

LINDA WATERFALL

THAT ART THOU:

SONGS FROM THE VEDAS



UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON CHAMBER SINGERS
Geoffrey Boers, conductor

THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON CHAMBER SINGERS

GEOFFREY BOERS, CONDUCTOR

Soprano: Mary Adams, Kristin Bush, Ariana Phillips, Johanna Grimsson, Laura Leith, Judy Lennard, Jeannette Mitchell, Kelly O'Halloran, Marissa Rebadulla-Ramos, Suzanne Hanson, Maggie Godwin, Larissa Stucki

Alto: Maxine Adams, Jihay Cho, Pat Collins, Vanessa Gerads, Lindsay Enbysk, Kelly Esvelt, Nathalie Hamel, Sarena Hyman, April Jacobson, Helen Markopoulos, Jana Pearsall, Hannah Won

Tenor: Mark Adrian, David Baker, Gary Cannon*, Gary Panek, Yoon Cho, Ben French, Sunghee Kim, Markdavin Obenza*, Brandon Tuohy, Mark Walters, Patrick Johnson
*Soloists

Bass: David Akers, Henrik Hagerstrom, Patrick Hawkins, Paul Kramer, Ron Mallory, Jens Nedrud, Seung-Hyun Oh, Bill Owen, Jose Rubio, Heath Thompson

Accompaniment:

Pianist – Scott Warrender
Timpanist – Matt Drumm
Percussionist – Will Dowd

Watercolors by: Linda Waterfall
Cover Painting: "High Bridge" – September 2001

Special thanks to Bob Searle

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ABOUT THE TEXT

The text for "That Art Thou" draws from two Vedic sources, the Rig Veda and the Upanishads. The Vedas contain the earliest collections of Hindu sacred text, and are considered by Hindus to be "sruti", meaning utterances which are "heard", intuited directly from the divine source, or as translators Shearer and Russell put it, "...cognised from an enlightened state...., records of perceptions not available to normal consciousness."

The oldest of the Vedas is the Rig Veda, the written version of which is dated at approximately 1400-1200 BCE, while the orally transmitted version from which it developed is thought to be much older. As property of the Brahmin priest caste, Rig Veda hymns are involved with the many sacrifices and rituals that were practiced in those times.

The Upanishads, while considered to be of the Vedas, are also referred to as the Vedanta, meaning the 'summing up' or the 'end of the Veda'. The earliest of these, called "aranyakas", meaning "forest books", were the beginning of a tradition of seers who, disillusioned with ritual and sacrifice, withdrew to forests and caves to meditate and seek the Infinite on their own independent terms.

CREATION HYMN

(This hymn is from the Rig Veda. I worked from the Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty translation, paraphrasing some sections, and quoting some lines directly. The time signature shifts between 7/8, 8/8, and 9/8, with 'cyclical' forms growing naturally out of the subject matter. I hear Steve Reich's influence in this movement.)

*There was neither non-being nor being
There was neither the realm of space nor sky
There was no dying, nor immortality
There was no sign distinguishing day or night
Darkness was hidden by darkness in the beginning
Darkness was hidden by darkness
That One breathed, windless, by its own impulse*

One breathed

*Desire came upon that One, in the beginning,
That was the first seed of mind
Poets seeking in their hearts with wisdom
Found the bond of existence with non-existence
Impulse below, give forth above
The Life Force that arose through heat*

*Who really knows? Who will proclaim it?
Whence was it made? Whence this creation?
Perhaps formed Itself, perhaps did not form Itself
The One who looks down from highest heaven
That One knows, or perhaps knows not
One breathed*

THE TWO FULL OF BUTTER

(This hymn is also from the Rig Veda; I used the O'Flaherty translation as a source, with the same approach of combining paraphrases and direct quotes to arrive at a text that would lend itself to song. The use of butter is prominent in many ancient Hindu rituals, as in the butter lamps of the arati ritual and the pouring of butter onto the yagya fire. The scent of burning butter delivers a powerful subliminal message. When I found this hymn, I was looking for a counterbalance to the cerebral spirituality present elsewhere in the texts. The innocent, open response to the sensual world is depicted here with a touchingly childlike honesty. The rhythm was inspired by the performance of a Middle Eastern belly dancer.)

*The two full of butter, broad and wide,
Milked of honey, beautifully attired
Sky and earth propped apart
Ageless, rich in seed
Tireless, boundless, unaging,
Rich in streams, full of milk
Pour out on us seed
Nourish us*

*Beautiful enclosed in
Beautiful engorged on
Beautiful and grown on
Beautiful in butter*

*Sky and earth stream with honey
Beautiful in butter, milked of honey;
Honey for their vow, Soak us with honey
Sky and earth that stream honey for their vow
Soak us*

*Sky and earth, all knowing,
Father, Mother, nourish us
Swell up and nourish us
Thrust toward us victory and wealth
(Beautiful and engorged in...)
Swell up, nourish us
Pour out on us seed*

FIRESTICK

(Firestick comes from the Svetasvatara Upanishad, one of the most recent, dating from probably only a century or two BCE. The text is sung both in English and the original Sanskrit; the English words are directly quoted from Juan Mascaro's translation. The metaphor of the twirling firestick aptly describes how the mind returns again and again to repetition of the mantra in the process of becoming quiet. The vocalisations attempt to recreate the "glowing" and "waving" of the aura in a state of bliss. In terms of influence, I hear both medieval chant and Stevie Wonder.)

