

Music of Dane Rudhyar

Marcia Mikulak, piano

Tetragram No.4 (Adolescence)

Tetragram No.5 (Solitude)

Transmutation

In a program note written in 1976, **Dane Rudhyar** succinctly states his compositional philosophy in these terms: “My music is essentially the exteriorization of inner experiences and states of consciousness and feelings. It is subjective rather than the development of objective and intellectually analyzable patterns conditioned by our culture. My music does not stress what is technically called the ‘development’ of themes or formally repetitive patterns of notes. Its principle of organization is derived from the flow of life itself rather from traditional forms and patterns dictated either by the old tonality or by Schoenberg’s ‘twelve-tone’ system of composition. The music seeks to induce in the hearer psychic processes of change, and at times to break down emotional crystallizations. I have spoken of it as a ‘music of speech’ to distinguish it from most of our Western music whose rhythmic patterns are essentially physical, because rooted in dance-forms. It is a speech whose components are not words with an intellectual or descriptive meaning, but tones whose quality is non-rational, yet which can evoke a higher realm of meaning and intent. The hearer should concentrate on the tones themselves as they flow and merge into each other. The holistic resonance of the piano tones should be allowed to vibrate within one’s consciousness and to stimulate a deeper experience of inner living and psychic transformation.”

Born in Paris March 23, 1895, Rudhyar came to music early, beginning to play the piano at age seven and to compose at seventeen. A year later, three short piano pieces were published by Durand, as well as the second part of his book *Claude Debussy and the Cycle of Musical Civilization*. He rapidly became involved in avant-garde artistic circles in Paris (he was in the audience that historic night in 1913 when Stravinsky’s *Le sacre du printemps* was premiered), but departed for New York in 1916. A performance of several of his short orchestral works was conducted by Pierre Monteux at the old Metropolitan Opera House on the night of April 4, 1917 (two days before the United States’ entry into World War I)—perhaps the first public performance of dissonant, polytonal music in America. Rudhyar came to Los Angeles in 1920, became an American citizen in 1926, and began a lifelong involvement with Oriental philosophy, theosophy, and astrology. He has written numerous books and articles on the latter subject, as well as several volumes of verse; visionary, almost science-fiction-like novels; and completed over forty-five paintings and drawings. He has continued to compose into this, his eighty-third, year.

The composer has provided the following comments about the works on this album:

“*Adolescence* and *Solitude* are respectively the fourth and fifth in the series of nine *Tetragrams*, each *Tetragram* being composed of four short sections needing no subtitles. The sixth *Tetragram*, *Emergence*, completes this second group of three which has an individual character of its own— just as the first group of three formed a definite sequence indicated by the titles: *The Quest*, *Crucifixion*, *Rebirth*.

“*Adolescence* should evoke the kind of feeling, no longer often related to adolescence in our American society, which might be associated with the Pre-Raphaelite painters and writers of the late nineteenth century—a pure, spontaneous longing for the ideal and mysterious dream-beloved, a longing mixed with insecurity and fear; yet (in the fourth movement) bursting out eagerly, as a flower in early spring.

“*Solitude* follows: the dark emptiness after the futile attempt at materializing the ideal—the long, empty hours filled with strange dreams. Yet the yearning remains, the insatiable aspiration.

“These *Tetragrams* were composed in Hollywood, California, in 1924 and 1927.

“*Transmutation*: A tone ritual in seven movements was composed in Palo Alto, California, during the early summer of 1976, under a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. It is meant to evoke some of the main phases of a process of inner, psychic, and emotional transformation. This process inevitably has a dramatic character, as it involves the overcoming of the ego and of the ghosts of the personal past. It almost never begins except out of some kind of tragic realization of what it is that blocks the way to self-sublimation, and of the decision to overcome the past (first section). The decision made, life presents mirages and tries to charm the seeker away from the process ahead. The third section tells of dramatic encounters, of the attempt to cut away the still much cherished attachment. In the fourth section, the aspirant (or ‘disciple’) sees his inner life stirred by deeper longings, charmed by dreams, and poignantly hurt by their illusory nature. In the fifth section, he or she faces the impersonal, unyielding forces of karma and the devastating power of that which his or her will to overcome has aroused. Once the ego has been battered, peace can come—the sixth section. Compassionate love speaks within. The light descends, touching the very depth of the psyche. The seventh movement resonates with the welcome into the realm of gentle power and peace. A deep melody intones words of acceptance, and the light rises within. Then all is peace, peace profound.”

Born in North Carolina in 1948, **Marcia Mikulak** is the recipient of degrees from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and Mills College in Oakland, California. She has received various scholarships and awards throughout her training, including the Biggerstaff Piano Award at Mills College. Although she has studied under several teachers, Bernhard Abramowitsch and Thomas La Ratta have been her principal instructors. Ms. Mikulak has played many concerts and radio broadcasts in the U.S. and is devoted to the performance of twentieth-century music as well as to the performance of classical and romantic music. She recently toured New Mexico and Colorado performing Rudhyar’s works and her own *Improvisation*. She has been involved in avant-garde music and theater for several years and in 1972 helped establish Hysteresis, a women’s creative arts group, which is devoted to the creation and performance of women’s music. She has also been involved in composition and improvisation for dance at Mills College, the University of California at Berkeley, Margaret Jenkins Dance Company, and others. She has taught music and piano at the College of Notre Dame in Belmont, California. Ms. Mikulak has given several premiere performances including the world premieres of Rudhyar’s *The Warrior* for piano and orchestra and *Transmutation*, which was written for her by the composer in 1976.

Notes by David Cloud, Music Director, KPFF-FM, Los Angeles

This recording was made possible by the generosity of Betty Freeman and David Cloud.

Musical Production: David Cloud

Recording: Ronald Streicher, Los Angeles, March 1977

THIS IS A COMPOSER-SUPERVISED RECORDING

(Original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)