The Influence of Theosophy on the Tradition of Speculative and Esoteric Theories of Music

Ronald Kenneth Butler BA (Hons), AMusA
Statement of originality

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original, except as acknowledged in the text, and has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this university or any other university.

Ronald Kenneth Butler
Abstract

This thesis examines the influence of the teachings of the Theosophical Society, founded in 1875 by Madame Blavatsky, on the tradition of speculative and esoteric theories of music from its founding until the present day. Three fundamental propositions are identified: that music is of divine origin; that music can act as a moral determinate; and that music has healing and therapeutic powers. These speculative ideas have informed the Western occultic tradition throughout the centuries. The core teachings of the Theosophical Society are examined, and it is argued that while Blavatsky wrote only a minimal amount about music and metaphysics relating to music, her overall cosmological and occultic ideas had a profound influence on those musical thinkers and composers whose spiritual ideas were of an occultic leaning.

The writings of various authors are examined, showing how these Theosophical notions have informed their views concerning speculative ideas of music. A number of contradictions within their writings are examined, as is the veracity of some of their claims. The primary focus is on the writings of Rudolf Steiner, Corinne Heline and Cyril Scott, as well as the effect of Theosophical teaching on the life and work of composers Alexander Scriabin and Gustav Holst. The final part of the thesis examines the ways in which Theosophical notions have been used and described from the 1970s until the present day under the rubric of the New Age Movement. It is contended that although these individuals interpreted Theosophical notions in various ways, they can all be categorised as having in common what Antoine Faivre, in his definition of esoteric, has called “a form of thought”. Faivre describes this as having six characteristics, four of which are essential: Correspondences, living nature, mediation, transmutation, praxis of concordance and transmission.

The methodological approach taken in this thesis is historical/contextual, involving a comparative critical literature review of a range of texts by the abovementioned authors as they relate to the notions put forward by Blavatsky in her writings. Some discussion on musical scales, notes and intervals is necessary, however the musicological component of the methodology is kept to a minimum, there being no need for any analysis of harmony or form.
As far as can be ascertained no broad survey of Theosophy and its impact on musical thinking has been undertaken, and this study is intended to contribute to the overall literature of both Theosophy and of esoteric theories of music.
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Chapter 1
Introduction

This thesis will examine the influence of the Theosophical Society and its teachings on the tradition of speculative and esoteric theories of music from its founding in 1875 until the present. I will contend that the influence of Theosophical teachings upon the speculative music tradition have been far reaching, especially in the light of Theosophy being credited as a forerunner of the New Age movement of the 1960s and beyond.¹ In order to demonstrate Theosophical influences, a comparative critical literature review of the writings of a number of selected authors will be undertaken. While it is accepted that it is impossible to prove or verify many of the claims made by the selected subjects of this thesis, a further aim will be to examine critically some of the assertions made by Theosophists concerning music within the context of current academic orthodoxy, both musically and historically.

The Theosophical Society, founded in New York in 1875 by the Russian mystic Madame Helena Blavatsky and Henry Olcott, was one of the more important groups to emerge during the nineteenth-century occult revival. The term “Theosophy”, as it is understood today, refers to the teachings and writings outlined in Blavatsky’s three major works, *Isis Unveiled* (1879), *The Secret Doctrine* (1888) and *The Key to Theosophy* (1889). These teachings were later supplemented by a number of commentaries and elaborations by such authors as Annie Besant (1847–1933) and C.W. Leadbeater (1850–1934). Blavatsky’s teachings attempted to synthesise religion and science under one all-embracing philosophy, claiming that all the world’s major religions were derived from a single source, referred to as “the ancient wisdom”.

The term “Theosophia” etymologically is “wisdom of God”, and as Antoine Faivre notes had been used by several Church Fathers in both Greek and Latin as a synonym for theology.² By the nineteenth century, the term “Theosophy” had come to refer to the tradition of religious illumination associated with the mystical ideas of occultists such as Jacob Boehme.³ In naming her movement The Theosophical Society, Blavatsky, asserted that Theosophy meant “Divine Wisdom”, Theo meaning “Divine” or

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“God”, Sophia meaning “Wisdom”. She argued the term did not mean “Wisdom of God”, but “Divine Wisdom” as possessed by the gods.⁴

At the time of the Theosophical Society’s formation, ideas about the origin, nature and vibratory power of tone and music had already enjoyed a long history, going back to the speculations of Plato and the Pythagoreans. Blavatsky accepted these ancient notions of a vibratory universe and in her writings incorporated the art of music and tone into an elaborate system of correspondences. Her metaphysical speculations became part of a body of esoteric music theories on to which it will be shown composers and authors influenced by Theosophy grafted their own speculative notions.

Blavatsky’s writings represent a synthesis of a number of occult-metaphysical movements existing at the time, which according to Alexander Kay were subsumed under the general heading of New Thought.⁵ They incorporated the predominant occultic ideas from Europe, such as those found in the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg and Franz Mesmer; these ideas will be examined in Chapter 3. These beliefs coincided with the emergence of a number of new religious movements in the United States, among them Transcendentalism, the most prominent personality of which was the writer Ralph Waldo Emerson. Transcendentalism embraced aspects of Neo-Platonism and Eastern philosophy, and has led Richard Kyle to claim that “Transcendentalism was the first American religion with a substantial infusion of Asiatic ideas”.⁶ Other important movements to appear during the mid-nineteenth century included Spiritualism, with its belief in the ability of the living to contact the dead, and Christian Science, emphasising the curing of illness by a process of mental healing, or what might now be described as positive thinking.⁷

**Current Research**

Recently, there has been some attempt to address the question of the occult and music from a scholarly perspective. Within the field of academic literature Joscelyn Godwin has produced a number of books on the subject, among them *Music, Mysticism and Magic: A Sourcebook* (1987) and *Harmony of the Spheres* (1993), both offering readings on a number of philosophers and musicians whose works have informed the tradition of

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⁷ Ibid., p. 32.
speculative and esoteric theories of music from Plato to Stockhausen. Likewise, his *Music and the Occult: French Musical Philosophies, 1750–1950* presents a study of occult philosophies developed during those years by French writers on music. Other works by Godwin that have proved useful in this research include *Harmonies of Heaven and Earth* (1987) and *The Mystery of the Seven Vowels* (1991). While further secondary material is drawn from a number of sources, the most important for this research are again taken from the musicological research of Godwin. This thesis draws on two of Professor Godwin’s translations, and forms the basis of Chapter 2, the authors in question being Johann von Dalberg and Fabre d’Olivet. The translation of Von Dalberg’s treatise is found in Godwin’s *Music, Magic and Mysticism*, while d’Olivet’s is a translation of his *Music Explained as Science and Art*.

Godwin’s research and translations into English of many unavailable texts, and his drawing together of the many strands of esoteric musical thought, have made him arguably the leading authority in the field today, and it should be acknowledged that without his work over the past three decades a study of this scope would have been much more difficult, if not impossible.

Further secondary material that proved helpful came from Tibor Bachmann, who analysed the music of Bela Bartók and his use of the Golden Mean and Fibonacci number series; D.P. Goldman, who has written on esotericism as a determinate in Debussy’s harmonic language; and John Covach, who has explored the occultic aspects of the music of Alban Berg and Arnold Schoenberg. Raymond Head has written on Gustav Holst’s Theosophical and Indian influences, as well as his interest in astrology, while P.F. Chandley has explored the Theosophical symbolism in the work of Cyril Scott. An important contribution to the literature is an essay by Johanna Petsche who

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examines the interrelationships between the teachings of Blavatsky and George Gurdjieff arguing that Gurdjieff used recognizable Theosophical terminology within his teachings and raises the possibility that he modeled himself after her.\textsuperscript{11} This was delivered at a conference in Sydney organized by Professor Karalis in 2012, the theme of which was “The legacies of Theosophy: Unveiling mysteries of the Imagination”.

A number of PhD dissertations have discussed various esoteric aspects of music, and it is among them that this thesis is situated, within the context of relevant scholarship. Diana Swann’s thesis “Gentlemen v Players: Alienation and the Esoteric in English Music 1900-1939” explores the problems occultic leaning composers such as Cyril Scott and Peter Warlock had with the music establishment.\textsuperscript{12} Cyril Scott is also the subject of a thesis by Thosmas Darson which, while having as its primary focus the piano works of Cyril Scott, explores the state of English music circa 1880.\textsuperscript{13} Ellen Crystall’s thesis “Esoteric Traditions in the Early Twentieth Century with an Appraisal of Composer Cyril Scott” attempts to link various composers with a number of secret societies. A more recent thesis on Cyril Scott is by Sarah Collins who looks at the development of Scott’s aesthetic thinking.\textsuperscript{14} Vladimir Marchenkov explores the symbolism of the Orpheus myth from Plato to Alexander Scriabin, while in “Music and Musical Thought of the New Age”, Donna Weston surveys the background and nature of New Age Music.\textsuperscript{15}

While a number of studies on speculative music can be located in the literature, a more focused study of how Theosophical concepts have informed the musical philosophy of those authors and composers who embrace the occult tradition has not been attempted. This thesis attempts to fill this void. It addresses the following questions:

1. What influence did the teachings of the Theosophical Society have upon the tradition of esoteric and speculative theories of music during the late nineteenth and through the twentieth centuries?

2. How is this influence recognised in the work of those creative artists who demonstrated an occult disposition and accepted Theosophical precepts?


\textsuperscript{13} Darson, Thomas. \textit{Solo Piano works of Cyril Scott}. U.M.I. Dissertation Service. 1979

\textsuperscript{14} Collins, Sarah. \textit{The Development of Cyril Scott’s Aesthetic Thinking: An Interpretation Informed by Literary and Biographical Sources}. Suffolk: Boydell Pub. 2013.

Considering the claim that the Theosophical Society and its teachings have been a major influence on the so-called New Age movement during the latter part of the twentieth century, in what way is this influence within esoteric theories of music recognised today?

Three Fundamental Esoteric Notions of Music

While Theosophy introduced a number of new concepts into the Western esoteric tradition, the speculative literature on music can be traced back to the speculations of Pythagoras and Plato. Three primary ideas in the ancient literature can be identified as prominent, and will form the framework upon which the subject authors – including Blavatsky – developed their own speculative notions. These are, first, that music has a divine origin emanating as a vibratory and creative energy from the Absolute or Divine. In this context, music was viewed as the voice or “word” of God, manifesting on the material plane – or, as the German musicologist Marius Schneider saw it, “the crystallized song of the Gods”.

This idea forms the basis of Plato’s creation myth in *Timaeus*, a notion that was influential in the writings of the sixth-century Roman philosopher Boethius, who’s *Fundamentals of Music* is claimed by Calvin Bower to have shaped the discipline of music during the Middle Ages and formed the basis of speculative ideas on music during the period of the Renaissance.

