stress reduction, enhancing overall health.

Incorporating this practice into daily routines or therapeutic settings may serve as a valuable tool for individuals seeking to improve their mental health.

For inspiration with your coloring, you can find H. Spencer Lewis's coloring of illustrations on pages 36 and 37 of the [2011 "Hermetism" issue](#) of the *Rosicrucian Digest*, as well as in the "Mountain of the Adepts" article in the supplemental section of this issue of the *Digest*.

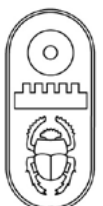
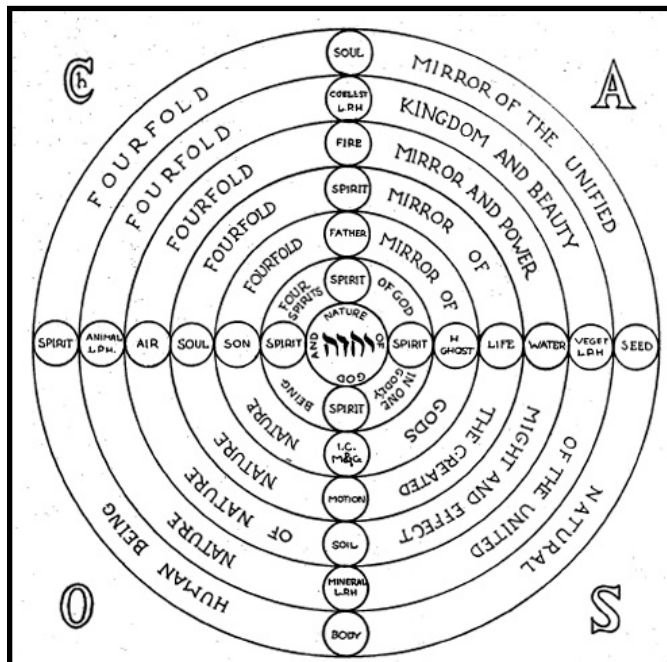
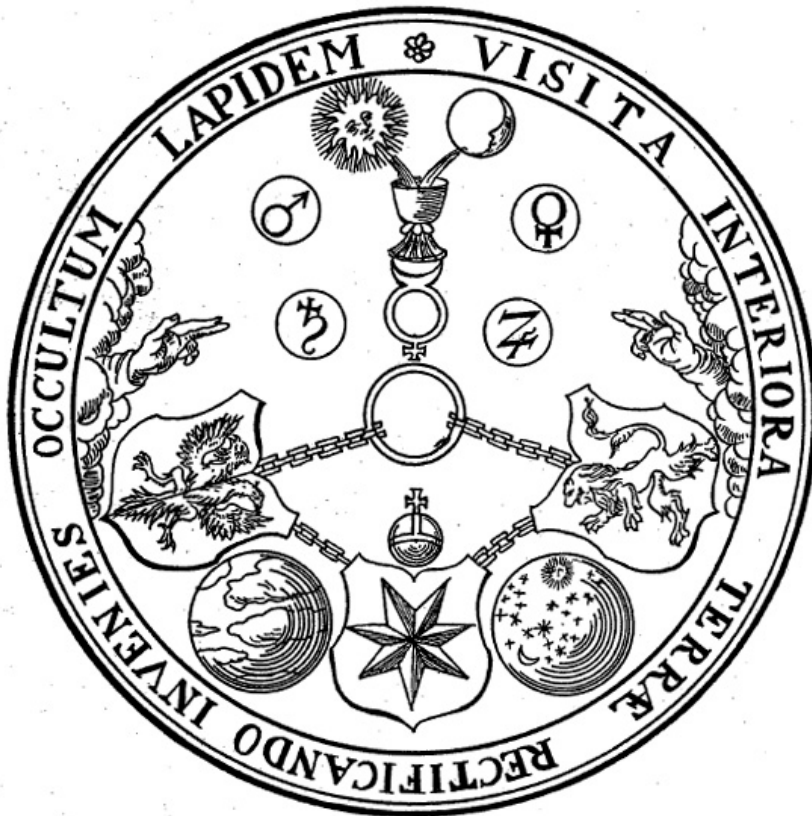
For more information about *Secret Symbols*, please read [an introduction to the text](#) written by staff of the *Digest*, as well as [a preface to the text](#) written by Lewis.

