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Cover: Jim Pomeroy
Edited by Peter Garland

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SOUNDINGS PRESS 1982 SANTA FE
Musical Chronicle

from The Dial, Dec. 1925
Paul Rosenfeld

Editor’s Note: In celebration of Rudhwar’s 87th birthday in March and of the publication here of Rite of Transcendence written last year (at the age of 86), SOUNDINGS is reprinting this, one of the very first (and despite small disagreements, still one of the best) articles on Rudhvar and his music. To put this in a proper generational perspective, I might add that my mother was three years old then, when this article was written, and none of my own music teachers had even been born yet. And on Rudhvar goes, producing and inspiring...

In the first stages of a career, Dane Rudhvar stands with the composers pushing the enmired machine of music where the weight lies heaviest. The majority of his tumultuous and mysterious piano Moments, the most recent of his works, release a definite pathos. The feeling is strongly religious and legitimate in the age of steel. Experiences of the great circling impersonal life flash through the achieved pieces, “what was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be” seen in the painful, ecstatic, and fleeting moments of birth into the vaster day. In instances, the quick minutes take shape in expressions of barbaric and machine-like power. In others, they come as gropings into darkness, stirrings of blind hunger passive and submiss. Sometimes the quiet tides of the abyss move stillly, the waters before the spirit brooded over them. Sometimes fires stream upward with joyous vehemence changing worlds in their fierce ascent. Occasionally, in a certain number of the Moments, the spark is faint, the contact vague. These inferior pieces irritate with the monotonous hysteric aspiration and sick yearning characteristic of much unsuccessful “cosmic poetry.” The failures are exceptional. The great number of Rudhvar’s preludes and poems are filled sufficiently with the power, wild joy, and movement of the impersonal state to give it expression and float us on its tides. This new music qualifies as part of the contemporary spiritual life.

The uncommonness of pathos of a similar intensity is the weakness of the body of ultra-modern music. Without the pathetic, music can have no force. The epochal change of sensibility in combination with the general exhaustion having dried the source, the incidental make-shifts—over-production of the ironic, the satiric, and the grotesque; attempted substitution of surface feelings for feeling; conception of music as a mechanism to be taken apart and put together again upon a formula; introduction of facts of personality and of transient emotions—have not satisfied and indeed cannot satisfy the human need. Talent and audiences not previously disaffected by the universal frost-bite have been disaffected by this poverty of expression. Rudhvar none the less has found himself accepting creative responsibility. Affiliated by birth and training with the generation of new French composers which has discovered no frank pathos and loudly preferred ironic and anti-lyric forms, he has met hours of clarity, and found himself in the presence of positive forces since the beginning of his American residence. The first of his personal pieces, Ravishments (1918), Dithyrambs (1919), The Surge of Fire (1920), possess the musical qualities provoking direct feeling. Scriabinianque and tinctured with literature though they are, they sing and sustain an architecture of tones. The tone is passionate, and the building generous. It is significant that it was not Strawinsky, the great influence of the young French school, but Scriabin who focused young Rudhvar’s creative impulse with his ritualistic poems. And the manuscript of Moments merely reveals a success in registering the clear periods more distinguished than any hitherto befallen the composer. If other composers possibly maturer than Rudhvar are likewise producing a pathetic music, in aspects larger and more positive even than his,
neither their number nor their success are sufficiently overwhelming to keep this new recruit from an unfavourable part from rousing wonder; besides, the recent experiments of the young Franco-American show much of the indissoluble combination of the traditional, and the original, personal, and timely which rouses wonder in very years of fecundity. They continue a high line of music from where the past snapped it off.