Second, if all things in the universe were vibratory in nature, then logically so too would be the body of each individual. This idea presents the concept of the human being as a microcosm of the macrocosm: if the universe is vibratory – able to be explained by using mathematics and the analogy of music – then humankind and society in general, would be subject to the same rules, with each individual being affected by cosmic vibratory influences. This suggested that a person’s character could be influenced by the type of music to which they were exposed, leading to the claim that music was capable of exerting a moral influence and acting as a means of spiritual regeneration and transformation on both the individual and societal level.

In Plato’s view, listening to music revealed – consciously or unconsciously – the underlying mathematical structure of the physical world. In turn, this was related to the order of the cosmos and the world of forms; therefore, in making or listening to music, an individual was exposed to universal ideals. Plato says:

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All musical sound is given us for the sake of harmony, which has motions akin to the orbits in our soul and which, as anyone who makes intelligent use of the arts knows, is not to be used, as is commonly thought, to give irrational pleasure, but as a heaven-sent ally in reducing to order and harmony any disharmony in the revolutions within us.  

To ensure that the population was exposed to the correct music, in *The Laws* Plato further argued for strict control of the scales and instruments that could be used in an ideal state. The idea of censorship in relation to music was not exclusive to the Western tradition and, as will be shown later, it had parallels within the ancient writings of other cultures such as those of India and China. This concept has generated much debate on the virtues of various genres of music over recent decades — for example, Cyril Scott, the subject of Chapter 7, went so far as to argue that the spiritual evolutionary progress of a particular race could be influenced by the quality of its music.

A third recurring theme asserts that if the human body and soul are divine in nature, they should reflect the harmony of the heavens. Any dissonance, or “being out of tune” with one’s own original vibration or frequency, would result in physical or mental illness, with wellness being restored by exposure to sympathetic vibrations. Music’s use as a therapeutic tool has universally been recognised in ancient writings ranging from tales of Pythagoras to David’s healing of Saul. By the time of the formation of the Theosophical Society in 1875, these ideas had become an integral part of the esoteric musical tradition and, as will be shown, remain prominent within that tradition to the present day.

In summary, the vibrations and frequencies involved in the creation of the world were said to be reflected in those making up the body and soul of the individual in the world of matter, but resonating at a lower octave. From a social perspective, any discordance in these frequencies was claimed to result not just in illness on an individual

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level, but to have the potential to result in social and moral breakdown. This idea of the harmony of heaven being reflected on Earth is in conformity to the Hermetic axiom “as above so below”.\(^{22}\) Therefore, from an esoteric perspective, and by analogy, music is used as a means by which the universe and the physical body can be explained. This framework served as a model for esoteric musical theories for over two thousand years, and was the basis upon which Theosophists later introduced a number of important secondary concepts or extensions.

**Definitions**

The term “speculative music” is defined in this thesis as a theory of music based on conjecture rather than knowledge. Jocelyn Godwin has described “speculative music” as “that part of music that has nothing to do with practice, but is more concerned with identifying the principles of music”.\(^{23}\) The term will also encompass all of the supposed “powers of music”, as well as music claimed by some authors to be of the Angelic or Devic orders. The sounds or tones said to be created by the movement of the planets is included being part of the esoteric concept of the Harmony of the Spheres.

The definition of the term “esoteric” as given by Antonine Faivre in his *Western Esotericism and the Science of Religion* has been preferred in this thesis to other usages. Faivre is one of the foremost authorities on Western esotericism in the world today, and defines esotericism as a “form of thought” that he says has been observable in the Western esoteric tradition since the Renaissance. Faivre contends that an idea or work can be identifiable as esoteric by the simultaneous presence of four to six components:\(^{24}\)

- *The idea of universal correspondences.* This relates to the hermetic principle “as above, so below”, or the idea of macrocosm and microcosm. Correspondences are said to exist in all parts of the universe; in music, this would relate to the “Great Harmony”.

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\(^{22}\) Hermetic Philosophy stems from the rediscovery during the Renaissance of nineteen treatises that were attributed to Hermes Trismegistus (Thrice greatest Hermes) and were said to represent Egyptian mystery teachings. The body of work became known as the *Corpus Hermeticum*. See Godwin, *Music, Mysticism and Magic*.


- **Living nature.** Nature can be read as a book; it is a network of sympathies that link all things together. In a New Age context, this relates to the principle of a holistic universe.

- **Imagination.** This means the ability to use symbols and images to enable one to access different levels of reality. In music, this could apply to the ecstasy created by the composer and the ability to obtain altered states of consciousness or to draw one closer to the divine.

- **Transmutation.** The terminology of Alchemy is used here, and suggests an inner process of regeneration and purification. In the Theosophical and musical sense, it relates to the refining of the person and society, of spiritual growth and transformation.

- **Praxis of concordance.** This is the recognition of common denominators between two or more different traditions. For example, it will be shown that interest in the music of other cultures has been a highlight in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in order to demonstrate a concordance of ideas and the universality of human kind. In the latter part of the twentieth century, the notion developed that the music of minority or different ethnic groups demonstrated a purer spirituality and reflected a simpler ecological approach to life.

- **Transmission.** Teachings can be passed on from Master to Disciple.²⁵

Within this thesis, Faivre’s definition of esoteric as a “form of thought” is preferred over the general notion that defines esoteric as an inner corpus of secret knowledge given only to initiates or a small number of people with a special interest.²⁶ The reason for the preference is that, except for a limited period in which a Pythagorean brotherhood existed, the knowledge of the alleged “power of music” was not regarded as a secret; on the contrary, as Jamie James points out in his *Music of the Spheres*, it was considered as part of mathematics and science.²⁷ It should also be noted that it is a definition favoured by Godwin, who says “speculative music is neither a body of knowledge, nor anything that can be learned and enclosed in a book. It is, rather, a frame of mind”.²⁸ Therefore, Faivre’s definition of the term “esoteric” as a “form of thought” serves the methodological approach taken in this thesis better than the idea of “secret knowledge”, which is absent from Faivre’s list.

²⁵ Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism*, p. 60
²⁶ Ibid., p. 49.
Commonalities

By their very nature, esoteric or speculative theories of music will always generate a number of different interpretations, and phenomena that will be subsumed under the title. In the content of this study, it will be shown that most of the selected authors display differences and contradictions, not only with each other but also sometimes within their own works. This is due to the abstract and non-representational nature of music, and the fact that many of the notions are claimed to be perceived clairvoyantly as instructions from spiritual beings from other realms.

This nullifies any possibility of the kind of scholarly analysis that would be practised within other areas of cultural history or musicology. However, over the past hundred years a body of literature has emerged that can be compared and analysed in order to draw out comparisons and differences. In undertaking this task, it becomes clear that a number of fundamental similarities underlie all of perceived differences. One way to explain this is to compare these similarities to what the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein characterised as family resemblances. He used the analogy of the word “game” to demonstrate his point, arguing that some games are played with a board, some with cards, some with dice, some are played for pleasure, some for profit, yet all games overlap in character with other games. Ultimately, the whole complex network hangs together in a structure of similarities and differences, similar to that existing in any family. Applying this to our topic and the various interpretations of our authors, many of their ideas can seem contradictory; however, their theories in total could be said to demonstrate a set of “family resemblances”. 29

Purpose of the Thesis

While many publications exist pertaining to the founding and history of the Theosophical Society and its various teachings, there has been no formal study that focuses exclusively on the relationship of Theosophy to esoteric or speculative theories of music. The purpose of this thesis is therefore to add to the existing literature through examining the effect that Theosophical ideas had on the musical philosophies of a number of composers and authors up to the end of the twentieth century.

It has been argued that, over time, a practice of “selective editing” within European currents of thought developed, with one writer noting that: “Western esoteric

traditions have been denigrated or dismissed for centuries, left out of literary, philosophical or religious and social histories or mentioned only to be dismissed as merely out-moded relics.\textsuperscript{30} A probable reason for this neglect is that, with the rise of science and the development of material reductionism during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, esoteric and occultic ideas became relegated to the category of superstition, and subsequently have been mostly ignored by musicologists and cultural historians. From the eighteenth century, this “other side” or metaphysical aspect of music went “underground”, remaining visible only within the world-view of occultists and mystics; it emerged again as part of an occult revival that took place in the middle to late part of the nineteenth century. It is only recently that the general history of this occult revival has been considered worthy of study by academics, foremost among them being Faivre and Hanegraaff.\textsuperscript{31} As a consequence, this has led to a re-evaluation of trends within esoteric and speculative musical thought throughout history, the most prolific researcher on this topic being Godwin.\textsuperscript{32}

This scholarly neglect has allowed many ideas concerning music to enter the literature – Theosophical and popular – without proper scrutiny. It is fair to say that in some cases the subject-matter is so “out there”, or seemingly “crazy”, that it is almost not worth discussion. However, within many of the alternative spiritual movements that have emerged from, or been influenced by, Theosophy – including the New Age movement – there are many who accept the most radical ideas concerning the power of music without question.

As most of the current literature on esoteric and speculative theories of music is of a popular and non-academic nature, and is in the main uncritical, this thesis will examine the literature for any inconsistencies and factual errors that appear in the data. From an academic perspective, many of the epistemological problems arising from authors who claim to access knowledge clairvoyantly are, if not ignored, then seldom corrected. This could be attributed to the fact that, within standard academic texts dealing with the history of music, esoteric or unorthodox opinions held by composers or authors such as Scriabin or Scott are either dismissed or passed off as an unfortunate interference with that


individual’s creative output. An example of this is the opinion of Mihae Ryu who in his thesis on the songs of Cyril Scott claims that Scott is a deluded man living in a fantasy world of his own.

This study diverges from the existing literature in that, besides drawing together a number of musicians and authors whose work has been informed by Theosophy, and noting their commonalities, it also aims to critically examine the veracity of the truth claims of the authors in question. As far as this researcher can ascertain, no study of this nature has ever been undertaken.

Methodology

As stated earlier, the primary approach of the methodology is a comparative critical literature review of the selected authors. Within this approach, a number of different disciplines are evident, making the overall methodology multidisciplinary. Each author’s metaphysical ideas are examined and placed in the context of their social background, spiritual views and relationship to Theosophical teachings, with their own hermeneutical approach, commonalities and differences examined. It should be noted that while the views of the selected authors, in the absence of any proof of a solid objective nature, will be considered as subjective constructs, reflecting their own individual spiritual views and personal philosophy as it appears within their writings; their use of Theosophical notions will be the main focus of the analysis.

