

7. Melody of the Moment

One Celtic evening, the mythical Fionn Mac Chumhail and his warriors were having a discussion about the finest sound in the world. His son Oisín extolled the ring of spear on shield in the din of battle. Another went on about the fearful cries of the stags and the baying of the hounds in the rising blood lust just before the kill.

Yet another spoke of the song of his beloved as she played the harp to soothe her hero after a day of blood and gore. The wise warriors nodded their approval. “And you, Fionn,” they then asked, “what do you say is the finest sound in the world?” The mighty hero paused. “The music of what happens,” he said.

We need to learn how to leave the mind and come to the senses so as to hear the silent music beneath the noisy traffic of our thinking, to catch the divine harmony in everything human. Close to our soul, we are called to become like human tuning forks catching the rhythm of grace.

The funeral memorial card of John Moriarty, the Kerry mystic, carried one of his reflections. “Clear mornings bring the mountains to my doorstep. Calm nights give the rivers their say. Some evenings the wind puts its hand on my shoulders. I stop thinking. I leave what I’m doing and I go the soul’s way.”

Along the soul’s way we find the only places of encounter between our spirit and the Spirit of all life, between our emptiness and the universal flow of energy. It is along the soul’s way that we hear and create the unique music that only we can hear and create. It is here that we come home to the God of harmony already within our hearts. “God is always at home,” Meister Eckhart insisted, “it is we who take a walk.”

If the present moment is the only place we can meet the incarnate God, will we be at home when God comes in disguise to find us? Are we always too distracted, seduced by other transitory attractions, to gaze at and recognise the mother of all beauty – and to hear the music she is always making for us? There is something both funny and lovely about a verse in John Ashbery’s “At North Farm”:

Somewhere someone is travelling furiously
towards you,
At incredible speed, travelling day and night,
Through blizzards and desert heat, across
torrents,
through narrow passes.
But will he know where to find you,
Recognise you when he sees you,
Give you the thing he has for you?

It is as though a secret smile, a whispered assurance, a small melody lies hidden, like an impatient epiphany, in everything we encounter in the course of each day. Everything wants to draw us into the harmony of life. Everything is waiting to encourage and support us as we struggle, mostly out of tune, to get the timing right. Our monkey-minds miss the magic and the music of the moment.

We need to be aware. To stop running. To be here. In “Now I Become Myself”; May Sarton writes of the time it takes to be present to one’s true harmony after years of distraction, of panic, of wearing “other people’s faces”

O, in this single hour I live
All of myself and do not move.
I, the pursued, who madly ran,
Stand still, stand still, and stop the sun!