

## Circumambulating the Musical Self

### Andrew Keeling

I have always composed music in one form or another: either 'on the hoof' (i.e. improvisational in nature) in rock bands during the 1970's and 1980's; by organising musical materials in a more formal way (i.e. by codifying sounds as written musical symbols). My composing has always drawn from different musical sources such as rock music, Anglican/Pentecostal church music - not as far removed from each other as one may think - and, more recently, contemporary classical music, for want of a more appropriate term. I have always had firm musical favourites, although I tend not to make distinctions between them. For example, King Crimson, Nick Drake, T2, Holst, Tavener, LeFanu, Casken, The Cocteau Twins, Tallis, Purcell, Tippett, Sandy Denny, Peter Sinfield, Robert Fripp, Ian McDonald, Cross and Ross, Hildegard of Bingen are probably the composers/musicians I turn to most of the time. I also have literary favourites such as Wordsworth, Blake, Sylvia Plath and Lindsay Clarke and my music has often been influenced by them.

During the 1980's my creative interests were re-directed away from rock music, as well as away from the church where I'd found myself responsible for the music in worship for a number of years. I found I could no longer work within the confines of an establishment, and this coincided with further musical studies and, more specifically, with my discovery of C.G. Jung's 'Analytical Psychology'. The night-time dreams I was having, reinforced by countless synchronicities, led me into Jungian analysis where, in the metaphorical 'alembic' of the analytical 'hour', I could discuss what the unconscious might be demanding. This was a time of profound personal transformation and exploration (1988) which also brought about equally unexpected changes of musical interest and direction. The pieces I began to conceive seemed to be realisations of archetypal contents or, as Jung may have said, 'concretisations of the unconscious'. Although this may sound as though it's based on hyper-subjectivity and inflation, I discovered we are who we are and, perhaps more to the point, who we are not. I also began to see that consciousness is only the tip of the ice-berg, so to speak, and under the surface lies something altogether much larger, and what Jung has termed as the 'collective unconscious'. This is the domain of the archetypes, and the huge, hidden reservoir of all the worlds different cultures. This seems, to me, to be truly Postmodern in its assumptions.

Many of the pieces I wrote, from 1989 onwards, began to include contents which has either been dreamed or prompted by specifically Jungian interests: Quaternaries ( a symbol of wholeness); Meditatio (a dialogue with the anima); Unseen Shadows (an important archetype); Pneuma (spirit); Concerto Nekyia (night-sea journey) etc. etc. I felt the pieces should, above all, represent this archetypal world but I also sensed that the chances were that I would find myself at odds with the more collective contemporary music world. I also felt as if I wasn't responsible for this shift away from the collective, but felt that it had to be pursued at all costs - in fact I had no choice in the matter. A dream in 1997 found me getting off a train, crossing under a railway bridge, to find myself in a dwarf's grotto which he had mined revealing shining diamonds. A railway track, in a dream, often represents the rigid collective, and crossing it means going against it. The little people often represent powerful creative contents of the unconscious, and diamonds are symbols of the self. It seemed to me that the process of individuation was leading me into unanticipated areas - both musical and spiritual.

In 1998, just as I was about to complete my PhD, I received a telephone call from Robert Fripp, of King Crimson and DGM, asking me to 'come and do something for Discipline'. Early on June of this year (2000) John Mercer, founder of Riverrun Records, phoned showing interest in recent recordings of my pieces. I also came into contact with Peter Sinfield and Ian McDonald who both share similar interest to myself. I felt that these events couldn't be ignored and that, creatively speaking, something was in the process of becoming. Through the lutenist, Jacob Heringman, I began to compose more and more for early music instruments and felt as though I was entering a different time: the past but, equally, the contemporary and one well disposed to the dimension of 'Eros' (feeling or relatedness) and, therefore, something even more adequately equipped to deal with my developing interests.

It now occurs to me that my life seems to have been circumambulating that hidden stream - the dimension of the archetypes - without me being truly conscious of it from the beginning. Many of my initial musical influences are also weighed in favour of this 'hidden' dimension, which is also a recent personal discovery. It strikes me that we may dream and experience the unconscious but, perhaps, the unconscious 'dreams' us instead?