Part of the methodology will be historical/contextual: an examination and comparison of various texts ranging from the original writings of Blavatsky and the early Theosophists through to occultists such as Rudolf Steiner and Cyril Scott will be undertaken. Their ideas will be examined within the framework of the three fundamental propositions outlined earlier and how these have been reinterpreted and augmented with Theosophical notions to support a particular author’s personal spiritual position. Further, an examination of those spiritual ideas that are best placed within the broader realm of the study of new religious movements will be undertaken. Some Theosophical notions have their origins in the Eastern religious tradition of Hinduism and Buddhism, such as karma and reincarnation, while others such as The Masters or Mahatmas and Root-Races are from Blavatsky’s writings.

While an analysis of musical form or harmony is not a component of this thesis, some knowledge of music theory is essential on the part of the reader. Within the thesis, references will be made to various tones, scales and key signatures – in particular their relationship to healing and astrology – found in the work of some of the selected authors. Therefore, there is a musicological component within the methodology, if only of a limited nature.

Arguably, esoteric music in itself cannot exist without criteria set out by the composer that suggest its esotericism. Therefore, the primary focus of this thesis will be on the esoteric and speculative theories of music as they are conceived by the selected authors – in other words, the metaphysics of music and not music as a performance art.

As no systematic study of Theosophical influence on music has been undertaken, the present task involves synchronising some of the work that has been done on specific individuals to be examined within this thesis. This includes the work of Boris De Schloezer, Simon Morrison and Malcolm Brown on Alexander Scriabin, and that of Raymond Head concerning Gustav Holst, as well as drawing together those strands from various authors that have produced a body of work that could be classified as “New Age”. The sources consulted include all of the relevant primary material of those philosophers, composers and authors referred to above.

In selecting the various individuals to be studied, certain factors were taken into account: (1) the degree to which their theories reflect the esoteric themes previously mentioned; (2) the individual’s involvement within the esoteric community, in particular their relationship with the Theosophical Society; and (3) the influence their work has had and is currently having within Theosophical and occultic movements.

**Structure of the Thesis**

The thesis is presented in two parts. Part I includes Chapters 1 to 3. This introductory chapter includes a brief overview, as does Chapter 2, of the thoughts on music that appear in the writings of Plato and the Neo-Pythagoreans, which have formed the basis for speculative ideas on music within the Western esoteric tradition to the present. In positioning Theosophical musical speculation from 1875 within what was an already existing tradition; Chapter 2 discusses the nature of esoteric musical thinking during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The writings of two authors – Johann Von Dalberg (1760–1812) and Fabre d’Olivet (1767–1825) – have been selected for this purpose, as their ideas encapsulate most of the speculative ideas regarding music that were current at
the time. Chapter 3 surveys important Theosophical teachings, with an emphasis on the passages concerning music that occur within the writings of Blavatsky. This chapter includes a discussion on how these ideas were developed by a second generation of Theosophists, including Besant (1847–1933) and Leadbeater (1854–1934).35

Part II encompasses Chapters 4 to 8. It examines how Theosophical teachings have influenced a number of selected composers and authors. Chapter 4 focuses on three individuals: Alexander Scriabin (1872–1915), who used Theosophical notions as a framework for his developing eschatological ideas; Gustav Holst (1874–1934); and Edmund Bailley (1850–1916). Chapter 5 examines the musical thought of the Anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925), who at one stage was head of the German Theosophical movement, while Chapter 6 discusses Corinne Heline (1882–1975), a Rosicrucian who used many Theosophical notions in her musical thought. Chapter 7 examines the work of Cyril Scott (1879–1971), who conceived a theory of history based upon the intervention of the Masters. According to Scott, the Masters were instrumental in sending to Earth various composers whose music would assist in the evolution of humankind. Chapter 8 examines the influence of Theosophy on the musical thought attributed to the so called “New Age” movement from the 1970s to the present; it does this by critiquing six current authors whose work demonstrates Theosophical influence and two mid-twentieth century authors, George Gurdjieff and the composer and Theosophist Dane Rudhyar, who are generally regarded as influential within the New Age movement.

“The New Age” is an umbrella term for a number of alternative spiritual and cultural movements that had been developing “underground”, but surfaced as a counter-culture during the 1960s. The influence of Theosophy on this movement has been noted by cultural historian Philip Almond, who argues that historically the New Age movement is a child of the Theosophical Society, while Mark Bevir of the University of California,

Berkeley sees it as one step removed, arguing “the Theosophical Society flourishes as the grandparent of the New Age Movement”.  

As mentioned above, the first task is to examine the ideas that were current prior to the advent of Blavatsky and Theosophy. This is the subject of the next chapter.

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Chapter 2
The Theosophic Tradition and Esoteric Theories of Music Prior to 1875

The purpose of this chapter is to present an overview of the ideas that permeated the Western esoteric tradition relating to the metaphysics of music prior to the emergence of modern Theosophy. An examination will be made of a range of esoteric and speculative theories of music current during the early to mid-part of the nineteenth century, from which later theosophical speculation emerged.

In order to demonstrate these speculative ideas, two composers have been chosen for examination, as their theoretical writing encapsulates many of the existing trends in esoteric musical thought that developed during the Enlightenment. The composers selected for this purpose are Johann Von Dalberg (1760–1812) and Fabre d’Olivet (1767–1825). Their work not only shows the influence of the Pythagorean, Platonic and Hermetic traditions, but will also be seen to anticipate many of the later Theosophical notions.

Historically, the Western tradition involving speculative theories of music could be said to have started with the Greeks. It is claimed that Pythagoras was the first to discover the mathematical basis of music by comparing the ratios of different intervals. He is also said to have used music for healing purposes – for example, once calming a drunken adolescent by changing the mode or scale of the music being performed. On a more cosmic level, music or vibration was seen as the creative force of the universe – a divine emanation – as occurs in Plato’s creation myth in Timaeus.

Although one should read the stories concerning music and Pythagoras as myth and legend, the same cannot be said about the musical speculations of Plato. Leaving aside his creation myth in Timaeus, which involves Pythagorean mathematics and

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37 Acknowledgement is made of the musicologist Joselyn Godwin, whose translations of the writings of these two composers form the basis of this chapter.
musical allegory, Plato saw music as an important tool in shaping the mind and moral character of the individual. In his *Republic* and *The Laws*, Plato places great emphasis on the role of music in education, and whether it can act as a moral determinate within society. Music in the context of the writings of Plato was not studied as a vehicle for self-expression or personal creativity; while it gave pleasure, in the writings of many ancient authors this was considered the least of its attributes – indeed, it was regarded as a distraction from its true purpose. Plato states in *Timaeus* that music was given for the sake of harmony, having “motions akin to the orbits in our soul”; he continues by arguing that music should not be used to give irrational pleasure, but rather be seen as a “heaven-sent ally in reducing to order and harmony any disharmony in the revolutions within us”. The study of music therefore primarily consisted of speculative theory that looked beyond music as a performance art to the metaphysics of music. Some of the metaphysical questions posed included: Where does music come from? What gives it the power to affect individuals’ emotions? What is its inner reality? What is its effect upon the soul? Should human conduct reflect the divine harmony demonstrated in the mathematical ratios of concords? These are the questions addressed in the work of both Von Dalberg and d’Olivet.

**Johann von Dalberg**

In the introduction to his translation of Von Dalberg’s *Heavenly and Earthly Music: An Allegorical Dream* (1806), Joscelyn Godwin writes that Von Dalberg was “a pioneer in the romantic revisioning of the arts, their origin and their purpose for mankind”. Johann Von Dalberg was a German nobleman and churchman and held the post of Dean at Trier Cathedral. Besides being the author of many scholarly works on Parsee and Islamic subjects, he seems to have been a musician of some ability, having written a number of piano sonatas. His interest in Indian religions led him to compose settings for a number of Indian songs, and he is credited with having translated into German the pioneering treatises on Indian music by the English philologist Sir William Jones. Von Dalberg’s fascination with exotic subjects places him squarely within the Romantic tradition –

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45 Ibid.
which, according to Mark Bevir, saw in Indian religion profound insights that reinforced the philosophy derived from German Idealism.47

Within Von Dalberg’s writing, it is possible to identify the three primary esoteric ideas outlined in the introduction: that music has a divine origin; that it acts as a moral determinate; and that it can be used as a healing modality. Von Dalberg may couch these in the symbolic language of a Christian mystic, but on close inspection they can be seen to be situated within the framework of the Theosophic and hermetic traditions. God is seen allegorically as the fundamental tone, the angels and humankind being an undertone or lower harmonic. Within this cosmology, he argues that each individual is assigned their own personal tone or frequency by God and that all tones, when sounded together, should create a harmony.48 For Von Dalberg, this musical allegory of divinely created harmony should be mirrored by the conduct of people and governments on Earth. He argues that a stable society requires its members to be in a state of permanent harmony, with any dissonance affecting the moral order of that society.49 Von Dalberg, in keeping with the notion of information being imparted by outside agencies, claims that “the Genius of Harmony hovered around my bed and whispered to me secrets of the higher mysteries of spiritual music”.50 Maintaining the musical analogy to describe his cosmology, he continues: “all souls are parts of an eternal symphony, all move according to an appropriate melody proscribed for them, each is a whole, yet each also is part of a greater whole, and all the endless parts make up the great chorus of creation”.51

Like Blavatsky’s later work, Von Dalberg’s cosmology was emanatory, with all things deriving from an ultimate source or God. He regarded all tones as being products of the One fundamental tone; similarly, he argued that all souls must be derived from God.52 Besides emanation, Von Dalberg introduced an evolutionary element into his writing, stating that “as all tones return to their source, the fundamental, so spirits return

48 A harmonic refers to a tone generated by the fundamental that is in proportional ratio to the frequency of the original. This is often referred to as the harmonic series. J.F.H. Von Dalberg, A Composer’s Glimpses of the Music of Spirits, trans Mannheim, in Godwin, Music, Mysticism and Magic, p. 180. For a fuller treatment of von Dalberg’s musical thought see, Michael Embach, & Joscelyn Godwin, Johann Friedrich Hugo von Dalberg (1760-1812) Schriftsteller, Musiker, Domherr. Mainz: Gesellschaft für mittelrheinische Kirchengeschichte, 1998. At present there is no English translation.
50 Ibid, p. 178.
51 Ibid.
52 Von Dalberg, A Composer’s Glimpses, p. 179.
to the Godhead”.\textsuperscript{53} This is similar to the view of Blavatsky, who later stated that everything in the universe is of one absolute essence, “from which all starts and everything returns”.\textsuperscript{54} However, as a Christian, Von Dalberg was adamant that the created being could never become fully reabsorbed into the source or become one with the Creator, “since they are never capable of its simplicity and purity”.\textsuperscript{55} The return to the source, as far as it is possible, is said to take place through a process of inner purification, “the single tone becoming an image of the fundamental, the soul an image of the creator”.\textsuperscript{56} Von Dalberg says:

