



Program — Impermanence
December 2003

MUSICAL MEDITATION

~ *Alain Valodze*

THE ETERNAL PRESENT

~ *Native American*

~ *Alfred Lord Tennyson*

~ *Hafiz*

~ *Omar Khayyam*

~ *Abu Bakr*

MUSIC

~ *Fiona Robertson*

MOMENTS

~ *from the Holy Passion*

~ *from the Baha'i Writings*

~ *Edwin Markham*

~ *Duane Herman*

We return thanks to our mother,
the earth, which sustains us.
We return thanks to the rivers and streams,
which supply us with water.
We return thanks to all herbs,
which furnish medicines for the cure of our diseases.
We return thanks to the corn,
and to her sisters,
the beans and squashes,
which give us life.
We return thanks to the bushes and trees,
which provide us with fruit.
We return thanks to the wind,

which, moving the air,
has banished diseases.
We return thanks to the moon and stars,
which give us their light when the sun has gone.
We return thanks to our grandfather,
He'no,
that he has protected his grandchildren
from witches and reptiles,
and has given to us his rain.
We return thanks to the sun,
that he has looked upon earth with a beneficent eye.
Lastly,
we return thanks to the Great Spirit,
in whom is embodied all goodness,
and who directs all things for the good of his children.

Native American *Iroquois Prayer*

MUSIC

performed by Fiona Robertson

O SON OF MAN!

If thou lovest Me, turn away from thyself; and if thou seekest My pleasure,
regard not thine own; that thou mayest die in Me and I may eternally live in

thee.

O OFFSPRING OF DUST!

Be not content with the ease of a passing day, and deprive not thyself of everlasting rest. Barter not the garden of eternal delight for the dust-heap of a mortal world. Up from thy prison ascend unto the glorious meads above, and from thy mortal cage wing thy flight unto the paradise of the Placeless

O SON OF SPIRIT!

The bird seeketh its nest; the nightingale the charm of the rose; whilst those birds, the hearts of men, content with transient dust, have strayed far from their eternal nest, and with eyes turned toward the slough of heedlessness are bereft of the glory of the divine presence. Alas! How strange and pitiful; for a mere cupful, they have turned away from the billowing seas of the Most High, and remained far from the most effulgent horizon.

O YE PEOPLE THAT HAVE MINDS TO KNOW AND EARS TO HEAR!

The first call of the Beloved is this:

O mystic nightingale! Abide not but in the rose-garden of the spirit. O messenger of the Solomon of love! Seek thou no shelter except the Sheba of the well-beloved, and O immortal phoenix! Dwell not save on the mount of faithfulness. Therein is thy habitation, if on the wings of thy soul thou soarest to the realm of the infinite and seekest to attain thy goal.

Baha'u'llah *The Hidden Words*

MUSIC

~ *Ingo Michel and Alain Valodze*

TRUE HAPPINESS

~ *Robert Louis Stevenson*

~ *4 selections from the Baha'i Writings*

MUSIC

~ *Fiona Robertson*

TODAY

~ *from Baha'i Writings*

~ *Leo Tolstoy*

MUSICAL FINALE

~ *Fiona Robertson & Alain Valodze*

vvvvv

ONE DAY it occurred to a certain emperor that if he only knew the answer to three questions, he would never stray in any matter.

What is the best time to do each thing?

Who are the most important people to work with?

What is the most important thing to do at all times?

The Emperor issued a decree throughout his kingdom announcing that whoever could answer the questions would receive a great reward. Many who read the decree made their way to the palace at once, each person with a different answer.

In reply to the first question, one person advised that the emperor make up a thorough time schedule, consecrating every hour, day, month, and year for certain tasks and then follow the schedule to the letter. Only then could he hope to do every task at the right time.

Another person replied that it was impossible to plan in advance and that the emperor should put all vain amusements aside and remain attentive to everything in order to know what to do at what time.

Someone else insisted that, by himself, the emperor could never hope to have all the foresight and competence necessary to decide when to do each and every task and what he really needed was to set up a Council of the Wise and then to act according to their advice.

Someone else said that certain matters required immediate decision and could not wait for consultation, but if he wanted to know in advance what was going to happen he should consult magicians and soothsayers.

The responses to the second question also lacked accord.

One person said that the emperor needed to place all his trust in administrators, another urged reliance on priests and monks, while others recommended physicians.

The third question drew a similar variety of answers.

Some said science was the most important pursuit.

Others insisted on religion. Yet others claimed the most important thing was military skill.

The emperor was not pleased with any of the answers, and no reward was given.