*Even as fire is not seen in wood
And yet by power, it comes to light as fire
So Brahman in the Universe
And in the soul is revealed by the power of Om.*

*The soul is the wood below that can be fire
Om is the twirling friction-rod above
Prayer is the power that makes Om turn around
And then the mystery of God comes to light.*

*Vahneryatha yonigatasya murtirna drsyate naiva ca
linganasah
Sa bhuya evendhanayonighrastadvobhayam vai
pranavena dehe
Svadehamaranim krtva pranavam cottaranim
Dhyananirmathanabhyasaddevam panyemigudhavat*

ARROW

(Arrow is also from one of the later Upanishads, the Mundaka. This passage contains both paraphrases and direct quotes from the Alistair Shearer/Peter Russell translation. This is a devotional hymn, in the Hindu sense of the word devotion, or "bhakti", meaning intense emotional attachment to God, who is here named as "Brahman".)

*At the core of All stirs the hidden pulse of Brahman
The heart of all that moves, or blinks, or breathes
That which is both non-Being and Being
The goal of all desiring,
Beyond all understanding,
Know that to be the essence of life.*

*Shining through all beings, shining through all beings
Truly, Brahman is Life Itself
Knowing it the wise can talk of nothing else*

*Smaller than smallest, farther than farthest
Nearer than nearest, beyond conception
Eyes cannot see it,
No words describe it, no sense perceive it
The wise know it resting deep within*

*Take the great Upanishad as your bow
Place upon it the arrow of the mind
Draw it back with a will made strong*

*By contemplation of the Eternal
And let it fly from the bow.*

*Meditate with the mantra as your bow
Consciousness the arrow, Brahman still the target
Free from distractions of the senses take aim
Take aim, release the mind and let it fly with Brahman
And be Oned with it
As the arrow is Oned with its target.*

THAT ART THOU, SVETAKETU

(This father and son story is from the Chandogya Upanishad, one of the earliest, approximately 700 BCE. The Shearer/Russell translation is the source for this text, with some paraphrasing and some direct quotes. This beautiful series of metaphors with its repeated refrain line falls naturally into the verse-chorus song form. A lot of musical influences in this movement—I think of it as a pop song that is “all dressed up.”)

*Once there lived a Brahmin boy named Svetaketu,
son of Aruna.*

*He was sent forth by his father to learn the Vedas,
the sacred teaching*

After some years, his son returning,

Proud of his knowledge, vain of his learning

His father said, “You feel that you are wise now,

But did you ask for that greater knowledge?

*Did you ask for that greater knowledge by which one
hears the unheard,*

And sees the unseen, and knows the unknown,

Did you ask for that, Svetaketu?”

“Please, Sir, tell me more of this teaching.”

“Very well, my son.

When the bees collect the nectar from many flowers,

And blend them into honey,

*Each flower’s nectar no longer thinks ‘I am from
this flower’*

‘I am from that flower’

In that same way, my son, all creatures,

when they die and merge with Being

Whether lion or wolf or fly or tiger,

they lose awareness of what they once were

*And that Being, that finest essence, which is the
source of life*

*The changeless and true, and the Self of All,
That Art Thou, Svetaketu.”*

“Please, Sir, tell me more of this teaching.”

“Very well, my son.

*Rivers flow from East or West, from the ocean, and
return there.*

When they return, they no longer think,

‘I am this river’, ‘I am that river’.

In the same way, all earthly creatures

Rejoin that radiant cosmic being,

And when they merge, they do not remember

‘I am this creature’, ‘I am that creature’.

*And that Being, that finest essence, which is the
source of life*

The changeless and true, the changeless and true....”

Changeless, Source of Life

Ageless, Self of All

Changeless, beyond all understanding

Boundless, boundless

Oneness

“Go pick a fig from yonder banyan,

Now split it open, what do you see?”

“I see many tiny, tiny seeds sir.”

“Now split one open, what do you see?”

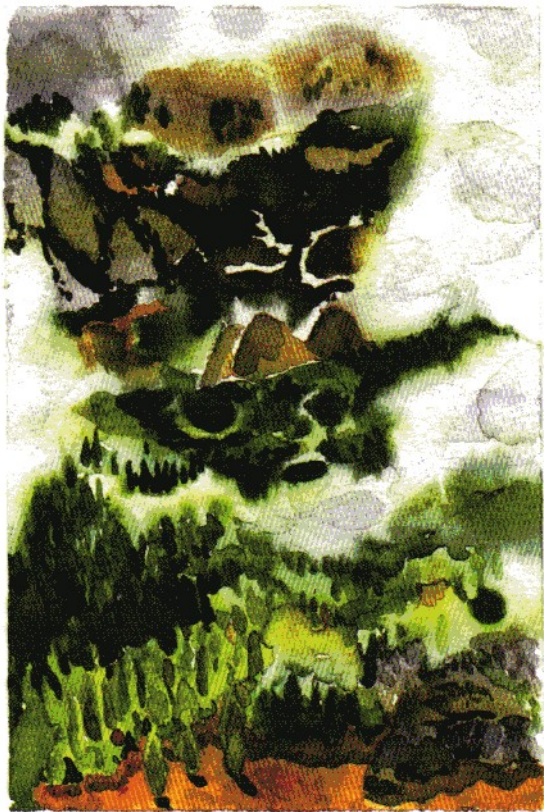
“Inside this tiny seed, sir, I see nothing”

Then his father smiled and said,

*“The essence of the seed appears to you as nothing,
Yet from that nothing this mighty tree has risen.*

*And that Being, that finest essence, which is the
source of life*

*The changeless and true, and the Self of All,
That Art Thou, Svetaketu.”*



Peaks and Clouds, Chelan – September, 1997



Greywolf River – June, 1995



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- 1 Creation Hymn – 7:57
- 2 The Two Full of Butter – 7:06
- 3 Firestick – 7:18
- 4 Arrow – 5:20
- 5 That Art Thou, Svetaketu – 6:01

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