Again a European has discovered a favourable environment in America. Notwithstanding its inhabitants, the "mountains of my native land" are strong! The original, personal, timely transformation of the ecstatic Scriabin esque piano-style produced by Rudhyar at the close of his first ten years of American residency, wears certain characteristics ultimately American. The better of the Moments, the unnamed second and third of the first cycle, and Reaching Out, The Gift of Blood, Zodiacal Birth, King of Kings, and Moon Ritual of the second cycle, bring together with the traditional tender, shadowy, and sombre lyricism and flighted beat, a sharpness of attack, a forceful spareness of utterance and rigidity of ponderous volumes of sound uncommon to the aristocratic expression from which they spring. Although a force and nudity of utterance related to this austere machine-like edge exists in the later Scriabine, it exists invariably softened by a comparative opulence of harmony and sinuosity of movement. Rudhyar is to be credited with a genuine innovation. Certainly, Ornstein's earlier piano moods, impressions, and dances show similar qualities, mixed as they are with turbulence of movement and turgidity of sound. Contemporary orchestral writing fairly bristles with them: Stravinsky and Varése, and in second line Ruggles, Prokofieff, and certain of the Six, have achieved shining pages with the "hard gemlike cutting of the Greek." The distinction of Rudhyar's musical art flows from the achievement in the medium of the piano of passages of a sonority at once slender and charged with
force, comparable to the significant pages of modern orchestration; and from the earnest of a fluency in the modern style contained in it. Limited in the range of his ideas, and burdened with literary and theosophic conceptions, he nevertheless moves about in the spare, rich, and metallic style with a naturalness and effortlessness that show him at home. Within the small compass of his Moments, there are strong accents at once rhythmical and precise and free and full, and devoid of the mechanical quality of much of Strawinsky’s. There are strong contrasts, nervous and perfectly legitimate changes of mood, sonority, and beat: sudden necessary accelerations and agitations, and equally sudden retardations and calnings. There are full and prodigiously extended chords without thickness; thunderous effects gotten from a single unsupported voice — No. 2 of the first cycle has fine examples; extreme delicacies of the melodic line twisting in mordant-like figures — the tense and penetrating Reaching Out supplies a capital illustration. The precise and bounding rhythms, the many staccato and martellato notes call for gong-like and metallic sounds; Zodiacal Birth demands piano roars to be gotten only by striking chords of black keys with the entire forearm, after the manner of Rudhyar’s Californian neighbour, Henry Cowell.

It is not beside Ozymandias in the Egyptian sand, but beside certain primitive American things made in the arid Southwest, that the grandiose clangours and stony weight of such a Moment as King of Kings demand a place. There is excessive timidity in refusing to recognize Rudhyar’s momentary freedom on the austere stylistic plane, and the rigid volumes and barbarous power of his rich affecting music, as products of the American soil. The spirit of the Amerind had the austerity. The Aztec had the rigid barbarous power, before him. The very transplanted life we live is permeated with both. The popular expressions, jazz and movies, contain them in a rudimentary form. Under the lace of inorganic borrowed ornamentation, the mountainous American architecture shows them, and recently they have begun creating a painting, a prose and poetry in their keen likeness. The American plains awaken a kind of grandiosity which the Indians expressed in the picturesque cosmic names they gave themselves; and poets of the cast of Carl Sandburg are moved unconsciously by vague but similar impulses. Doubtless, as Nietzsche noticed, the testimony of composers concerning themselves and their works is not exhaustively reliable. None the less, Rudhyar’s personal feelings about the potentialities of American life and the divinity of the land, freely expressed in his letters, his talk, his essays and poems, are worthy of scrutiny for their corroborative witness. To us, Dane Rudhyar’s work, in its form and the pathos exhaled by it, in its weaknesses and strengths, bad literature and realizations alike, presents itself quite simply as inspired with the unconscious reality of America. It has analogies in the life of the Pacific seaboard, where they look still further to the West and feel Buddha near. It has analogies not only there. It has them wherever men feel the presence of a new god that is being born, an American God; not the old jealous, fighting, egotistical Jehovah and his suffering, expiating, self-sacrificing son; but a spirit of fire that opens all individual forms, and purifies and merges all souls together, flushing the hills to scarlet, bursting the earth with corn, dancing, and releasing souls in dancing; the god of old American writers — Whitman with his song of the open road, Melville with his wild laugh writing the tragedy of the god of evil, hate, and retribution; the god of the newcomers, too — warm Mr Anderson hearing hallucinating black laughter and the throb of Dionysiac life beneath the stupid crust of the republic; sad Mr Eliot freighted with a god periodically mysteriously defunct; young Mr Cummings intoxicated with a pussy-footed god who cannot quite get the step; the number grows with every year. It is the intuition strong in these men that lives in Rudhyar. His beauty and theirs flow from a common apprehension; and with theirs his art art composes a single ritual.
Rite of Transcendence