To access the full book for free, please visit the website: <https://www.rosicrucian.org/secret-symbols-of-the-rosicrucians>.



COLORING SECRET SYMBOLS OF THE ROSICRUCIANS

TABULA SMARAGDINA HERMETIS.



WORK INSPIRED BY A VISION OF A HEAVENLY COSMIC ROSE GARDEN

Ginny Brown, SRC



Ginny Brown, Transitions, 2018.

NAVAJO SANDPAINTINGS: SACRED HEALING

Pensator

In the Four Corners region of the Southwest United States, where Arizona, Utah, New Mexico, and Colorado meet, is the Navajo Nation, the largest Native American reservation in the country. The Navajo or *Diné* call it *Dinébtah*. It is strikingly beautiful country, and was the home of one of the ancient civilizations of North America.

The Navajo tell stories about Rain Boy, a gambler who lost all of his family's possessions. Fleeing his angry relatives, he arrived at the house of a beautiful woman. Her jealous husband shattered him with hailstones. Some Holy People from the spiritual world took pity on him and restored him. After further adventures, he returned to his own people, bringing with him the healing ceremonies he learned from the Holy People. It is now thought that these ceremonies and the paintings associated with them were originally learned from the Pueblo tribes of the Rio Grande valley, the descendants of the Anasazi civilization. Among the Navajo, who came later to this land, the ceremonies evolved a more complex and important role, emphasizing their innate sense of "oneness."

The Navajo concept of the universe is an ideal one, an all-inclusive unity, delicately balanced, full of enormously powerful forces with potential for both good and

bad, in which all parts are maintained in interrelated harmony. Only humans can upset this balance. Illness, physical and mental, is seen as the result of upsetting this harmony. It is for the preservation or restoration of this harmony, that Navajo religious ceremonies are performed. During the complex series of healing ceremonies or chants, designed to restore harmony

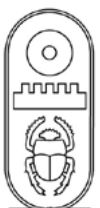
to the patients, the Navajo create pictures on a one- to three-inch bed of sand, some as small as a foot square, while others can be as much as twenty feet across. Most average about six feet. The drypaintings, perhaps a more accurate term than sandpaintings, are made with pigments obtained from pulverized gypsum, yellow ochre, red sand,

charcoal, pollen, cornmeal, and crushed flowers. The colors may vary, but the four principal colors: white, blue, yellow, and black are always present, reflecting the four directions. They are intricate, highly stylized, and beautiful. These sandpainting designs duplicate the images that the Holy People used in their rituals, and are a type of mandala.

The images depict the legendary supernatural heroes and heroines (or deities) known as the Holy People. This vast pantheon includes First Man and First Woman; Spider Woman, who taught women to weave; Big Fly, who conveys



A Navajo sandpainting.





A Navajo sandpainting photographed in 1905 by Edward S. Curtis.

messages between the Navajo and the Holy People; and others like the Mountain People, the Snake People, and the Corn People. Especially revered is Changing Woman, the mother of the Hero Twins, the sons of the Sun, called Monster Slayer and Born For Water. They made the world a safer place for the Navajo by slaying many threatening creatures.

The Navajo term for sandpainting is *iikaah*, “the place where the deities come and go.” Summoned by a singer or *bataaii*, (a medicine person), the Holy People enter a sandpainting, infusing it with their healing power. By sitting in the middle of the painting, the patient is able to attune with and absorb this healing power. Such sandpaintings are considered gifts from the Holy People and must be started at sunrise and be completed by sunset.

