

The Music that Dreamt Me Today

Maurice Shaw

Today when I woke up there was music in my head. Did it have any meaning? Or was it just lost chords echoing in my mind, the mind of a one-time musician who sometimes longs to return to simpler days?

I left school with a degree in music. I taught music for a number of years, and also performed and wrote music. Then changes happened in my life, and I took off on another career path. But I have always carried with me a love, appreciation and fascination with music. Of more recent times I have studied process work, and in this article I try and combine two loves that I have.

So often during a day, I find myself humming a tune. Sometimes I intentionally think of a piece of music that I like, but most of the time I just find music running through my head without any conscious effort on my part.

Trusting in my process work training that what is happening has meaning, I set out to track and unfold some of these songs. As I started thinking about this project, I was surprised at how many songs run through my head during the course of a day. Then came the fun part of learning more about myself from these songs. Some were songs with words, some a whole song, others just a phrase. Others were instrumental pieces. Some I knew, while others were lost somewhere in my past with meaning and associations that eluded me for the moment.

One of the things that was common to all of these pieces is that they just happened. I did

not consciously say to myself, "Self, I'll just go ahead and sing this little old song here." On every occasion the music was happening in me before I became aware of it. The music was not something I set out to do, not something I was really identified with, but rather something that crept up on me from somewhere inside and surprised me with its presence. Some of the questions I started with were: What was its meaning, where did it come from, and what was the vehicle that carried it to consciousness?

The first song popped up when I was driving down to the Oregon Coast with a friend and started singing in my head these words from "Joseph and His Technicolor Dreamcoat:"

*I close my eyes,
Drew back the curtain, oh, oh,
Of what I knew for certain,
Any dream will do
I close my eyes,
Drew back the curtain, oh, oh,
Of what I knew for certain,
Any dream will do.
A crash of drums,
A flash of light,
Colors...
I don't want to...
Any dream will do.¹*

Why did this slip into my mind at this particular time? My friend and I had been talking about someone who had told part of a dream to three different people, and how they

know that she is having a difficult time herself right now.”

“Well, now that you are aware of it, what are you going to do?”

“Talk to her about it. Tell her what I am feeling. I also need to be more supportive. Maybe there is not much that I can do except ‘hold affection higher than any star.’”

The next song on the album was “Beauty and the Beast.” This title set me off on a related track. When relationship difficulties start to constellate, I begin to feel like a beast. I watch as old relationship material arises and begins to attack the part of me that wants to relate and have intimacy. All the hurts and pains and rejections swirl around and produce a mood as well as inaction. Past hurts from as far back as primary school, situations with teachers as well as other students, the hurts and pains and shaming, begin to surface and relive in me. Each new memory triggers other memories. These memories continue to more recent times with the most painful relationship that I have ever experienced, when my partner walked out, bringing the hurt and pain to a crescendo.

This experience was fascinating, because for the first time I had a metaposition, a position outside myself that was able to watch in detail as the constellation formed and grew and rendered part of me inoperable. For the first time I felt that I had a choice in relationships and could bring the emotional issue up with my friend. I went ahead and did that. It turned out that while I was imagining that she was drifting away, she was thinking that I was getting more and more distant. We talked about this, as well as our fears about the changes that we saw in each other, and how this would require us to work on our relationship. We started that process right there and then.

The next song I noticed popped up as I was walking to the final meeting of a workshop, wondering “Will I get to work in the middle?” Part of me was apprehensive since I did not trust some of the people in the group and

didn’t know if I wanted to be that vulnerable with everyone. I noticed that I was singing the song “Teddy Bear’s Picnic.”

*When you go down in the woods today,
You’d better not go alone.*

My fear was echoed in the words of the song, “You’d better not go alone.” As I headed “into the woods” I felt extremely sensitive and was looking for the reason why “I’d better not go alone.” I was relieved when someone else got to work in the center. The process was difficult and I was glad I didn’t “go alone.”