Dane Rudhyar
May 1981

Notes without accidentals
are natural. Bars 48
measures are merely for
the convenience of reading

for Yvar Mikhashoff

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Majestic and singing
(legato moto)

Restless and questioning
(legato moto)
The Music of Dane Rudhyar

3635 Lupine Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94303
Dane Rudhyar was born in Paris, France on 23 March 1895. He studied briefly at the Paris Conservatoire, and in 1913 Durand published his first short piano pieces and a small book on Claude Debussy. His career and studies were interrupted by the war, but he composed polytonal music for a radically avant garde "multimedia" performance, *Metachory*, featuring abstract, ritualistic dance. Rudhyar came to New York in 1916 for its performance at the Metropolitan Opera (Pierre Monteux, conductor) in April 1917 — the very night America declared war on Germany.

Rudhyar remained in America and reached California in 1920, where he wrote scenic music for the Hollywood Pilgrimage Play (1920-22) and won the $1,000 W. A. Clark, Jr. prize offered for an orchestral work by the then-new Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra. He made an intensive study of oriental philosophies and music in New York and California and was active in the founding and development of the International Composers Guild and the California New Music Society. In 1925 his *Surge or Fire* (for small
orchestra and three pianos) was performed. Throughout the 1920s he wrote articles and books and gave lectures and recitals promoting "world music" (a term he coined at the time), a new approach to music, and the concepts of "dissonant harmony" and "syntonism."

After 1929 the Great Depression, the pressure of personal circumstances, and developments in the musical world stopped Rudhyar's activities as a composer for many years. Although there were brief interludes of composing and performances (especially in New York in 1949-50), his time was devoted to lecturing, painting (between 1938 and 1949), and writing. He has published several books of poetry, two novels, and volumes on esthetic and social criticism. Over twenty books written between 1935 and 1978 pioneered a psychospiritual reformulation of astrology. His most recent books present a new, structural approach to a multilevel, evolutionary psychology and philosophy.

A new period of musical activity began in the early 1970s, after Rudhyar's writings became popular among young people attracted to astrology and Asian philosophies in the mid-60s. In 1972 the Berkeley, California, radio station KPFA produced and broadcast a "Rudhyar Retrospective" that included an exhibit of his paintings and a recital of piano works. Three similar "Rudhyar Festivals" have been presented since, by the University of California at La Jolla (1975), by California State University at Long Beach (1976), and by the University of Minnesota in conjunction with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra (1977). A new generation of musicians and music lovers began to respond warmly to Rudhyar's works, of which seven records have been made.

In January 1976 Rudhyar moved to Palo Alto, California, and began composing a series of piano and orchestral works under grants from the National Endowment for the Arts. In 1978 he received the Marjorie Peabody Waite Award from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters for continuing artistic integrity and achievement. John F. Kennedy University and the California Institute for Transpersonal Psychology awarded him honorary doctorate degrees in 1980. In 1982 he was one of six American composers to whose music an entire program was devoted at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. His most recent book on music, The Magic of Tone and the Art of Music (Shambhala Publications, 1982) is being translated into French and German. His other books are now published in six languages, twenty of them to appear in French alone.

RUDHYAR ON MUSIC AND PERFORMANCE

Music is a means to communicate the psychic energy generated by authentic inner experiences; great music is born of great experiences. Most such experiences involve dramatic elements, because they imply struggle, inner confrontation, conflict and overcoming. Hence my use of the term "syntonic drama." But the term, drama, refers to more than the narration of a series of external events or interpersonal conflicts. The musical developments deal with crises of consciousness and are meant to evoke processes of personal transformation and, hopefully, of spiritual growth. It is "syntonic" music because it employs vibrant tones rather than abstract patterns of relationship between musical notes. A sound becomes a tone only when a musician endows it with a meaning, be it individual or collective and cultural. Music is the organization of tones, not mere sounds. Tones are sounds which convey the quality of being inherent in their producer and thus have a function and purpose. My purpose in composing is to attempt to induce in both performers and listeners the capacity to live more intensely and feel more deeply.

