

SUMMER 2024

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Collaboration

JOURNAL OF THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

The background is a vibrant, abstract watercolor composition. It features a mix of warm colors like orange, red, and pink on the left, transitioning into cooler tones of blue and green on the right. Overlaid on this are delicate, white musical notes and a treble clef, suggesting a connection between music and consciousness. The overall texture is soft and ethereal, with various circular and linear patterns that create a sense of movement and depth.

Music and Consciousness

If you want art to be the true and highest art, it must be the expression of a divine world brought down into this material world. All true artists have some feeling of this kind, some sense that they are the intermediaries between a higher world and this physical existence. If you consider it in this light, Art is not very different from yoga.

—The Mother, *Questions and Answers 1929–1931*,
Collected Works of the Mother, vol. 3, p. 105



Image: finleywilliamson / Pixabay

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NADYA ROSE has been deeply moved by beauty and how visual imagery can give voice to inexpressible feelings. She studied fine art and English at the University of California Berkeley and has worked in many styles and mediums. She also studied music, which has been a constant accompaniment to her painting process. Poetry came in 1991 when, unable to paint due to a hand injury, she sought language to convey her inner experience of the luminous Presence streaming into life.

SARA TEASDALE (1884–1933) was an American lyric poet who won a Pulitzer Prize for her 1917 poetry collection *Love Songs*. In addition to "Stars," her poems "The New Moon" and "Only in Sleep" were set as choral pieces by Eriks Esenvalds. Her poem "There Will Be Rest" has been set to music under multiple titles by different composers.



EDITORIAL

Music Brings Us Near to the Infinite

IT MAY BE SAID that music is as old as humanity itself. For millennia and across all cultures, music has been used to experience beauty and joy as a form of art, to enhance celebration and ritual, and to put us in touch with the Divine. Music brings us near to the infinite and to the essence of things. It can express what is verbally inexpressible, and if we listen closely and attentively, music can be a method of inner opening to the Divine. Music can uplift the emotions, be used in healing, cultivate suppleness on all levels of consciousness, and deepen our experience of human unity.

Based on these propositions, we sent out a call for submissions that was widely and enthusiastically received. Many authors gave us a wealth of material that covered a wide range of topics, including music as an aid to spiritual practice, the transformative power of music, sound consciousness, sonic ecology, deeper ways of listening, and more!

We start out with some insights from the Mother on music and consciousness. Music, she says, has always been associated with an inner life. Its essential quality depends on the origin of the inspiration, whether it be, e.g., from the higher vital (life energy and emotions), the psychic being (soul), or the spiritual summits. But the value of its execution depends on the vital strength that expresses it.

A number of our feature essays have focused on the influence of Indian music on Western music and culture. In his essay "The Wide-Ranging Impact of Maestro Shankar," Philip Goldberg traces the influence of Shankar on key musicians such as Yehudi Menuhin, Philip Glass, and John Coltrane, and subsequently through their influence on numerous other musicians. However, in Goldberg's words, "For sheer planetary impact, those friendships were dwarfed by the seismic eruption that followed the meeting of Shankar and George Harrison."

The adventure with George Harrison continues with Jeffery Long's "To Touch Your Lotus Feet': George Harrison and My Spiritual Journey." This essay explores the

parallels between the author's own spiritual development as a Westerner drawn to Hinduism and that of George Harrison as a seeker of truth. Long follows the contours of George Harrison's spiritual development, from his early experience with LSD, meeting Ravi Shankar, and reading books about Indian spirituality to his journey to Rishikesh in 1968 to meet Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, culminating in an enduring commitment to a spiritual life.

We follow with an in-depth look at the impact of Indian music and spirituality on the Beatles through Michael Miovic's article, "The Beatles: Vibhutis of Popular Culture." Miovic uses an Integral Yoga framework to interpret the role of the Beatles in the emerging new consciousness. For him, "the Beatles represented the first dawning of the psychic inspiration in the collective consciousness of Western popular culture under the impress of the emerging supramental manifestation." He traces the evolution of the Beatles' music from its early youthful vitality to the mentally more mature development after the mid-1960s, then to their spiritually inspired post-Beatles work in the 1970s and beyond. George Harrison's last album, he says, sets a "new high-water mark for Western popular music in terms of spiritual substance."