Typically, the sandpaintings are used in night rituals conducted inside an eight-sided log Hogan or Navajo house. The Hogan is a gift of the Holy People, and as such it occupies a place in the sacred world. Its door faces the east, so that the first

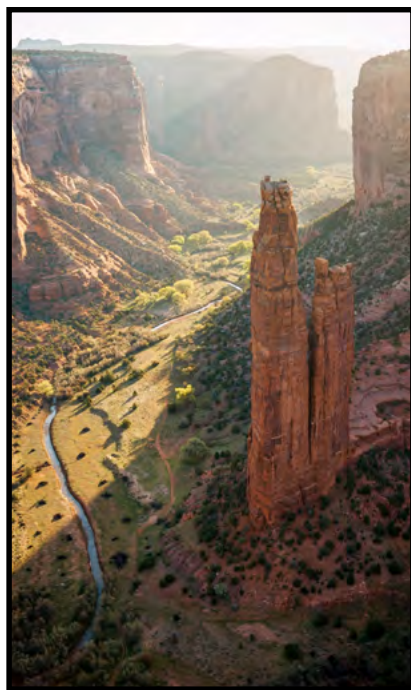
thing a Navajo family sees in the morning is the rising sun. The sandpaintings in the Hogan cannot be made by just anyone. The singer who supervises the construction is a specialist whose apprenticeship to another medicine person, sometimes lasting many years, initiates them as a practitioner of a ceremony known as a “Way.” Each “Way” is named for the forces addressed by its songs, chants, prayers, and sandpaintings, among which are the “Blessingway”, performed for general well-being, and to ensure that one may “walk in beauty”, “Mountainway”, “Nightway,” and “Windway.” The cause of the sickness determines the ceremony needed to effect a cure. Some “Ways” may last as long as nine days and nights.

A “Way” may have as many as a hundred sandpaintings associated with it, and over five hundred different sandpaintings have been recorded. Although the “Ways” may differ in length of ceremonies, number of sandpaintings, and forces toward which prayers are directed, all share a common goal: the restoration of *hózhó*.

The word *hózhó* has no English equivalent. It can be grasped by blending concepts such as “sacred,” “holy,” “blessed,” “balance,” and “harmony.” It has also been referred to as “beauty” and is the equivalent of the ancient Egyptian concept of Ma’at (order). To the Navajo, *hózhó* is fragile and easily disrupted by the forces of chaos.

When life tips out of balance, disorder ensues. Someone in need of, for example, “Mountainway” can suffer from a range of ailments including arthritis, rheumatism, fainting, nerves or stomach disorders. By contacting the elemental forces of the cosmos through chanting ceremonies, the singer tries to alleviate the suffering. Through the sandpaintings and ceremonies, the singer appeals to the Holy People, summoning them to heal the patient by reinstating *hózhó*.

The designs were an integral part of the religious ceremonies of the Holy People themselves, recounting the lessons of life. The construction of each sandpainting follows a prescribed formula. If it is not made correctly, the Holy People will not come. Properly constructed, it functions as a beacon the Holy People cannot ignore. Sandpaintings face east, which is always at the top of the painting, and open to let in the dawn’s light. The east is the direction from which the Holy People enter. It is sacred and one from which no harm can enter. The painting must then be ceremoniously destroyed before dawn.



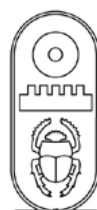
*Canyon de Chelly National Monument
in Navajo Nation.*

Sandpaintings convey complex and symbolic messages. The principal colors white, blue, yellow, and black link the four sacred mountains rising up at the farthest borders of Dinéhtah, within the boundaries of which they believe the Creator placed them. White, the dominant color in the eastern part of the sandpainting, represents the dawn and *Sisnaajini* or White Shell Mountain, the Sacred Mountain of the

East (Sierra Blanca peak in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains near Alamosa, Colorado). Blue represents *Tsoodzil* or Turquoise Mountain, the Sacred Mountain of the South (Mount Taylor in the San Mateo Range near Grant, New Mexico), and represents the sky. The western part is yellow and represents *Doko’o’osliid*, the Abalone Shell Mountain, the Sacred Mountain of the West, (Humphreys Peak in the San Francisco Mountains north of Flagstaff, Arizona). It

represents the twilight. Black represents the north, associated with *Dibé Nitsaa* or Obsidian Mountain, the Sacred Mountain of the North (Mount Hesperus in the La Plata range near Durango, Colorado), and represents darkness. Within the area encompassed by these four were another three sacred mountains.