My compositions do not belong to any particular school, nor do they follow the fashion of a decade or two. From the beginning I was unable to accept the neoclassical worship of antiquated forms based on the system of tonality reflecting the way of life of the aristocratic classes of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Nor could I adopt the rigidly intellectual, neoscholastic procedures of the Schoenberg school. Although I have used the musical heritage and instruments of Western culture, I have endeavored to free them from concepts and procedures which are no longer vital and transformative — and first of all from subservience to a narrow sense of tonality.

Classical European tonality is based on the principle of consonant relationship — the relation of many elements to a "root-unity" (the tonic). By contrast my music is inspired by the ideal of dissonant harmony, in which unity is to be achieved as the result of a process of integration involving both development in time (melody) and the resonance of musical space. In the former approach chords appear as strong tonal relationships, while in dissonant harmony they become "simultanities of sound," areas of resonant intensity, the vibratory quality of which is determined by the dramatic process the music endeavors to evoke.

(continued)
Though I was among the first European or American musicians to recognize the value of Asian music and to openly promote an understanding of non-European approaches to the use and meaning of musical tones, I never tried to imitate Asian, African, or indigenously American procedures or forms. I believe that each society has its own integral collective psyche or "cultural soul," the essential character and power of which, at least in its heyday, is released through a specific type of music. Thus I have never believed in musical hybridization. As a culture disintegrates, it becomes open to alien influences which may stimulate musicians to free themselves from subservience to the tradition of the past; but a naive acceptance of the outer forms and products of other cultures is not a truly creative solution. My music flows from the mainstream of the type of Western music which, throughout the nineteenth century, was in tune with the new possibilities of personal transformation engendered by revolutionary social and cultural changes.

The musical process should have form in the sense that the totality of musical elements should reveal an inner psychic consistency and internal logic; but the musical process need not be constrained by any of the preordained musical forms of a particular tradition or school. I see form in music not as an objective factor expressing standardized, collective responses to life and human experience; rather it is a subjective element of organic coherence inherent in the composer's mind and individuality. My intention is not to compose musical "objects," as external and dependent on style as the making of a chair is to a craftsman. Instead I allow an inner, psychospiritual process to unfold through the combining and development of resonant, vibrant tones endowed with the quality of being which the musical composition seeks to evoke and communicate.
Orchestral Works (continued)

Recording: Varese Sarabande, VC 81046, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, Jonel Perlea, cond. (reissue of Remington R199188)
Score: ACE (originally printed in New Music Orchestra Series, 1934)
Parts: Fleisher

EMERGENCE (1948)
For string orchestra, in five movements, incorporating the musical material of piano Tetragram No. 6
12 minutes
As yet unperformed
Score and parts: ACE

ENCOUNTER (1977)
Dramatic sequence in five scenes for piano and orchestra. The piano plays a dominant role but not in concerto style.
21 minutes
2fl-ob-Eng hn-d-b cl-2bn-2hn-2tbn-tb-2tpt-timp-
cymb-gong-solo pno-strings
As yet unperformed
Score and parts: ACE

DIALOGUES (1977)
In three movements
20 minutes
2fl-ob-Eng hn-2cl-2bn-tpt-2hn-timp-pno-strings
Score and parts: ACE

THRESHOLDS (1954-55)
In four movements. Orchestrated 1975 by George Champion in consultation with the composer.
23 minutes
3fl-2ob-Eng hn-3cl-2bn-dbl hn-2tpt in Bb-tpt in D-3tbn-tb-timp-b dr-cymb-tt-strings
As yet unperformed
Score: ACE
Parts: Fleisher

COSMIC CYCLE (1981)
In three movements:
Formation, Unfoldment, Severance and Release.
23 minutes
3fl-picc-2ob-Eng hn-2cl-b cl-2bn-4hn in F-3tpt-2tn
2bn-b tbn-tb-perc-timp-2hp-clsta-pno-strings
As yet unperformed (A shorter first version for small orchestra, performed 1951, Columbia University Composers Forum, Maurice Bonney, cond.)
Score and parts: ACE
Parts: Fleisher

