Phil Treloar Jeeling to Mought

Sudhana Cycle

PREFACE

When completed The Sudhana Cycle will consist of fifty-three "Works" with its inspiration, place of reference, and point of departure, being related in the Introduction below. At the time of its initiation the entire cycle was to be composed of either solos or duos. The original idea has transmogrified so as to become an open-ended concept, one I can no longer predict.

Of the "Works" either written to date or thoroughly planned, instrumentation ranges from solos and trios through string quartet to a piece for double septet and trio. Compositional form is no longer limited by predetermination in any way. Though principles of structure and compositional procedure found firmly planted in the ground of Collective Autonomy are intrinsic to composition and performance practices as made manifest in the Sudhana Cycle, these are anything but dictates or matters of necessity. On the other hand though, they may well find themselves being strictly adhered to. While Collective Autonomy has a home in the Sudhana Cycle its deploy and behavior are not foregone conclusions nor are they to be taken for granted. Myself and my previous life's work are in the service of the Sudhana Cycle and to feel free to say this is an absolute joy.

Visiting the Sudhana Cycle page on this website you'll find "Works" listed according to their Cycle No. The listings will run thus: No. 27: Avalokiteśvara - solo for alto flute; No. 24: Sinhavijurmbhita - for solo violin, and so forth. There will be an entry in the Sudhana Cycle page Contents in accord with this numerical order and by clicking on the number you choose, information specific to that particular composition will appear. As each "Work" in the cycle is completed information relevant to its composition will be found in the page Contents.

INTRODUCTION

Even a passing glance at Asian Buddhism will reveal images, in one form or another, of Avalokiteśvara. This sanskrit name is a compound consisting of Avalokita and Iśvara embracing the meaning, "He who perceives the sounds of the world", or alternatively, "He who looks upon the world with compassion." In China she is known as Kuan-yin while in Japan Avalokiteśvara goes by the name, Kannon. In her place of origin the Indian Avalokiteśvara is male and as such, is thought of as a celestial bodhisattva; one of the Great Beings of Mahayana Buddhism. In India, Tibet, Sri Lanka, and Southeast Asia, Avalokiteśvara has always assumed the male form. But whether represented as male or female, s/he is the Bodhisattva of Compassion.

Buddhism was first introduced into China via the Silk Road during the first centuries of the common era. With the process of his Chinese domestication, Avalokiteśvara not only increased enormously in popularity but by the tenth century had become feminine with her initial images appearing as the Water-moon Kuan-yin. In Chinese paintings and sculptures Kuan-yin, after the T'ang dynasty (618–907), is attended by a girl and a boy. The the girl is usually taken to be the Dragon Princess and the boy, Sudhana. The Dragon Princess is related to the story of the bodhisattva's visit to the palace of the Dragon King at the bottom of the ocean where he was able to benefit the beings there. Sudhana is the pilgrim from the *Avatamsaka Sutra*.

The Avatamsaka Sutra – Eng. 'The Flower Ornament Scripture' – is a highly exalted scripture. Its cast is broad, drawing out many aspects of Buddhist teaching and is thought to have been written by several hands throughout the period when Buddhism was first introduced into China. Its place of origin is most likely the Central Asian regions bordering Kashmir. Of the thirty-nine Books that comprise this gigantic sutra, there are only two for which the original sanskrit is extant. The sanskrit text for one of these, the Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra – Eng. 'Entering The Realm Of Reality' – was edited by Hokei IZUMI and Daisetz Teitaro SUZUKI – interestingly, the latter of these is from our hometown of Kanazawa, Japan – and it is from this, the thirty-ninth Book of the Avatamsaka Sutra, that the Sudhana Cycle draws its inspiration.

The Sudhana Cycle, when completed, will consist of fifty-three "Works". It traces the journey taken by the pilgrim, Sudhana, on his quest for ultimate truth. Sudhana is sent on his journey by Manjushri – the personification of wisdom – and during which he encounters various beings referred to as 'spiritual friends' who offer guidance to Sudhana, then send him on to the next. None of these 'spiritual friends' proffer the whole truth, nor do they seek to bind Sudhana to any dogmatic belief system. There is no apparent hierarchical structure in their succession nor does any one of them assume to possess greater knowledge than any other. They are of both female and male forms yet this, in itself, bears no particular significance. True to Buddhist experience Sudhana is witness to a long process embraced by equality and equanimity. One of the many aspects here that becomes increasingly apparent as his journey moves along is that 'every-day' events and encounters become vehicles for spiritual awakening. With Maitreya, the fifty-first of Sudhana's spiritual encounters, he realizes the way to Buddahood. He then returns to Manjushri, his first and now, fifty-second benefactor, and realizes the perpetual practice of Universal Good. Finally, Sudhana comes upon Samantabhadra, his fifty-third benefactor, in whose company he realizes the utter equality and 'allpervasiveness' of Universal Good - the ultimate enlightenment.