The first part of any chant is devoted to purification, achieved through the use of emetics, herbal treatments or sweat baths. After this, during the second part of the ceremony comes the attempt to attract the Holy People to restore balance



or hózhó. This is when the sandpaintings are made.

The singer, patient, friends, and relatives sit around the sandpainting joined in common purpose by the singer's prayers, a melodic recitation of repeated refrains reflecting the universal need for meaningful ritual. The ceremony reaches its climax as the singer escorts the patient into the sandpainting itself, which is a center of transformation. The patient sits facing the east, the direction from which the Holy People will arrive. For a few moments, as the singer rubs pigment from the sandpainting onto the patient's body, one part at a time, the Holy People, sandpainting, and patient merge into one. During this physical contact a pathway between the patient and the deities is established, allowing healing to begin. The patient then rises to "walk in beauty" once again.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the participants destroy the sandpainting. It is swept on to a blanket and taken outside to be disposed of, to the north of the Hogan. If it was left in place, the Holy People, having no choice but to revisit it, would discover no ceremony under way, no patient, no singer, none of the honor they expect and which is their due. Their displeasure could manifest itself in the patient's loss of hózhó just restored by the ceremony.

If a patient has confidence in a singer, then they can be cured. Exactly what happens during a sandpainting ceremony is a mystery to Western understanding, but the Navajo maintain that the sandpaintings work because they are gifts from the Holy People. Given attention and surrounded by people who care, the patient follows a trusted singer along the healing pathway. The spectators also share in the blessings derived from attending the ceremonies, and in the feast afterwards.



A Navajo rug done in the style of a sandpainting.

The previous descriptions are all reminiscent of the symbolism in our own Lodges, Chapters, Pronaoi, and Atrium Groups. Today, it is possible to buy sandpainting designs on textiles, pictures, or miniature "sandpaintings." But precautions are taken. Perhaps different colors are used or figures are omitted or included in a scene, to render the designs harmless.

As Rosicrucians, we learn in our studies that when we are ready, the Master will appear. While the tradition of sandpainting may not have the same connotation as the Rosicrucian axiom, we know that for patients it is necessary to be ready, to prepare themselves with the correct inner mental attitude for the Holy People and the healing to manifest. After all, all forms of healing simply augment the body's own natural healing abilities. Medical staff now acknowledge that for many traditional Navajo patients, successful treatment will be done in conjunction with a hataáalii, a holistic concept long known to the native peoples of the Americas, but only now being rediscovered by Western medicine.