After several nights of reflection, the emperor resolved to visit a hermit to ask him the three questions, though he knew the hermit never left the mountains and was known to receive only the poor, refusing to have anything to do with persons of wealth or power. So the emperor disguised himself as a simple peasant and ordered his attendants to wait for him at the foot of the mountain while he climbed the slope alone to seek the hermit.

Reaching the holy man's dwelling place, the emperor found the hermit digging a garden in front of his hut. When the hermit saw the stranger, he nodded his head in greeting and continued to dig. The labour was obviously hard on him. He was an old man, and each time he thrust his spade into the ground to turn the earth, he heaved heavily.

The emperor approached him and said, "I have come here to ask your help with three questions: When is the best time to do each thing? Who are the most important people to work with? What is the most important thing to do at all times?" The hermit listened attentively but only patted the emperor on the shoulder and continued digging. The emperor said, "You must be tired. Here, let me give you a hand with that." The hermit thanked him, handed the emperor the spade, and then sat down on the ground to rest.

After he had dug two rows, the emperor stopped and turned to the hermit and repeated his three questions. The hermit still did not answer

but instead stood up and pointed to the spade and said, “Why don’t you rest now? I can take over again.” But the emperor continued to dig. One hour passed, then two. Finally the sun began to set behind the mountain. The emperor put down the spade and said to the hermit, “I came here to ask if you could answer my three questions, but if you can’t give me any answer, please let me know so that I can get on my way home.”

The hermit lifted his head and asked the emperor, “Do you hear someone running over there?” The emperor turned his head. They both saw a man with a long white beard emerge from the woods. He ran wildly, pressing his hands against a bloody wound in his stomach. The man ran toward the emperor before falling unconscious to the ground, where he lay groaning. Opening the man’s clothing, the emperor and the hermit saw that the man had received a deep gash. The emperor cleaned the wound thoroughly and then used his own shirt to bandage it, but the blood completely soaked it within minutes. He rinsed the shirt out and bandaged the wound a second time and continued to do so until the flow of blood had stopped.

At last the wounded man regained consciousness and asked for a drink of water. The emperor ran down to the stream and brought back a jug of fresh water. Meanwhile, the sun had disappeared and the night air had begun to turn cold. The hermit gave the emperor a hand in carrying the man into the hut where they laid him down on the hermit’s bed. The man closed his eyes and lay quietly. The emperor was worn out from a long day of climbing the mountain and digging the garden. Leaning against the doorway, he fell asleep. When he rose, the sun had already risen over the mountain. For a moment he forgot where he was and what he had come here for. He looked over to the bed and saw the wounded man also looking around him in confusion. When he saw the emperor, he stared at him intently and then said in a faint whisper, “Please forgive me.”

“But what have you done that I should forgive you?” the emperor asked.

“You do not know me, your majesty, but I know you. I was your sworn enemy, and I had vowed to take vengeance on you, for during the last war you killed my brother and seized my property. When I learned that you were coming alone to the mountain to meet the hermit, I resolved to surprise you on your way back and kill you. But after waiting a long time there was still no sign of you, and so I left my ambush in order to seek you out. But instead of finding you, I came across your attendants, who recognized me, giving me this wound. Luckily, I escaped and ran here. If I hadn’t met you I would surely be dead by now. I had intended to kill

you, but instead you saved my life! I am ashamed and grateful beyond words. If I live, I vow to be your servant for the rest of my life, and I will bid my children and grandchildren to do the same. Please grant me your forgiveness.”

The emperor was overjoyed to see that he was so easily reconciled with a former enemy. He not only forgave the man but promised to return all the man’s property and to send his own physician and servants to wait on the man until he was completely healed. After ordering his attendants to take the man home, the emperor returned to see the hermit. Before returning to the palace the emperor wanted to repeat his three questions one last time. He found the hermit sowing seeds in the earth they had dug the day before.

The hermit stood up and looked at the emperor. “But your questions have already been answered.”

“How’s that?” the emperor asked, puzzled.

“Yesterday, if you had not taken pity on my age and given me a hand with digging these beds, you would have been attacked by that man on your way home. Then you would have deeply regretted not staying with me. Therefore the most important time was the time you were digging the beds, the most important person was myself, and the most important pursuit was to help me. Later, when the wounded man ran up here, the most important time was the time you spent dressing his wound, for if you had not cared for him he would have died and you would have lost the chance to be reconciled with him. Likewise, he was the most important person, and the most important pursuit was taking care of his wound. Remember that there is only one important time and that is Now. The present moment is the only time over which we have dominion. The most important person is always the person with whom you are, who is right before you, for who knows if you will have dealings with any other person in the future. The most important pursuit is making that person, the one standing at your side, happy, for that alone is the pursuit of life.”

Leo Tolstoy

The Eternal Present

That Day which you fear as being the end of all things is the birthday of your eternity.