IN MUSIC COMPOSITION

THE SUDHANA CYCLE

It's impossible to say when and how the process of musically composing the Sudhana Cycle began. The lead-up to it is a very long story. But it's worth restating the web-page introduction: "During 1984 and guided by I'm not sure what, I emerged from TIBET HOUSE, Lodhi Road, New Delhi, India, after having spent an hour or so browsing. I'd been moved in a way I'd never before experienced and had in my hand a very small volume entitled *Atisha and Buddhism in Tibet*. Shortly thereafter I found myself, though I don't recall how, with a copy of Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey's *Tibetan Tradition of Mental Development*. Thus began my very modest, slowly trodden path into Buddhism."

Another slim though mighty volume I found myself in possession of early on, written by Geshe Rabten together with Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, published in English, 1977, and entitled, 'Advice from a Spiritual Friend', begins its Introduction: "There are many ways of transforming the mind. The method presented here is intended to turn the mind from non-virtue to virtue." Yes! Simple! Yet profound. And so replete with implications, byways and highway, that, as I continue to discover, it will take a myriad life-times to fathom. The composing out of the Sudhana Cycle is a path I tread with joy, utterly inspired by the work done by Buddhist devotees in our sentient world. For myself it is neither a byway nor a highway. Rather, the Sudhana Cycle turns out to be an inevitable path.

Why it's been that I've hung on so tenaciously to the work of Collective Autonomy has only become clear since the Sudhana Cycle began its journey. All the while I'd been thinking that Collective Autonomy, as a working teleology, was about philosophy, music practice, and other associated fields of endeavor. And significantly, as something in and by itself. But the coming into view of the Sudhana Cycle made the years of effort so clearly purposeful and beyond question, it was as if all the questions pertaining to 'purpose' had been already asked and answered. Prior to this I'd not considered with enough depth of meaning, the cast of spiritual growth; that it is not so much about my own advancement but rather that which is shared by the world. Through the reading of, and contemplation on, the Avatamsaka Sūtra the Sudhana Cycle came as a gift. It drew into single-pointed focus various aspects of my life, work, and spiritual aspirations, placing them withon the trajectory of one long, projected arc. And while stretching way beyond my own ken, the entire arc seemed, somehow, to remain in view; something that, while I could see myself as one of its constituents, I was not the cause of, nor the reason for, its being. In this sense, then, Collective Autonomy was set free from its own shackles. Or, more precisely, set free from the shackles I'd incarcerated it with. The Sudhana Cycle has given Collective Autonomy a home rather than the reverse holding true.

December 18, 2007, is the date written over the last double-bar line of Sudhana Cycle No. 27: *Avalokiteśvara* - solo for alto flute, approximately fourteen minutes in duration. As it happened, this is the first piece written in the cycle, and the first piece performed. There remained at this time, however, one restless element of the equation that required stabilizing; my own self-confidence apropos ... well, how can I put it? Possibly with another question: Do I actually have the right to be venturing this terrain? Who do I think I am, figuring my insights as being embracing enough, or significant enough, to penetrate the profundity of something

as magnificent as the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra?* Do I have the right to re-present this Buddhist scripture through my perceptions and via the medium of music composition? To proceed, any self-doubt had to be put to rest.

I embarked on a project that, in the event, subdued these self-doubts: of Paradox Once Found. My own description of this extensive investigation runs: "Conceived of as a unified, large-scale "Work", of Paradox Once Found explores transformations of textual readings and their interpretation into interdependent expressive forms rendered as written text and spontaneous improvisations for solo marimba." The relationship this bears vis-à-vis the Sudhana Cycle is clear. For the *Paradox* project I read and considered texts that were essentially of Hindu persuasion, interpreting these as best I'm able through my own Buddhist orientation. The task of Paradox was three fold: 1., to write a text as commentary on the texts I read, with this reflecting my own life-world. 2., To consider this in musical terms as these might be realized through music for solo marimba, and 3., that I'd document this music as improvisations, doing so with no structural pre-planning. The result turned out to be a 3-CD set with an accompanying essay of some ten-thousand words. Over and above this, though, in the doing I was freed of my self-doubts regarding the composing out of the Sudhana Cycle. In essence, doing this is not a questions of rights but simply something I have to do.

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