Purification takes place through gradual individual advancement and through the progress of species, genera, and races of spirits, until they are sufficiently ripe for that higher purity that they can escape from their earthly vestures, return to the Intellectual World, and there become strings of the heavenly lyre on which God alone plays.\textsuperscript{57}

Discounting the notion of God playing the lyre, the cosmology of Von Dalberg contains both the involution and evolution of spirit; also worth noting is his allusion to the progress of “races of spirits”, which is not dissimilar to the Blavatskian notion of Root-Races. The essence of Von Dalberg’s evolutionary ideas can be recognised in Blavatsky’s work, the difference between them being that Blavatsky argues for a complete reabsorption into the Godhead.\textsuperscript{58} The concept of emanation, as well as the hermetic axiom of “as above so below”, is also present within Von Dalberg’s cosmology. Following Pythagoras and Plato, he argues that the music of spirits in the heavenly realms follows harmonic and therefore mathematical laws, and that our earthly music is only “an image, vesture, an emblem of the eternal and spiritual”.\textsuperscript{59}

Von Dalberg lived at a time that encompassed both the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. The Revolution, which started in 1789 due to a general discontent with the social, economic and political situation of the time, culminated in what later became

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{54} Blavatsky, \textit{The Key to Theosophy}, p. 40.
  \item \textsuperscript{55} Von Dalberg, \textit{A Composer’s Glimpse}, p. 179.
  \item \textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{57} Ibid., p. 180.
  \item \textsuperscript{59} Von Dalberg, \textit{A Composer’s Glimpse}, p. 179. See also, R. Steiner, \textit{The Inner Nature of Music and the Experience of Tone.}, New York: The Anthroposophic Press, 1983, p. 18.
\end{itemize}
known as the “Reign of Terror”. The years following the Revolution and subsequent Napoleonic Wars witnessed great social chaos and hardship throughout Europe; therefore, it could be argued that the horrors Von Dalberg would have seen and experienced played a part in the emphasis his writings place upon social harmony. This is demonstrated allegorically in his work as musical harmony: he advises similar tones to seek out and join with one another, “for society arose with the creation”. However, he argues that not all souls are equal, for in reflecting the Platonic concept of a “divine madness” – or perhaps being aware of the genius of contemporaries such as Mozart and Beethoven – he advises different treatment for inspired souls:

As they give forth tones which the others cannot find…hence they fit so little into the common music of life, it is therefore foolish to judge them according to the common measure of tones.

Using musical metaphors to explain the nature of society, he describes each species and race as a musical instrument, each with its own strings and tuning. Drawing on what seems to be his own observations of human behaviour in society, he observes that “many are out of tune” and “with one wrong note the whole instrument will be in discord”. He further advises not to attempt to tune others instruments unless one is sure that one’s own is in tune, “otherwise you will share your own discord with them”. A great deal of this seems to be sensible advice relating to the problems of his time. What stands out, however, is the way he uses symbolic musical metaphors to explain his position: they not only embrace ethics and the nature of society, but present a cosmology of emanation that ultimately includes salvation and reunion with God. Echoing Plato, he advises that, for the human race, it is necessary to imitate the divine harmony in order to create an ordered society. He writes that “if some tones are in tune and others not, no pure melody can arise”. Likewise, accepting the Pythagorean and Platonic notions of a

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61 Von Dalberg, *A Composer’s Glimpse*, p.182
62 Ibid., p. 181. Plato argued that composers were “out of their minds when they compose”, and that he was incapable of composing “until the God has entered him and his wits have left him”. Plato, *Ion*, trans. St G. Stock, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909, p. 534.
63 Von Dalberg, *A Composer’s Glimpse*.
64 Ibid.
mathematical and musical universe, he says that “man in his relationships to the universe, to God, to society, to him-self and to his inner nature, must act according to the laws of music”.  

As Von Dalberg’s primary concern is with “harmony”, it is not surprising to find him in opposition to Fabre d’Olivet in supporting “equal tempered”, or modern tuning in favour of the Pythagorean – a controversy that by the time of Von Dalberg had already been going on for over two centuries. His comments on discord not only refer to anti-social behaviour within society and the discord between nation states, but allude to the problems encountered mathematically within the Pythagorean scale, which left some intervals slightly larger or smaller than others (particularly thirds). This inconsistency between semi-tones that left some notes sounding slightly out of tune would make harmonic music as practised during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and into the present, impossible. Von Dalberg refers to the tuning controversy when comparing the human being to a musical instrument. Coming down on the side of those arguing for equal temperament, he says: “We are truly instruments; and the passions are our tones. Only equal temperament is salutary on an instrument.”

Von Dalberg’s position concerning the tuning is surprising in light of Godwin’s assertion that he showed great interest in the Pythagorean experiments with the monochord, as well as personally conducting experiments with overtones up to the 64th partial. These experiments, based upon the Pythagorean division of the string, might have suggested to him that Pythagorean tuning was more mathematically “correct”, and therefore could be seen as being closer to “divine truth”. However, his overriding concern was with social harmony and living as he did at a time of great social upheaval as well as musical innovation in both harmony and form – being contemporary with the great classical composers – it was perhaps inevitable that he took the position on tuning that he

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69 See the section on Fabre d’Olivet for a fuller explanation of this problem, including the ratios making up the major scale.
70 Von Dalberg, A Composer’s Glimpse, p. 181. Up until the ninth century, music consisted of single-line melodies; therefore the speculative theories of Plato, the Neo-Platonists and Boethius incorporated peculiarities that existed within the Pythagorean tuning system without question. It was with the rise of part singing and harmony in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that the problems of Pythagorean tuning arose. For an examination of this problem, see S. Isacoff, Temperament, London: Faber and Faber, 2002; J. James, The Music of the Spheres, New York: Copernicus Press, 1995.
71 Godwin, Music, Mysticism and Magic, p. 177.
It should also be noted that as a composer of piano sonatas Von Dalberg would have welcomed the freedom to modulate to all keys in the same manner as his contemporaries. While Von Dalberg makes no specific comment on music as a healing modality, he implies that the cause of illness is related to not being “in tune”, and notes that “in madmen the individuals tone is tuned too high, and shrieks; in idiots it is too low, the instrument is dumb, the melody senseless”.

This brief overview of Von Dalberg’s *A Composer’s Glimpses of the Music of Spirits* shows it to be an important work within the field of esoteric theories of music, expounding his cosmological and social theories using musical allegory and demonstrating a concise summary of many of the major themes on esoteric music current among his contemporaries. Although there is no evidence that Blavatsky knew of or had any connection to his work, the thematic ideas contained within his writing – and, as will be seen below, those of Fabre d’Olivet – point to a common source. This source resides in the notions of Pythagoras and Plato which, along with the Corpus Hermeticum, informed the Western occult tradition up until their time.

**Fabre d’Olivet**

Nineteenth-century France generally is regarded as the epicenter of occultic and esoteric thought, including speculative theories of music. Godwin notes that “it was in France that speculative music had its most fruitful encounter with occult philosophy”. Faivre confirms this by pointing out that: “In France especially, music was the object of esoteric speculation.”

One of the important influences on French musical esotericism during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was Fabre d’Olivet. He was born in 1767 in the Languedoc region of Southern France, to a successful Protestant family. Until 1805, the year of his marriage, he had worked as a poet, prose writer, composer and civil servant. D’Olivet lived through the French Revolution and had initially been a supporter of it, but as David Harvey suggests, the resulting collapse of his father’s business, and the

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72 It should be noted that Von Dalberg was a contemporary of Joseph Haydn (1732–1809), Mozart (1756–91) and Beethoven (1770–1827).
emerging radicalism of the leaders, changed his opinion to one of opposition.\textsuperscript{77} He writes of having been witness to many horrors, describing the Jacobins as “the most hateful government that ever appeared on the Earth, whose only purpose is terror, whose means is death, whose principal agents are executioners”.\textsuperscript{78} Harvey suggested that d’Olivet was so traumatised by the “terror” that he devoted much of the rest of his life to seeking hidden, timeless principles that would prevent such disorders from recurring.\textsuperscript{79}

D’Olivet learned music as a child, maintaining his interest throughout his adult life. According to Godwin, as d’Olivet grew older music became more “the basis of his whole philosophical system”.\textsuperscript{80} Although not musically prolific or particularly talented, he seems to have been well known enough as a composer to write a number of songs as well as a cantata for the Protestant Church’s celebration of Napoleon’s coronation in 1804.\textsuperscript{81} Around this period, he underwent a conversion to Theosophy – obviously not the Blavatskian version, but one that had informed the ideas of many mystics throughout the ages. Godwin suggests that this conversion came after a period of study and meditation, noting that at about this time his writings developed what were to become lifelong interests in sound, music and language – with the last of these resulting in his claim to having rediscovered the true meaning of the Hebrew language.\textsuperscript{82} With this knowledge, he made a new translation of the first ten chapters of the Book of Genesis that showed a cosmogony depicting Moses as the transmitter of esoteric knowledge from Ethiopian sanctuaries, which d’Olivet claimed had preserved the doctrine of “divine unity” that had been held in Atlantis.\textsuperscript{83}

He was a prolific writer and philosopher – his many works included a book containing his speculative ideas on music. These ideas are the subject of his \textit{Music Explained as Science and Art (La Musique expliquée comme science et comme art)}, written during the years 1813–15, but not published until the 1840s.\textsuperscript{84} The work is much broader than von Dalberg’s, setting out his musical and cosmological thought and

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{78} Ibid.
\bibitem{79} Ibid., p. 681.
\bibitem{80} Godwin, \textit{Music, Mysticism and Magic}, p. 207.
\bibitem{81} Ibid.
\bibitem{83} Ibid. In his introduction, Godwin has claimed D’Olivet translated the first ten books of Genesis, this seems to be an error, unless Godwin is treating each chapter as a book. See also F. d’Olivet, \textit{Histoire philosophique du genre humain}, Vol. 1, Paris, 1979, p. 289.
\bibitem{84} Godwin, \textit{The Harmony of the Spheres}, pp. 344–45. The work was published in \textit{La France Musicale} in 1850.
\end{thebibliography}
developing several themes that were current among his contemporaries. Godwin lists them as:

1. The inferiority of modern music;
2. The superiority of the ancients and their music;
3. The rediscovery of the ancient wisdom of the Chinese, giving proof of a primordial universal civilization;
4. Correspondences of the seven planets to notes in the scale;
5. Pythagorean intonation as the correct tuning of the scale;
6. The evils of equal temperament, responsible for our loss of music’s powerful, therapeutic effects;
7. The priority of melody over harmony, and of the voice over artificial instruments.  