WORK INSPIRED BY *AZOTH OF THE PHILOSOPHERS*

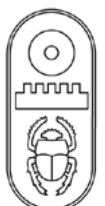
Nikki Schiro, SRC

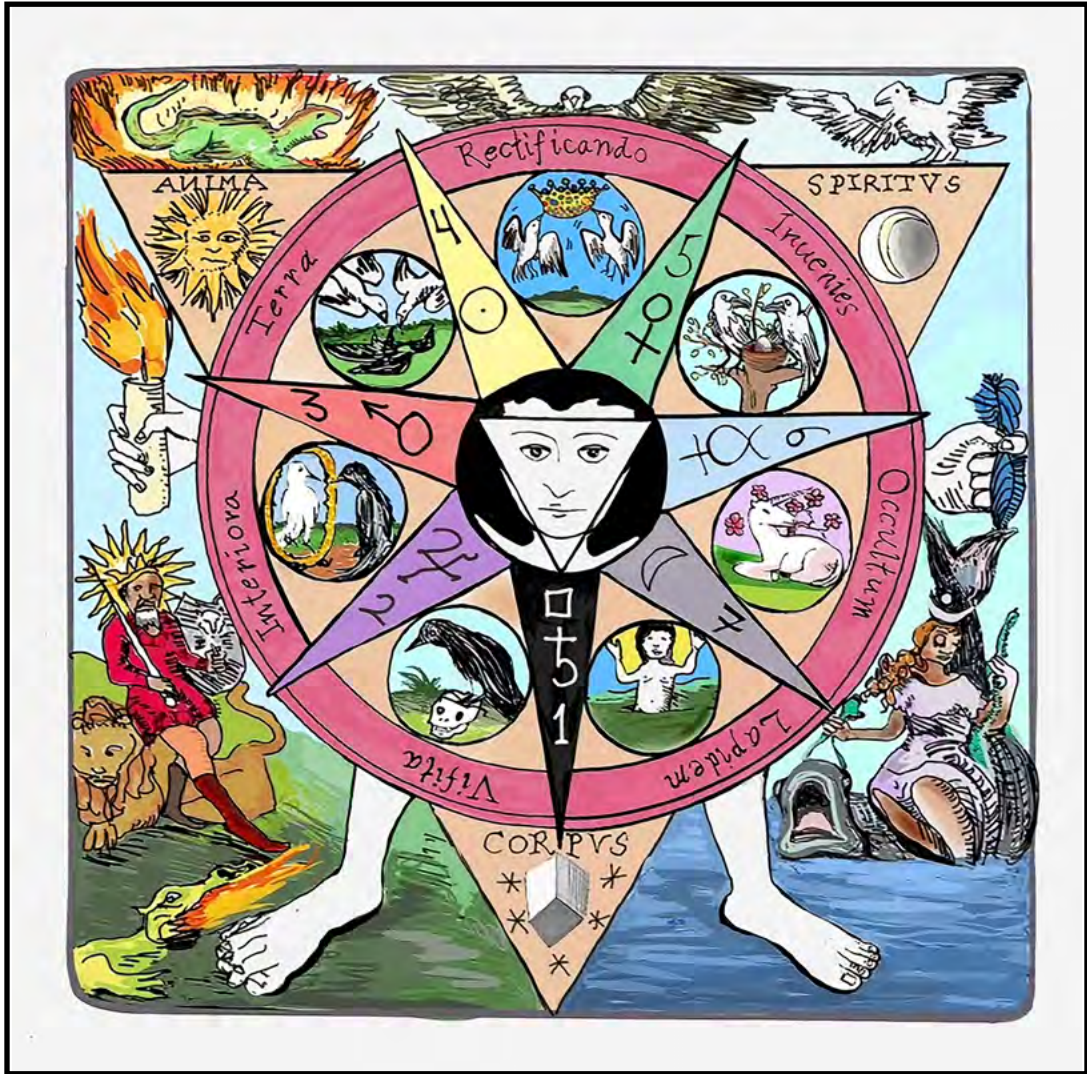


Nikki Schiro, Dissolution: An Operation Taking Place In The Innermost Parts.

Since my earliest memories, I have been preoccupied with the human condition. The art I make is, on some level, a visual diary of my explorations of this subject.

Disturbed by social and political paradigms, I began asking myself: How could my art, in the Rosicrucian context, “contribute to Peace,” a future where people were reconnected to themselves, to each other, and to nature? I thought, to get past cognitive dissonance, that I might look to higher symbolism—images that nudged at the heart and soul, overriding the petty, mundane identifications of the ego. I began to (re)introduce ancient, mystical, and alchemical principles that I believe can, do, and will serve humanity, today and always. The works in this grouping are from a series based on the *Azoth of the Philosophers*, an alchemical image that breaks down the steps of transmutation, a path to achieve the philosopher’s stone, spiritual enlightenment, or the Rose+Croix state.



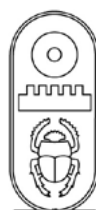


Nikki Schiro, Androgenous Azoth.

The Grand Secretary propositioned a group of Rosicrucian artists to re-render the *Azoth of the Philosophers* drawing with a philosopher that was more androgynous. I leaned into an Egyptian-Greek aesthetic, which seemed to nicely connect with our Order's origins, and tried to keep the race neutral. The King and Queen became people of color, since existing alchemical images already well represent Caucasian figures.



Nikki Schiro, Azoth or The Way to the Hidden Gold.





Nikki Schiro, Calcination: Igniting the Fire of Introspection.



Nikki Schiro, Fermentation: You Will Discover.