The music from Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Scheherazade*, Suite Symphonique, Op. 35³ (I. The Sea & Sinbad’s Ship, a theme also used in IV. The Festival at Baghdad) had been going around and around in my head for most of the morning. There were no words to help me go deeper into the question: “Why this piece of music and why at this particular time?” I found the music in my CD collection and put it on. I noticed that my body wanted to move with the music. I started moving in the room, turning slowly with my head thrown back. It didn’t feel right, it felt too enclosed, too hemmed in. I went out into the back yard. I could still hear the music clearly and continued with the movement. It felt better out in the open air. I got giddy and fell over. As I was lying there, I got an image of the soil coming over me like a wave. The feeling was one of welcome, and of being lifted up. The land was pleased to have me home. (This was two days after I arrived home from the United States.) I stayed lying on the ground listening to the music and felt in my heart the land that I know so very intimately, and that I love and that loves me. I felt connected again and that I was home.

At one point, I had been thinking about some therapy that I had done, and I noticed that the theme music from the film *The Mission*⁴ was playing over and over in my head. As I listened to the music, I noticed a conflict between two different parts. The opening theme was white, western, church music with a choir and orchestra backing. After a few bars, another beat begins to emerge, with different instruments and choral singing, more native, South American style music. These two themes intermingle, at times overtaking one another, until finally, the native South American music takes the leading role.

No wonder I had been singing this music over and over in my head. It clearly illustrated where I was at the moment. My true nature was fighting to come out and be heard against the backdrop of western consensus reality that I live in. I was feeling that at last my real instruments, rhythms and tunes were beginning to make themselves heard. What I hear as western consensus reality was beginning to recede into the background and, although it was still audible, other rhythms and melodies were beginning to come through. While I was relieved to be my true self in our society, the fact that I was singing this music from *The Mission* meant that there was a challenge to sing my tune against the consensus reality backdrop.

When I let my mind roam, it turns to relationships. I thought next of a relationship that has been on my mind because I felt used and kept at arm's length by this person. My need to speak up and be heard struggles against the backdrop of my upbringing of being nice, not hurting others, and turning the other cheek. Yet my dreaming body was singing music that encouraged me to sing my song and speak of the hurt, even against the backdrop of the consensus reality of my upbringing.

I sometimes think that we just have one relationship in our lives. We focus our attention on different people, but it is the same relationship that we are having. We started having it way back before we were born, maybe even before conception. That relationship is the one that

we have with ourselves, each part of the rich tapestry that we have in our internal lives. It is also in our relationship with our parents, friends and partner(s). It is also the same relationship we have to nature and the world around us.

One day I found myself singing a short melody, which at first I didn't recognize. I tracked it down and it turned out to be a few bars from the fourth movement of Dvorak's Symphony No. 9, "From the New World."⁵

There are two parts. The high part (A) is played by a clarinet, with a lower answering part (B) played by cellos. I worked for a long time on this beautiful and haunting piece of music and felt that I wasn't getting anywhere. At that point, I decided to include this example because not every piece of detective work solves the riddle. As my writing on this article progressed, I worked more on this musical fragment, and felt that it tapped into a deep part of myself. I came to see that top part as the part of me that wants to go beyond this world, that is drawn beyond. The bottom part is the part that wants to stay here, and has "feet on the ground."

This reminds me of my earliest childhood memory, in which I am in my cot on the back verandah in the late afternoon. The sun is shining down the hallway. The rays pick up the dust particles that seem to be dancing in delight. My parents are sitting down and having a cool drink. I remember wanting to go to the sun and being incredibly drawn to it. I felt a deep longing, and then, looking at Mum and Dad and feeling the warmth of their love, I felt equally drawn to them.

This music brings out the incredible relationship between these two parts—the part that feels drawn to the beyond and the next life, and the part that wants to stay here and live this moment. I listen to this musical fragment time and time again. It is beautiful and feels as though it was written especially for me. These few bars strike such a deep note in me. I am grateful for the music that dreamt me today.