Differences between d’Olivet and von Dalberg can be recognised, particularly in d’Olivet’s emphasis on China as opposed to India as his model of an ancient society, his support for Pythagorean tuning and the emphasis he places on melody over harmony.

Fabre d’Olivet’s high regard for the superiority of the music of the ancients is based on the role he believed music played in those societies. He wrote that “music in its speculative aspect is, as the ancients defined it, the knowledge of the order of all things, the science of the harmonic relationships of the universe; it rests on immovable principles which nothing can alter”. For d’Olivet, music was based on the universal laws he saw reflected in the Pythagorean ratios. He tells us that intellectual and celestial music has nothing to do with the practice of art, pure and simple, but relates to “the contemplation of nature and knowledge of the immutable laws of the universe”. He argues that to be effective within any society, music must be a true reflection of those laws; it must be true to the numerical principles and fundamental numbers that govern the tuning of scales and chords. To change the music is to change society. Plato, he says, “had dated the corruption of Athens from the period when their music became decadent”.

Like Plato, d’Olivet saw music as a moral determinate. As an example in his own time, he offers the chaos of the revolution: “the instigators of the revolution knew that to

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85 Ibid., p. 345.
86 d’Olivet, Music Explained, p. 40.
87 Ibid., p. 56.
88 Ibid., p. 60; see also Plato, The Laws, pp. 700–01.
change morals you first change music, so they demanded bellicose songs that would ‘electrify the soul’’. He again cites Plato who, in his Republic and The Laws, imposed a rigid censorship on any changes or innovations in music in order to prevent a breakdown within the social fabric of society. Plato argued that the Egyptians had maintained the same rules of music for ten thousand years, and that any “modification and innovation outside the traditional framework were prohibited and are prohibited even today”. Plato further suggested that only music showing a natural correctness should be heard, and should then be enforced by legislation. The authority and wisdom of the past were not in question for d’Olivet, who when commenting on the source of Plato’s musical theories argued that the musical system Plato had in mind in his writing had originated in Egypt, had been brought to Greece in its practical form by Orpheus, and was later developed by Pythagoras.

D’Olivet saw universality in the ancient systems of musical ethics with minor modifications within other cultures such as those of the Arabs, Persians, Indians and Chinese; however, he argues that all cultures ultimately derive their musical systems from a common source: the Egyptians. This universality is based upon the recognition that the same mathematically demonstrable ratios can be observed in the music of all cultures, and that the fundamental laws of mathematics – from which musical consonances are derived – are common to all times and places. Therefore, it is possible to assume that the pure tuning that has come down to us as “Pythagorean” had been discovered long before that particular person had been born. D’Olivet suggests that these aspects of the science of music were revealed to Pythagoras during the time he had been an initiate studying under Egyptian priests.

D’Olivet writes often in praise of Confucius, whom he calls the “Socrates of China”. Like Plato, Confucius considered music to be one of the first elements of education, and viewed its corruption as the “surest sign of the decadence of empires”. Thus censorship in Chinese music occurred in the same manner as in Egypt, which had been suggested by Plato for his model republic. Plato, d’Olivet notes, had recognised in

89 d’Olivet, Music Explained, p. 5.
90 d’Olivet, Music Explained, p. 59.
91 Plato, The Laws, p. 656.
92 Ibid., p. 657.
93 D’Olivet, Music Explained, p. 44.
94 Ibid., p. 44.
96 D’Olivet, Music Explained, p. 46.
97 Ibid.
this art an “irresistible influence on the form of government, and had not hesitated to say that one could make no change in the music without making a corresponding change in the constitution of the state”.  

To emphasise the universality of his point, d’Olivet quotes Confucius, who asked: “Do you wish to know if a kingdom is well governed, if the morals of its inhabitants are good or bad? Look to the music that is current there.”  

In a similar vein, in the Li Chi or Book of Rites Confucius wrote:

Music is the expression and the image of the union of Earth and Heaven; its principals are immutable; it determines the state of all things; it acts directly on the soul and puts man directly in touch with the celestial spirits. Its principal goal is to regulate the passions. It is music that teaches mutual duties to fathers and children, to princes and subjects, to husbands and wives.

The fascination with the past and his interest in biblical hermeneutics led d’Olivet into very strange places; not content with the civilisations of Egypt and China, he makes much of the lost civilisation of Atlantis. These imaginative ponderings are contained in a two-volume meta-history entitled Lettres à Sophie Sur l’histoire, which claims to be a history of the world commencing with the cooling of the Earth. In this work, he recounts the story of Adam and Eve (called Adim and Evehna) as the only surviving refugees from Atlantis. In a tour they undertake of ancient societies, Adim recognises them all as decadent and warns that the same looming catastrophe that befell Atlantis will befall them.  

According to d’Olivet, while in the last days of Atlantis, Elohim, a priest of Neptune, is claimed to have told Adim that “these pure and sweet morals have disappeared, the Atlanteans have believed themselves more happy in accumulating unjust riches, and greater in increasing the number of their slaves”. However, d’Olivet notes that previously they must have developed an ideal society, saying that “one cannot refuse to believe that they had attained the highest degree of the social state”.

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98 Ibid., p. 43.
99 Ibid., p. 49.
102 Ibid.
103 Ibid., p. 677
104 Godwin, Music and the Occult, p. 70.
During his travels, Adim seems to have found the same sorts of vices and corruption that for d’Olivet characterised the final years of the Old Regime in eighteenth-century France. It has therefore been suggested that this polemic should be seen more as a political satire then a history of mankind.\(^{105}\) For our present purposes, d’Olivet’s interest in Atlantis is important, as it anticipates Blavatsky and other twentieth-century Theosophists such as Rudolf Steiner, Cyril Scott and Corinne Heline, who all go on to discuss theoretical aspects of the music of Atlantis, claiming that the remnants form the origin of the music of various Asian countries.\(^{106}\)

According to d’Olivet, every tone includes all other tones – in other words, all tones emanate from a fundamental note.\(^{107}\) In this he is in agreement with von Dalberg, but is Pythagorean in supporting the mathematical proofs that can be demonstrated in the science of *Harmonics*. For d’Olivet music is therefore a reflection of the laws of the universe and its numerical principals, or fundamental numbers, which in turn govern the tuning of both scales and chords. In this, his outlook is that of a Pythagorean and his view of emanation from a fundamental note can be recognised as being similar to the views later articulated by Blavatsky, with her notion of the *Monad* or Absolute mind as being the ultimate source of all things.\(^{108}\)

The cosmology of d’Olivet – like Pythagoras before him and Blavatsky later – is in principle numerical, being based on the first four integers making up the Pythagorean Tetractys and the numbers 7 and 12. The number 12 not only represents the number of signs in the zodiac but, as d’Olivet tells us, was the harmonic manifestation of the natural principles 1 and 2, under which all the elements are coordinated.\(^{109}\) For d’Olivet, the number 12 was “the symbol of the universe and the measure of tone”.\(^{110}\) The number 12 is also the product of 4 and 3, which when added produce 7 or a septenary. It is formed from the ternary and the quaternary as well as the divisions of the Zodiac; 12 and 7 were therefore magical numbers for d’Olivet.

The number 7 according to d’Olivet is the symbol of “the soul of the world”, and he refers to the seven-holed flute of Pan given by “the God of the Universe”. A number of further references are made, which claim the importance of the number 7 to the


\(^{106}\) C. Heline, *Music: The Keynote of Human Evolution*, Santa Monica, CA: New Age Bible and Philosophy Centre, 1965, p. 44. For more detailed discussion, see Chapters 5–7 of this thesis.


\(^{110}\) Ibid.
Pythagoreans, the Chinese and the early Christians.\textsuperscript{111} The importance of numerology and the symbols related to each number is of ancient origin, being found in the works of the Pythagoreans and the Old and New Testaments, especially the Book of Revelation. Embracing this numerological tradition, Blavatsky stated that the number 7 was “the fundamental figure among all other figures in every national religious system.”\textsuperscript{112} Blavatsky’s cosmology, as will be discussed in the following chapter, was primarily septenary; she argued that one of the most important aspects of Pythagorean thought was the metaphysics of numbers. In the Secret Doctrine, she claims that any candidate who wished to enter his school would have needed to have already studied the four disciplines making up the Quadrivium of Boethius: Arithmetic, Astronomy, Geometry and Music.\textsuperscript{113}

One aspect common to d’Olivet and Blavatsky was the linking of planets to tones, thus creating a musical scale. Recognising that a string cannot be divided into both thirds and quarters, d’Olivet decided to explain his theory with two strings. For this, he decided to start from the notes F and B. He writes:

\begin{quote}
Let the F string be divided into 3, representing the principal, principal.
This string thus divided produces its fifth “C” by proceeding from 3:2.
Next let the B string be divided by 4 representing the principal, principal this string thus divided produces it’s fourth “E” by proceeding from 4:3.\textsuperscript{114}
\end{quote}

Thus generated, the F string gives a series of fifths, F, C, G, D, A, E, B. The B string gives a series of fourths, B, E, A, D, G, C, F – the reverse of the first series. If the two series are placed parallel, they meet on the note D which is a fourth from F and B. According to d’Olivet, D is thus the archetype of unison and represents Mars in his planetary system.\textsuperscript{115} D’Olivet goes on to create a table that links the seven planets to the seven days of the week; giving a system of correspondences thus.\textsuperscript{116}

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., p. 97.
\item\textsuperscript{112} Blavatsky, The Secret Doctrine, p. 35.
\item\textsuperscript{114} D’Olivet, Music Explained, pp. 168–69.
\item\textsuperscript{115} D’Olivet, Music Explained, p. 169.
\item\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., p. 108.
\end{itemize}
Placed in Diatonic order we obtain the following:

**Figure 2.2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saturn</td>
<td>Jupiter</td>
<td>Mars</td>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>Venus</td>
<td>Mercury</td>
<td>Moon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Sun is now at the center of the universe. No other addition is possible or necessary, as the notes given not only create a septenary but the next note in the F sequence would give F# and the B sequence Bb both regarded in this context as non-diatonic tones.

The idea of linking the planets with musical tones has its origin in the Pythagorean notion of the “Music of the Spheres”, which for centuries had been a speculative abstraction. It was Johannes Kepler (1571–1630) who provided the concept with a more modern mathematical basis, making it an object of study to the present. His mathematical calculations of planetary motion provided the starting point for Isaac Newton’s astronomical work, as well as for the stream of esotericists who have studied harmonic relationships between, and within, tones in order to explain their cosmological theories. Kepler had calculated not only the distance between the planets but also their elliptical orbits around the Sun. He then expressed these ratios as musical intervals, constructing a series of scales. In 1619, he published *Harmonices Mundi Libri V (Five Books on Cosmic Harmony)*, in which he not only gave “rational notation of the planets’ songs”, but confirmed that their real music was polyphonic and not some static scale of distances such as previous writers had struggled with.