Finally, in "On the Descent of a New Music," Richard Eggenberger (Narad) shares his musical journey from childhood and young adulthood days to studying Eastern music in India. Eventually he finds the Mother and begins his search for the New Music, "through which one will experience the mantric force that calls into manifestation the supernal bliss."

The next set of articles convey the experiential and practice-oriented dimensions of music. "Interstates of Consciousness, Integral Yoga, and the Grateful Dead" by Lynda Lester is a wonderful interweaving of her spiritual experiences in connection with the music of the Grateful Dead. She sees their quest for transcendence as "part of

a larger yoga of nature that is leading humanity toward a subjective and spiritual age foreseen by Sri Aurobindo.”

Next, Joseh Garcia explores the transformative power of music—in part by sharing some of the findings from his research on music as a vehicle for self-transformation, and also through his own personal experiences as a composer. He discovered that songs can lead to experiences such as self-knowledge, self-acceptance, emotional change, empowerment, catharsis, and spiritual growth.

In “Nada Yoga: Deep Listening, Resonance, and Sound Consciousness,” Aurelio, a long-time resident of Auroville and founder and creative director of Svaram Sound Experience, takes us through an experiential journey of the sonic ecology of Auroville and deep listening through the practice of nada yoga, by recognizing “the patterns, interactions, and intricate connectivity of the whole body-mind phenomena.”

“AUM Tat Sat: All That Is Truth” by Arnab Chowdhury, founder of Know Your Rhythm, describes a collaborative training program “that helps participants discover their own sense of rhythm in life and work, raising well-being, wellness, empathy, teamwork, leadership” through immersive practices such as yoga, meditation, movement, and music.

“Sunlight Ragas” is a series of paintings by Nadya Rose that are the product of her experience of listening to ragas while painting, expressing the nuanced feeling and slow sensuous quality evoked by the music.

Lastly in our experiential series, Jonathan Kay invites us to experience ourselves as embodied sound and modes of melodies and rhythm as the inherent musicality of life unfolds. As such, sounds can be seen as nourishment, melodies as love, and songs as archetypal wisdom figures.

The “Reflections” section begins with an essay by Seabury Gould that describes the connection between spirituality and music, drawing on quotations by Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, John Coltrane, Hazrat Inayat Khan, and Krishna Das. Next, Karen

Mitchell shares two powerful experiences from different times in her life that helped her experience the psychic being (soul) as the conductor of “true cosmic music.” A contemplative essay by Carol Ferguson reflects on music and sound in Sri Aurobindo’s epic poem *Savitri*. Finally, “Apropos” presents a compilation of engaging quotes on music and consciousness from multiple sources.

In our poetry series, “A Greater Music” by Richard Eggenberger (Narad) creates a psychic bridge to higher truth through the music of the higher spheres and “a song of human destiny.” “Darshanic Listening” by Sylvia Nakkach Knapp and Sasha Mardikian Bainer is inspired by Dante’s *Divine Comedy* and the soul’s journey to the Supreme. This is a unique, provocative, and creative hermeneutic exercise that invites the reader’s active participation through contemplative exercises. “Stars” by Sara Teasdale is a short poem that describes the humble but profound experience of looking at the stars at night in awe of their majesty; it is linked to two beautiful musical videos.

Lastly, on the back cover we feature “Perhaps the Heart of God Forever Sings,” an excerpt from Sri Aurobindo’s longer poem, “The Meditations from Mandavya.”

Our editorial team is delighted to share with you such a rich array of insights about music and consciousness!—Bahman A.K. Shirazi for the *Collaboration* editorial team

“Dancing Dervishes”: Glass mosaic by Gloria Sayavedra