OUT OF THE DARKNESS (1982)
Svntonic drama in five acts for full orchestra
23 minutes
3fl-2ob-2Eng hn-2cl in Bb-2bn-3hn in F-2tpt in C-2 tn
2bn-2tbn-2tn-2tb-2tpt-2hp-clsta-pno-perc-strings
As yet unperformed
Score and parts: ACE

VOCAL AND CHAMBER MUSIC

TROIS POEMES TRAGIQUES (1918, revised 1979)
12 minutes
On French poems from the book Rhapsodies (1918) by the composer
MS or Bar-pno-vln
First performance: 1979, Brooklyn Philharmonia, Lukas Foss, cond., Jan Curtis, MS.
Score: RBT

TROIS CHANSONS DE BILITIS (1918, revised 1981)
15 minutes
MS-str quintet-fl-ob-cl-bn-hn-tpt-tbn-hp-clsta-vib-pno
First performance: 1984, California Institute of the Arts, CalArts 20th Century Players, Stephen Mosko, cond., Carol Plantamura, MS.
Score and parts: ACE

THREE MELODIES FOR FLUTE (1918, revised 1974)
10 minutes
fl-pno-vcl
First performance: 1974, University of California at San Diego
Score and parts: General Music, Joshua

COMMUNE (1929)
3½ minutes
Words, “A Prayer,” by Abdul Baha
Bar or MS-pno
First performance: 1942, Colorado Springs
Score: RBT (originally published 1938, Baha’i World Annual)

THREE INVOCATIONS (1939-41)
5 minutes
Words by Alice Bailey
MS-pno
First performance: 1942, Colorado Springs
Score: RBT

AFFIRMATION (1930, revised 1981)
1 minute
Words from New Thought Literature
MS or Bar-pno
First performance: 1930, Brookline, Massachusetts
Score: RBT
POEM for violin and piano (1919-21)
9 minutes
Score and parts: General Music / Joshua

DARK PASSAGE, Miniature String Quartet No. 1 (1914)
9 minutes
As yet unperformed
Score and parts: ACE

SOLITUDE, Miniature String Quartet No. 2 (1926)
10 minutes
First performance: 1951, New York, New Music Quartet
Score and parts: ACE

BARCAROLLE (1954)
3½ minutes
vln—pno
First performance: 1976, California State University, Long Beach
Score: ACE

ALLELUIA (1976)
3½ minutes
Carillon
First performance: 1976, University of California at Berkeley
Score: RBT

ADVENT, String Quartet No. 1 (1978)
21½ minutes
First performance: 1979, San Francisco, Kronos Quartet
Recording: CRI SD 418, Kronos Quartet
Score and parts: ACE

CRISIS AND OVERCOMING, String Quartet No. 2 (1979)
20 minutes
Recording: CRI SD 418, Kronos Quartet (with Advent)
Score and parts: ACE

NOSTALGIA (1979-83)
Nonet in four movements
19 minutes
3vln—vla—vc—cb—alt fl—pno—perc
Score and parts: ACE

PIANO WORKS

FOUR PENTAGRAMS (1924-26)
Each in five sections
1. The Coming Forth (10½ minutes)
2. The Enfolding (13 minutes)
3. The Release (12 minutes)
4. The Human Way (16 minutes)
Also exists in a two-piano version.
Nos. 1, 2, and 3 are revised versions of the three "cycles of tone poems for the piano" published under the title Moments (C. C. Birchard, 1930).
Columbia University: Galaxy-Schirmer

THREE PAEANS (1927)
8 minutes
Recording: CRI SD 247, William Masselos, pno.
Presser/Merion (with Granites)

GRANITES (1929)
9 minutes
In five sections
Recording: CRI SD 247, William Masselos, pno.
Presser/Merion (with Three Paean)