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117 This gives a sequence of tones and semi-tones known as the Locrian mode.


Although d’Olivet would have agreed with Kepler’s calculations, he was at heart a Pythagorean, and was convinced that the true tuning of the scale should be based upon Pythagorean intervals and not the “out-of-tune” equal tempered ones. He believed that modern composers had strayed from the true principles of nature, and that the miracles and wonderful cures the ancients wrote of were no longer possible. He argued that the marvels attributed to music by the ancients were not due to any specific melody or harmony, but were “simply the physical envelope of a known intellectual principle whose presence awoke in the soul an analogous thought, and by its effect produced not only the sensual pleasure dependent on the form but the moral effect dependent on the principle”.

To be able to achieve this effect, the tuning principles as laid down by the ancients could not be compromised.

The Tuning Dilemma

At this point, a digression is necessary in order to explain the difference between the two systems as it remains an issue to this day – if only on a philosophical level. Pythagoras’s musical experiments were carried out using a monochord, a single-stringed musical instrument with a moveable bridge. Pythagoras found that if he moved the bridge on the monochord to the mid-point, the string, which vibrated twice as fast as a string vibrating at its full length, created an octave or ratio of 2:1. At three-fifths of the length, the string produced a ratio of 3:2 – or a perfect fifth. He then is said to have applied the principle of inverse proportion, not only showing a mathematical consistency but also proving a musical consistency that existed between the length of the string and the pitch it produced. This inverted fifth (C-G) becomes the perfect fourth (G-C) from the lower note or a vibrational ratio of 4:3; in this way, Pythagoras created the basic idea of the scale.

If, for our purposes, we think of the scale of C Major consisting of seven notes, we have CDEFGAB with a ratio of 2:1 supplying the top C. Up to this point, from the ratios above, we have constructed mathematically the primary notes within the scale, the octave, the fourth and the fifth – or the notes CFGC. To complete a Pythagorean scale, the gap between the first note and the fourth must be filled. If we take the first four notes or tetrachord and increase the vibrations of the first note C by 8:9, we arrive at D, which is in turn increased by 8:9 to arrive at E. At this point we are left to fill in what should be a half-tone; however, another 8:9 increase would take us past F, the perfect fourth, to F#.

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120 D’Olivet, *Music Explained*, p. 78.
121 Ibid., p. 54.
(the tritone), which is too far. The problem was that 8:9 was not divisible by two so the semi-tone, which in Greek theory was called Leimma or “left over”, was slightly out of tune, the ratio being 243:256. This same process was applied to the second tetrachord completing the scale.\textsuperscript{122}

A second problem concerning the relationship between the octaves and the fifths now became apparent. Working with two monochords, Pythagoras is said to have divided one in half seven times, making eight octaves. The second monochord he divided by three-fifths twelve times. In theory, both monochords should end with the same note eight octaves higher, but as the ratios are incommensurate, the fifths end up about one-ninth of a tone sharper than the octave. This has become known as the “Pythagorean comma”. Mathematically expressed, the ratio is approximately 73:74.\textsuperscript{123}

Up until the development of polyphonic music in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, this was not a practical concern, but with the introduction of polyphony it became clear that the thirds continually needed to be adjusted to be in tune.\textsuperscript{124} The crucial period was during the late eighteenth century, with the development of keyboard instruments. As more sophisticated ensemble music was being composed, it became necessary to create a scale that served the creative needs of composers better. After a number of experimental ideas had been tried, the “equal temperament” system as a means of tuning was adopted. This meant that the octave 2:1 remained in tune, but each fifth in the cycle needed to be flattened by one-twelfth of the comma so that the octave divided equally into twelve parts, each semitone being flattened by one part of the twelfth root of two.\textsuperscript{125} This enabled greater possibilities for modulation and orchestration by composers, leading to the musical developments of the late eighteenth century and beyond.

**Music as a Healing Modality in d’Olivet’s Work**

One final aspect of d’Olivet’s musical thought to consider is his limited reference to music for therapeutic purposes. He had studied medicine informally in his early years, and is said to have had a good understanding of the anatomy of the ear. This led him to experiment in the cure of deaf mutes by a process of tapping walls, scraping teacups and sounding “high” and “low” notes on a violin and a glass harmonica. In a letter to a friend, written on 18 April 1812, he says:

The sound of silver (my patient) told me, scrapes my throat uncomfortably; and he added that other sounds affected him sometimes in the stomach or heart region, sometimes at the top of his head, sometimes in his teeth, and sometimes throughout his whole body.  

This seems to suggest that the patient was experiencing a form of synesthesia, whereby different senses become confused. Leon Cellier suggests that d’Olivet combined a number of natural substances in the ear, as well as using a sort of animal magnetism or Mesmerism. Whatever method he used, considering the fascination he had with ancient cultures whose texts have numerous examples of the use of music to heal disease, it is surprising there is not more mention – or examples of – attempts at music therapy in his work. It would also have given him the opportunity to argue the case for the supposed curative powers inherent within Pythagorean tuning, reinforcing his argument that the loss of music’s powerful therapeutic and ethical effects was due to the introduction of equal temperament.

All of d’Olivet’s cosmological principles demonstrate the numerical, geometrical and harmonic patterns that he saw lying behind the illusory phenomena of the sense-world. For him, music tuned the cosmos according to the Pythagorean ratios, and scaled the human soul to the same proportions. Thus the sounds of heaven vibrated within the earthly soul and, to ensure heaven and Earth would be harmonized, human music should reflect the celestial. Any change in the music would consequently untune the world, bringing discord and chaos. According to Godwin, d’Olivet’s writing on speculative music made him “the first to restate the Pythagorean ideas in modern terms, and to show the way for music to regain its spiritual heritage”.

This chapter has examined a number of speculative musical ideas current during the nineteenth century through the writings of Von Dalberg and d’Olivet. Although different in emphasis, and in fundamental disagreement on the question of tuning, both are situated within the mainstream of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century esoteric musical thought. Despite their personal eccentricities, both chronicle important aspects of musical esotericism that were carried forward into the latter part of the nineteenth century.

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126 Godwin, Music and the Occult, p. 60.
127 Ibid., p. 58.
128 Godwin, Music, Mysticism and Magic, cover notes.
century, being absorbed into the Theosophical teachings of Madame Blavatsky and beyond.
Chapter 3
Sound, Vibration and Music in the Teachings of
the Theosophical Society

This chapter examines some of the fundamental teachings of the Theosophical Society, founded in 1875 by Madam Blavatsky (1831–1891) and Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1907), in particular those teachings that are relevant to music. The chapter is structured in three parts. The first provides a preliminary overview of the major streams of influence within the occultic world that were current during the period of the formation of the Theosophical Society. This is followed by an examination of the major teachings of Theosophy, and a discussion of how the topic of music was viewed within the writings of Blavatsky and later the prominent second generation Theosophists such as Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbeater.

Historical Background

Theosophy was not created in a vacuum; it was the synthesis of a number of disparate streams making up the occultic tradition of the latter part of the nineteenth century. While a number of movements arose during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, three will be discussed which are direct precursors of Theosophy. Therefore, an examination will be undertaken of the ideas of the Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772), Franz Anton Mesmer (1734–1815) and the Spiritualist movement – which, according to Wouter Hanegraaff, effectively dates from 1848, when the Fox sisters professed to have found a way of communicating with the spirits of the dead.¹²⁹

Emanuel Swedenborg

Bruce Campbell calls Swedenborg “the father of modern occultism”.¹³⁰ Godwin has said that his writings reject both a literal interpretation of the Bible and the doctrine of atonement; he asserts the dignity of man and claims that the spiritual destiny of the individual is an adventure that goes beyond death.¹³¹ Swedenborg describes a graduated

¹²⁹ W. Hanegraaff, New Age Religion and Western Culture, p. 435.
universe, its levels linked by correspondences in which everything emanates from the one
God descending through three levels of heaven, the world of spirits, humanity and lastly
the world of nature. He used a form of meditative trance to enter different states of
consciousness in which he is reported to sometimes have startled his servants by holding
conversations with spirit beings. These beings, he believed, inhabited the various levels of
heaven appropriate to their personal level of spiritual development.\textsuperscript{132} This is a very
similar notion (discussed below) to the Mahatmas or Masters of Blavatsky, who are
claimed to be adepts of the highest order, possessing knowledge and power commensurate with the stage they have reached in their spiritual evolution.\textsuperscript{133} While
Swedenborg makes no mention of a hierarchy of Masters, he did claim that all his
doctrines came from the spirit worlds.\textsuperscript{134}

Swedenborg’s accounts of trips into the spirit world were later challenged by
Blavatsky, who – while referring to him as “that great, natural, though uninitiated seer” –
cast doubt upon some of his work. She wrote, “witness Swedenborg, who goes so far as
to dress the inhabitants of Mercury, whom he meets in the spirit world, in clothes such as
worn in Europe”.\textsuperscript{135} Despite the validity or otherwise of his cosmic wanderings, much of
his teaching could be said to anticipate the spiritualism of the nineteenth century, leading
Campbell to refer to him as “the immediate predecessor of spiritualism”.\textsuperscript{136} Swedenborg’s
spirits, however, seem to be far more informative than the discarnate entities of
spiritualism, with their rather mundane messages from the other side to loved ones; they
have more in common with Blavatsky’s Adepts, imparting wisdom and occult “truths”,
and could be seen as the precursors of the Theosophical Masters.

\textbf{Franz Mesmer}

Franz Mesmer was an Austrian physician whose fame rests on his having developed
“hypnotism” or “mesmerism”. In his dissertation of 1766, he writes that the Sun, Moon
and stars not only influence each other in a similar way that the Moon does the tides, but
that they “affect in similar manner all organized bodies through the medium of a subtle
fluid, which pervades the universe and associates all things together in mutual intercourse

world-view when applied to Faivre’s definition of esotericism, see J. William-Hogan, “The Place of
Emanuel Swedenborg in Modern Western Esotericism”, in Faivre and Hanegraaff (eds), \textit{Western
\textsuperscript{133} H.P. Blavatsky, \textit{The Key to Theosophy}. London: Theosophical Publishing House, 1889, p. 299.
\textsuperscript{136} Campbell, \textit{Ancient Wisdom Revived}, p. 14; Godwin, \textit{The Theosophical Enlightenment}, p. 97.
For Mesmer, this natural flow of energy equated with health and well-being, which led him to claim that illness and nervous disorders were the result of the balance of this fluid being out of harmony with the universal rhythm. In order to counter this, Mesmer created various healing rituals, often involving magnets that were placed on the patient in order to manipulate the natural force or fluid within the person, the idea being to induce a crisis within the individual, who should then begin to recover.