MA'AT'S FEATHER AND THE ART OF TRANSFORMATION

Anne Nordhaus-Bike, SRC

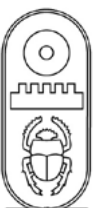


Anne Nordhaus-Bike, Ma'at's Feather, 2005.

Art provides a powerful way to connect with our inner selves. It communicates through symbols which constitute the language of the soul. This symbolic language speaks to us through art's physical qualities of color, form, composition, and medium. It also communicates through an artwork's content. In this way, form and content combine to express spiritual or mystical meaning, giving art a sense of mystery and inviting us to return again

and again for contemplation. Over time, art can reward us with new insights and touch our souls through beauty of form and meaning.

In ancient Egypt, the deity Ma'at personified the order that came out of primordial chaos. Her name, which means "truth," alludes to her vital role in the afterlife: after death, every person came face to face with Ma'at, who weighed the individual's heart (which housed the



soul) against a white feather. If the scales balanced, the person was allowed to make the journey to eternal paradise; if the heart was too heavy, the demon Ammit devoured it and the person had to stay in the underworld, suffering from a terrible restlessness.

The painting on the previous page, *Ma'at's Feather*, evokes this ancient story. The red background alludes to the heart that Ma'at must weigh as well as the spiritual fire and personal sacrifice that assist inner growth. Touches of gold indicate spiritual riches obtained from inner purity and heartfelt devotion. Here, the white feather floats in air and has turned almost completely purple, symbolizing a kind of spiritual achievement or royalty beyond simple purity; after reaching a pure state in order to balance the scales of Ma'at, a soul still faced a long journey and many trials before reaching paradise.

Ma'at's association with lightness—feathers symbolize birds as well as air and lightness—comes through in ancient Egyptian artists' depictions, which typically

show Ma'at either with an ostrich feather in her headpiece or with human arms filled with feathers that create wings. Her likeness indicates the lightness required to succeed at the afterlife's weighing.

Her symbols also associate Ma'at with communication, as birds tend to be talky beings that communicate through various calls and other sounds and fly high in the sky, bringing them closer to the heavens—literally and symbolically—and therefore making them privy to divine communication. Here on Earth, observing their colors and traits can give us clues to spiritual messages. For example, a robin's large red breast indicates a big heart and emotional warmth, and its perky, jaunty movements symbolize freshness, youth, and good cheer.

Ma'at's scales indicate her devotion to justice, balance, and purity, exemplified by the 42 Confessions of Ma'at from the *Book of Coming Forth by Day*. Her scales also link Ma'at to alchemy, which originated in ancient Egypt: the balance scale provided a useful instrument for alchemists and



A detail of one of the wall paintings in the Tomb of Nefertari showing Ma'at.



In a scene from the Book of Coming Forth by Day, the heart of Hunefer is weighed against the feather of Ma'at.

came to symbolize their Great Work's final success. Alchemy, or the Art of Transformation, purifies and balances natural forces to restore equilibrium on all planes.

This painting links Ma'at and ancient Egypt's mystical and alchemical practices with those of later cultures in the Western mystical tradition, particularly regarding communication, the mind and thought, and spiritual alchemy:

- Ma'at's husband, Thoth, associated with wisdom and writing, served as the scribe during the weighing process, recording the verdict for each person who faced Ma'at. Although ancient Egyptian scribes used reeds for writing, Roman and later scribes and writers used feathers (quills).
- During the Hellenistic era, Egypt's Thoth merged with the Greek deity Hermes, eventually evolving into Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus, or "Thrice-Great Hermes." This figure became associated with

Hermes from Greek tradition and Mercury from the Roman pantheon; he also is associated with the planet Mercury and with alchemical Mercury, also known as quicksilver.

- Both Hermes and Mercury carried associations with birds as well as inspired communication and higher thought. With wings on their feet and caps, they served as the speedy messengers of the deities.

During our time on Earth, our work consists in making our hearts light and pure enough to balance perfectly with a single feather. Using Mercury (thought), we can make progress toward that goal by refraining from negative thoughts and misuse of our minds and communication. At the same time, we can engage in constructive communication and positive thoughts. In addition, we can attune with Mercury's best expression by enjoying lighthearted pleasures that freshen our spirits and inspire our minds.