TETRAGRAMS (1920-28)
Each in four sections
1. The Quest (1920 — 9½ minutes)
2. Crucifixion (1926 — 9½ minutes)
3. Rebirth (1927 — 9½ minutes)
4. Adolescence (1925 — 8½ minutes)
5. Solitude (1927 — 9½ minutes)
6. Emergence (1929 — 10 minutes)
7. Tendrils (1924 — 8½ minutes)
8. Primavera (1928 — 8 minutes)
Recording Nos. 1, 2, and 3: Serenus SRS 12072, Dwight Peltzer, pno.
Recording Nos. 4 and 5: CRI SD 372, Marcia Mikulak, pno.
Score Nos. 1, 2, and 3: General Music / Joshua
Score Nos. 4 through 8: ACE

SYNTONY (1919-34, revised 1967)
Dithuramb (1919 — 10 minutes)
Eclogue (1934 — 4½ minutes)
Oracle (1934 — 7½ minutes)
Apotheosis (1925 — 5 minutes)
The musical material in Apotheosis has been used and considerably expanded in the last movement of the orchestral work, Cosmic Cycle. The composer prefers that Dithuramb be performed alone; Eclogue and Oracle may be performed together.
Recording: Orion ORS 7285, Michael Sellers, pno.
Score: ACE
Piano Works (continued)

New works composed in Palo Alto, 1976-83

TRANS_MUTATION (1976)
A tone ritual in seven movements
27 minutes
Recording: CRI SD 372, Marcia Mikulak, pno.

THEÜRGY (1976)
A tone ritual in five movements
23 minutes

THREE CANTOS (1977)
17 minutes
First performance: 1984, Richard Cameron, pno.

AUTUMN (1977)
A dramatic sequence in four movements
21 minutes

EPIC POEM (1978)
20 minutes
Recording: CP 1 13, Robert Black, pno (with Five Sunzás)

RITE OF TRANSCENDENCE (1981)
11 minutes
First performance: 1982, Copenhagen, Denmark, Yvar Mikhashoff, pno.

PROCessional (1983)
5 ½ minutes
First performance: 1984, State University of New York, Buffalo, Yvar Mikhashoff, pno.

COMMENTS ON THE PIANO WORKS

My work with the ideal of vibrancy and extended resonance is particularly emphasized in compositions for piano. I have likened the piano to a miniature orchestra and have developed the concept of "orchestral pianism." Under sensitive hands the piano can sing like string instruments, boom like brasses, thunder like gongs, or vibrate softly like crotales or small Tibetan cymbals. The seven octaves of the piano keyboard are the raw material which the hands can knead and mold to produce "tone-organisms," free from strict tonality, potentially including the resonance of the whole musical space represented by the piano's one sounding board.

This kind of music is not primarily concerned with technical skill and even less with virtuosity. The pianist and the piano are involved in one another. Touch is the most basic factor because it reveals the deeper relationship between the performer and the multi-colored spectrum of tones which he or she can arouse from the instrument. What matters is the quality of the resonance, the internal dynamism of the tones, and what they evoke within the psyche of the listener as the music flows, transmitting the potential of transformative experiences.

In several of my most recent piano compositions the dramatic element is not only emphasized, but ritualized. As in many of the Tetragrams and the fourth Pentagram, the basic scenario is the overcoming of suffering and conflict leading to either a glowing conclusion or an extremely peaceful, serene fading into transcendent silence.

Transmutation unfolds in seven stages of personal growth and entrance into a vast new realm of consciousness, to which the seventh stage leads. In Theurgy the ritual has a more objective character. The music is an appeal to superior Beings who respond dynamically to the call. The luminous presences reveal the fullness of their resonant being in the fourth act; the fifth is a paean of intense jubilation.

In Autumn the initial melodic theme is poignant incline toward the earth-depth, reflecting the autumnal return of the life-force to the roots. But out of the peace of acceptance, evoked in the last act by a pure monastic chant, the promise of Christmas arises. In Rite of Transcendence vivid flashes of symbolic lightning cut away all remaining attachments, and consciousness peacefully accepts and meets the transition. Processional evokes a solemn entrance (In-itation) into a new and transcendent realm of consciousness.
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