Mesmer’s claims were rejected by an official committee of the Royal Academy of Sciences, which had been formed to investigate his theories. In its report, published in 1784, he is dismissed as a charlatan and an impostor, being placed in the same category as the magicians Cagliostro and St Germain. Writing in his defence, Blatavsky argued that “his claims have now been vindicated under its new name Hypnotism and is accepted by science”.

The idea of an imbalance within a person’s inner fluid creating illness is similar to the concept of illness being caused when one’s personal frequency or tone has gone out of tune, with the dissonance and lack of harmony causing disease or mental illness. Within this study, it will be shown that most of our selected authors posit theories that in various ways pertain to the idea of rebalancing the vibrations of the body to cure illness.

**Spiritualism**

Spiritualism refers to the practice by which the living attempt to communicate with the spirits of the dead – usually through a human medium. This practice has been attempted in many cultures since ancient times, but it was the events in the home of the Fox sisters in Hydesville, New York State in 1848 that marked the beginning of spiritualism as a mass movement.
Blavatsky’s involvement with the Spiritualist movement is an example of her evolving thought processes; her early involvement with the movement as a medium and a defender of the authenticity of spiritualist phenomena has been well documented. However, the degree to which she accepted spiritualist teachings by the 1880s is open to debate. Her followers point to a note in her scrapbook indicating that she was less than convinced. Using the third person, she wrote of her friend: “H.S. Olcott is a rabid spiritualist and H.P. Blavatsky is an occultist, one who laughs at the agency of spirits (but all the same pretends to be one herself).” Whether she was trying to distance herself from public identification as a spiritualist is not clear; however, in The Key to Theosophy she argues against much of spiritualist phenomena, saying that anyone who wishes to cultivate one of the occult sciences – whether it be hypnotism, mesmerism or spiritualism – having produced the physical phenomena, would find that, “without the knowledge or the philosophical rational of those powers, it would be like a rudderless boat launched on a stormy sea”.

The tension between Blavatsky, her followers and the Spiritualist movement was such that Roy Wallis has suggested that the Theosophical Society was founded as a reaction to the failure of spiritualism to develop beyond its limited ideological rationale. This may partly be true; however the evidence suggests that Blavatsky’s hostility to spiritualism developed as her own cosmological system gradually clarified – it was not apparent during the writing of Isis Unveiled. Indeed, she is quite enthusiastic about some of the phenomena, saying:

The phenomena of the mystic odors and music, exhibited by Roger Bacon, have been often observed in our own time. To say nothing of our personal experience, we are informed by English correspondents of the Theosophical Society that they have heard strains of the most ravishing music, coming from no visible instrument.

within the spiritualist movement, detailed descriptions of séances, and contemporary accusations of fraud, see C. Wilson, The Occult, St Albans: Mayflower Books, 1971, pp. 601–702.
145 Ibid., p. 751.
146 Blavatsky, The Key to Theosophy, p. 25.
Music seemed to be one of the more common phenomena to be experienced at séances during the nineteenth century: trumpets would appear in the air, drums and piano music would manifest in the room and often this would be enhanced by smells such as sandalwood.\textsuperscript{149} With regard to apparitions, Blavatsky continued, “suffice it to say that they are evoked now in spiritualist circles, and guaranteed by scientists”.\textsuperscript{150} However, by the time she came to write the Secret Doctrine, this view had completely changed.

The debate that developed between Blavatsky and the spiritualists centred on the nature of the discarnate entities being summoned and the content of the messages received. Spiritualists claimed these messages were from departed loved ones, while Theosophists argued that theirs were from highly evolved beings. Blavatsky’s position was that she did not believe in the return of the dead, saying “we deny this point blank, that which appears objectively is only the phantom or shell of the physical man”.\textsuperscript{151} It is therefore clear that while accepting much of the phenomena of séances Blavatsky claimed that they were the products of astral shells, elementals or materializations of the astral body of the medium.\textsuperscript{152} In Blavatsky’s writings, the discarnate entities of Spiritualism developed into an elaborate cosmology that included a hierarchy of beings possessing “super human knowledge and power”.\textsuperscript{153} The wisdom that these beings were able to communicate to humanity via their chosen channels was believed to contribute to the moral and spiritual evolution of the race.\textsuperscript{154}

**The Influence of Egypt**

Traditionally, occultists had identified Egypt as the fountainhead of the “ancient wisdom”, as did Blavatsky in the early part of her career – which included time spent in Egypt where she attempted to form a societé spirite in Cairo.\textsuperscript{155} Interest in Egypt had been present in Europe for many years, due to the prominence of that land in various Biblical stories. The obvious antiquity and mythology of Egyptian civilisation coupled with the mystery surrounding the interpretation of its hieroglyphs is said to have excited

\textsuperscript{149} Ibid. An example of this phenomenon is described in Wilson, The Occult, pp. 604, 611.

\textsuperscript{150} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{151} Blavatsky, The Key to Theosophy, p. 25.

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid. p.26.

\textsuperscript{153} Cited in Judge, Ocean of Theosophy, p. 34.

\textsuperscript{154} J. Ranson, A Short History of Theosophy 1875–1927, Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1938, p. 42.

\textsuperscript{155} Godwin, The Theosophical Enlightenment, p. 277.
the imagination of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century occultists.\textsuperscript{156} In light of her writings, Blavatsky was obviously among them.

It had been during Napoleon’s 1798 campaign in Egypt that a large stone of black basalt – subsequently referred to as the Rosetta Stone – was discovered. The script upon its surface consisted of hieroglyphs followed by Demotic and Greek texts.\textsuperscript{157} It was not until 1824 that the French philologist Jean-Francois Champollion, by a method of textual comparison, managed to decipher the hieroglyphs.\textsuperscript{158} From an occultist perspective, the deciphering of hieroglyphs was disappointing, as they exposed the fact that many of the hieroglyphs did not contain the hoped for ancient wisdom but were mainly records of court life and of a rather mundane character.

Blavatsky’s Egyptian interest can be observed by the title and much of the content of her first major work, \textit{Isis Unveiled}, published in 1877. By the time she came to write \textit{The Secret Doctrine}, however, Blavatsky had made India the source of the “ancient wisdom”, arguing that “recently it has been discovered that the very same ideas expressed in almost identical language, may be read in Buddhistic and Brahmanical literature”.\textsuperscript{159} As Mark Bevir observes, Blavatsky subsequently gave Western occultism an eastward focus similar to that already found in some Romantic writing.\textsuperscript{160} In doing so, it has been suggested that Theosophy became the most important avenue of Eastern teaching to the West during the early part of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{161}

**The Theosophical Society: Formation and Teachings**

It was in 1875 that the Russian mystic Madam Helena Blavatsky and Colonel Henry Steel Olcott, in conjunction with a number of fellow occultists, founded the Theosophical Society in New York.\textsuperscript{162} Although incorporating earlier hermetic and occultic traditions, the teachings of the Theosophical Society differed in that they were claimed to be a revival of the ancient wisdom based on personal contact with hidden Adepts or Ascended Masters. The three official objectives of the society were to form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour,

\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid., p. 228.
\item Blavatsky, \textit{Isis Unveiled}, Vol. 1, p. 626.
\item Bevir, “The West Turns Eastward”, p. 748.
\item Ibid.
\item For discussion on the history of the Theosophical Society, see Campbell, \textit{Ancient Wisdom Revived}; Godwin, \textit{The Theosophical Enlightenment}.
\end{enumerate}
to encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science and to investigate
the unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in the human being.\textsuperscript{163}

Forming the core Theosophical teachings are Blavatsky’s major works, \textit{Isis Unveiled} (1877) and \textit{The Secret Doctrine} (1888), the latter being sub-titled “\textit{a Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy}”. Other works include \textit{The Key to Theosophy} (1889) and \textit{The Voice of the Silence} (1889). A further more contentious work is what has become known as the \textit{Mahatma Letters}. This series of letters is claimed by Theosophists to have been written by two Mahatmas or Masters, Master Morya and the Master Koothumi, and formed the basis of two works published by A.P. Sinnett, \textit{Occult World} (1881) and \textit{Esoteric Buddhism} (1883); however, it has been suggested – particularly by non-\textit{Theosophists} – that the \textit{Mahatma Letters} were in fact the work of Blavatsky, who passed the letters on to Sinnett and convinced him of their other-worldly origin.\textsuperscript{164} The two aforementioned Masters were said to have been Blavatsky’s personal mentors, and working through her set in motion the events that gave rise to the formation of the Theosophical Society. It is therefore claimed that they are the true founders of the Society.\textsuperscript{165}

\textbf{Blavatsky’s Major Works}

The first of Blavatsky’s major works was \textit{Isis Unveiled}, which is sub-titled \textit{A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology}. The work is in two volumes, the first entitled \textit{Science} and the second \textit{Theology}, which draws together a number of themes from the occult tradition, including the idea of an ancient wisdom, an emanationist cosmology and the concept of Adepts.\textsuperscript{166} \textit{Isis Unveiled}, which has been described as a milestone in the history of Western Occultism, discusses these notions in relation to current ideas in science and in particular the implications of Darwinism.\textsuperscript{167}

An important part of Blavatsky’s cosmology was that of an emanatory universe. This process, she said, “is called evolution by science but pre-Christian philosophers and

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{163} Cited in \textit{Contact} (the Newsletter of the Brisbane Theosophical Society), No. 2, 2003, p. 2. These are part of the revised by-laws of 1878 of the Theosophical Society. See Campbell, \textit{Ancient Wisdom Revived}, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{166} Blavatsky, \textit{Isis Unveiled}. Evolution as seen by Blavatsky.
\textsuperscript{167} Campbell, \textit{Ancient Wisdom Revived}, p. 38.
\end{flushright}
Orientalists had called it emanation”. Each individual thing from an atom to the human soul is said to contain the same essence that belonged to the primeval emanation or the one infinite universal soul; therefore, according to Theosophical teaching, we are not only part of the “manifested Divine Principle”, but all souls ultimately derive from the “One”.

The notion of all souls emanating from a divine source had been part of the hermetic tradition prior to Blavatsky, and the idea of using music as an analogy was certainly a device that had been used by philosophers and music theorists from Plato through to Boethius and beyond. The sixth-century philosopher Boethius had argued that music being part of us through nature could ennoble or debase character. He placed music into three categories: musica mundane, or the music of the universe; musica humana, or human music; and musica instrumentis, created by musical instruments. His ideas of cosmic harmony were Pythagorean and Platonic and remained influential throughout the Medieval period and the Renaissance.