Seneca, Letters to Lucilius

MUSIC

performed by Alain Valodze

MUSIC

performed by Fiona Robertson

I am a part of all that I have met;
yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
gleams that untravelled world, whose
margin fades
for ever and for ever when I Move.

Alfred Lord Tennyson

When the musky moon takes the garment off the body,
There is not an equal to that moon in pure fair beauty;
One can see that heart in the breast for
it is transparent,
Like the hard stone in crystal water,
it is easy to see.

Hafiz

Ah, Love! Could thou and I with Fate conspire
to grasp this sorry scheme of things entire,
would not we shatter it to bits – and then
re-mould it nearer to the heart's desire?

Ah, Moon of my Delight who knowest no wane,
the Moon of Heav'n is rising once again:
how oft hereafter rising shall she look
through this same Garden after me – in vain!

Omar Khayyam

I THANK YOU, Lord for knowing me better than I know myself, and
for letting me know myself better than others know me. Make me, I
pray to You, better than they suppose, and forgive me for what they
do not know.

Islam: *Abu Bakr*

Moments

We do not remember days, we remember moments.

Casare Paves

The Stream of Time

In the stream of time,
everything is delivered –

the winnowing, the peril,
means and wherewithal –

cusp, apex, swirl and
 circus – final destinations

 offer themselves, every
 vestige charters a spot –

 locks and channels –
 wayfaring and waylaid –

 we are in for road time
 in this life, in the mind,

 or between cities where
 we consume the culture

 that the ages have left
 us as keepers – we have

 the honours to do for the rest
 of time, and today is its gate –

The Holy Passion, p.240

This is the Day in which God's most excellent favours have been poured out upon men, the Day in which His most mighty grace hath been infused into all created things. It is incumbent upon all the peoples of the world to reconcile their differences, and, with perfect unity and peace, abide beneath the shadow of the Tree of His care and loving-kindness. It behoveth them to cleave to whatsoever will, in this Day, be conducive to the exaltation of their stations, and to the promotion of their best interests. Happy are those whom the all-glorious Pen was moved to remember, and blessed are those men whose names, by virtue of our inscrutable decree, We have preferred to conceal.

Beseech ye the one true God to grant that all men may be graciously assisted to fulfil that which is acceptable in Our sight. Soon will the present-day order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead. Verily, thy Lord speaketh the truth, and is the Knower of things unseen.

Baha'u'llah, *From the Baha'i Writings*

We men of Earth have here the stuff
Of Paradise – we have enough!
We need no other stones to build
The stairs into the unfulfilled –
No other ivory for the doors –
No other marble for the floors –
No other cedar for the beams
And dome of man's immortal dreams.
Here on the paths of every day –
Here on the common human way
Is all the stuff the gods would take
To build a Heaven, to mould and make
New Edens, Ours the stuff sublime
To build eternity in time!

Edwin Markham, *Earth Is Enough*

POET AS HOUSE BUILDER

How does a poet build a house?
a mystic?
a seeker of visions?
a seer of things unseen?

With great concentration –
and not a little effort.

First,
one must grasp the essence of the building.

Then,
one must accept its potential and being.

And,
one must face its spiritual reality.

After all this,
one picks up the hammer slowly,
and brings forth:
the essence perceived . . .
the potential conceived . . .
the reality received . . .

The house goes forward –
step by step,
piece by piece,

plan by plan.

And,
in its own time,
the house is finished.

Duane Herman,

MUSIC

performed by
Ingo Michel & Alain Valodze

True Happiness

I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I do know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve.

Albert Schweitzer

HELP US to look back on the long way that Thou hast brought us, on the long days in which we have been served not according to our deserts but our desires; on the pit and the miry clay, the blackness of despair, the horror of misconduct, from which our feet have been plucked out.

For our sins forgiven or prevented, for our shame unpublished, we bless and thank Thee, O God. Help us yet again and ever. So order events, so strengthen our frailty, as that day by day we shall come before Thee with honour. In their weakness and fear, the vessels of thy handiwork so pray to Thee, so praise Thee.

Robert Louis Stevenson

True Happiness

So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.

Mathew 6:14

MUSICAL FINALE

performed by
Fiona Robertson
&
Alain Valodze

Oh, trust in God! For his Bounty is everlasting, and in His Blessing, for they are superb. Oh! Put your faith in the Almighty, for He faileth not and His goodness endureth for ever! His sun giveth Light continually, and the Clouds of His Mercy are full of the Waters of Compassion with which He waters the hearts of all who trust in Him. His refreshing Breeze ever carries healing in its wings to the parched souls of men.

'Abdu'l-Baha, from the Baha'i Writings