Von Dalberg, writing on the relationship and hierarchy of spirits to God, made reference to “the being that includes them all” describing the process of emanation and evolution as “out of which they flow, and into whose bosom they return”. As discussed previously, Von Dalberg saw the universe as emanating from an “ultimate source”; however, being a Christian, he shaped his metaphysical speculations in conformity to the idea of a Creator Being, while Blavatsky, rejecting the idea of an anthropomorphic God dispensing rewards and punishments, posits a more pantheistic solution.

There is evidence to suggest that Blavatsky’s thought underwent an evolutionary process; her attitude to reincarnation in Isis, for example, shows an inconsistency with her later teaching. Bruce Campbell points out that Blavatsky did not teach reincarnation until at least two years after the publication of Isis. It would seem that at this stage she was still under the influence of Spiritualism, as she writes: “Normally human souls go to other and more spiritualized planes after death rather then returning to Earth.” The reason

168 Blavatsky, The Key to Theosophy, p. 76.
169 Ibid., p.98.
171 Von Dalberg, A Composer’s Glimpses, p. 179.
172 Campbell, Ancient Wisdom Revived, p. 39.
given later by Olcott was that during the writing of *Isis* the Mahatmas had not taught either himself or Blavatsky about reincarnation.\textsuperscript{174}

By the time of *The Secret Doctrine*, Blavatsky’s philosophical orientation was towards the East, reflecting Indian spiritual ideas. Blavatsky taught that the universe was not created by a God, but that it appears and disappears at regular intervals of time, covering periods of immense duration – what the Hindus call “the Days and Nights of Brahma”.\textsuperscript{175} She explained:

> The Universe manifests, periodically, for purposes of the collective progress of the countless lives, the outbreathings of the one life (the Soul of the Universe, or Brahman), in order that through the *Ever-Becoming*, every cosmic atom in this infinite Universe, passing from the formless and the intangible, through the mixed natures of the semi-terrestrial, down to matter in full generation, and then back again, re-ascending at each new period and nearer the final goal; that each atom we say, *may reach through individual merits and efforts* that plane were it re-becomes the one unconditional ALL.\textsuperscript{176}

The concepts of *Reincarnation* and *Karma* are a major theme throughout *The Secret Doctrine*, which is generally acknowledged by scholars and Theosophists to be Madame Blavatsky’s master work. The book is in two volumes, setting out what is claimed to be the root knowledge out of which all religion, philosophy and science have grown.\textsuperscript{177} Blavatsky makes clear that the teachings contained in the book do not belong to any one religion, but are representative of the original source from which they all sprang. She states that “the various religious schemes are now made to merge back into their original element, out of which every mystery and dogma has grown, developed, and became materialized”.\textsuperscript{178} This was restated in 1897 by Annie Besant (1847–1933), then president of the Theosophical Society, who – referring to a “central primary body of doctrines” – writes that “as theosophy of old gave birth to religions, so in modern times

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{175} Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 76.
\textsuperscript{177} Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived*, p. 40.
\end{flushleft}
does it justify and defend them”.\(^{179}\) Concerning the spread of this knowledge, Blavatsky writes:

The Secret Doctrine was the universally diffused religion of the ancient and prehistoric world. Proofs of its diffusion, authentic records of its history, a complete chain of documents, showing its character and presence in every land, together with the teaching of all its great adepts, exist to this day in the secret crypts and libraries belonging to the occult fraternity.\(^{180}\)

The purpose of the *Secret Doctrine* could be said to be a response to the reductionist methodology of science, one of its purposes being to show that Nature is not a “fortuitous collection of atoms”. According to Blavatsky, it aims:

To assign to man his rightful place in the universe; to rescue from degradation the archaic truths which are the basis of all religions; to uncover, to some extent, the fundamental unity from which they all spring; finally, to show that the occult side of Nature has never been approached by the science of modern civilization.\(^{181}\)

Blavatsky claimed that the *Secret Doctrine* was a commentary on a mystical text known as the *Stanzas of Dzyan*. This work – supposedly discovered by Blavatsky in Tibet – was “utterly unknown to our Philologists”.\(^{182}\) The first volume of the *Secret Doctrine*, *Cosmogenesis*, deals with the creation of the universe, while the second, *Anthropogenesis*, discusses the history of the Earth and the evolution of humanity. The work is based upon three main propositions. The first is that there is “One Absolute Reality” that precedes all manifested, conditioned being – in other words, the infinite and eternal cause of all.\(^{183}\) Second, although the universe is eternal, it is subject to the law of periodicity – of ebb and flow, or the continual manifesting and disappearing of universes. This is likened to “Day and Night, Life and Death, Sleeping and waking, it is one of the

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\(^{181}\) Ibid., p. xxi.
\(^{182}\) Ibid., p. 6.
\(^{183}\) Ibid., p. 44.
fundamental Laws of the Universe”. A third principle is the identification of all souls with the Universal Over-Soul, “the pilgrimage for every soul through the cycle of incarnation”.  

Anthropogenesis, according to Peter Washington, is both the history of the human race and a commentary on Darwin. It shows humankind as descended from spiritual beings from other realms or planets, who have gradually taken physical form through a series of “Root-Races”. Human history is seen as one phase in spirit’s attempt to rise up again through a vast series of rebirths, moving through the cosmos from planet to planet. This theory of evolution, involving movement out of the source or godhead, a descent into matter and then subsequent return, embraces Darwinian ideas in a larger synthesis of science and religion. Reiterating what had been proposed in Isis Unveiled, Blavatsky says:

All things have their origin in spirit – evolution having originally begun above and preceded downwards, instead of the reverse, as taught in the Darwinian Theory. In other words there has been a gradual materialization of forms until a fixed ultimate level of debasement is reached.

This made it possible for her to reconcile in principle the theories of evolution that had been propounded by Charles Darwin and others with a more spiritual evolution that included the evolution of consciousness. One major difference between her and the Darwinian theory of evolution was that although Blavatsky was prepared to admit to the human race’s ancestors not being human, she was sure that they were not apes, saying: “Theosophy has never supported the wild theories of the Darwinists, least of all the descent of man from an ape”. She argued that apes appeared millions of years later than speaking human beings, being “a transformation of species most directly connected with that of the human family”. They had reached the “human stage” but due to the

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184 Ibid., p. 45.  
185 Ibid.  
187 Ibid.  
“bestiality that had taken place in the later third and earliest fourth race of men, their Karma dictated that their ‘egos’ incarnate in animal forms”.191

Peter Washington argues that the complexity of Blavatsky’s evolutionary theories enabled her to transform evolution from a limited socio-biological theory into an explanation of everything from atoms to angels. Instead of opposing religion with the facts as presented by Victorian science, she attempted to subsume these facts into a grand synthesis, making religious wisdom not the enemy of scientific wisdom, but its final goal – hence the sub-heading of the work as “A Synthesis of Science Religion and Philosophy”.192

Western Interest in Eastern Philosophy

As noted in Chapter 2, the nineteenth century witnessed a fascination with Orientalism and in particular Eastern philosophical and religious systems; this general interest had been developing throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, long before Madame Blavatsky emerged. An example of its influence in philosophy can be found in the writings of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860).193 Although there is no evidence to suggest that Schopenhauer was an occultist in any way, he will be discussed within this thesis due to his speculative and esoteric ideas concerning music and the influence of his philosophy on a number of later musicians, whose esoteric ideas reflect a mixture of both Schopenhauerean and Theosophical notions, among them Alexander Scriabin, Rudolf Steiner, Corinne Heline and Cyril Scott. Schopenhauer was also a major influence on the thought of Richard Wagner, whose influence is referred to consistently within esoteric musical literature.194

Interest in the East is said to be one of the consequences of the Romantic Movement that portrayed the Indians of the sub-continent as a people who shunned the materialism of the West for a simple life centered on self-realisation.195 This idealistic view is confirmed by one of the founders of the Theosophical Society, William Q. Judge,

193 See A. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 2 Vols, Trans. E. Payne, New York: Dover, 1969. For further discussion on the European fascination with India, see the section on Gustav Holst in Chapter 4 of this thesis.
who in his *Ocean of Theosophy* (1893) characterised the Indian people as being “fitted by temperament and climate to be the preservers of the philosophical, ethical and psychical jewels that would have been forever lost”. True or not, it is probable that people returning to Europe from exotic places such as India, having been exposed to Hindu and Buddhist thought, helped to foster and disseminate these ideas to a receptive audience.

Of importance within the writings of Blavatsky is her attempt to synthesise the Western occultic traditions with the religious traditions of the East, such as Hinduism and Buddhism. In so doing, she introduced concepts such as reincarnation and karma into the mainstream of Western occultism, giving occultism an Eastern orientation. The importance of Theosophy’s influence has led to it being called “the mother of the occult”, and “a seedbed from which many twentieth century occult movements would emerge”.

The popular fascination with India likewise manifested itself in literature through the writings of the Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson, and the poet Walt Whitman. One of Whitman’s major mystical poems is entitled “Passage to India”, the text of which became the subject of a number of musical compositions in the twentieth century. Such was the Indian influence on Whitman that Emerson observed that his (Whitman’s) poem *Leaves of Grass* was a combination of the Bhagavad-Gita and the *New York Herald*.

During the middle to late years of his life, the composer Richard Wagner (1813–83) also became greatly influenced by Eastern thought, in particular Buddhism; he writes of the religion as “the final transfiguration and highest perfection of the doctrine of the Brahmans”, and calls the Buddha “a saint”. Such was Wagner’s admiration for Buddhism that in 1856, with the encouragement of King Ludwig of Bavaria, he contemplated writing an opera based upon the life of the Buddha to be called *Der Sieger* (The Victor), an idea he held for 20 years. According to Raymond Head, the project was

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200 W. Whitman, *The Complete Poems*, ed. F. Murphy, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975, pp. 4–8. Although no musicians from the United States feature in this chapter, it must be borne in mind that there was a widespread interest in esotericism and occultism in that country, as is evidenced by the growth of Spiritualism and Theosophy. See Chapter 4 for the use of *Passage to India* by Gustav Holst and R. Vaughan-Williams.
never completed because Wagner probably felt the subject-matter was not strong enough, as “the Buddha’s conflicts were internal rather than external”.\textsuperscript{203} The music critic and biographer of Wagner, Ernest Newman, has argued that the emotional and metaphysical impulses of \textit{Die Sieger} were eventually incorporated into both \textit{Tristan und Isolde} and \textit{Parsifal}.\textsuperscript{204}

\textbf{Evolution and Theosophy}

Evolution as seen by Blavatsky was spiritual, not physical in the Darwinian sense. It involved emanation or involution from above, being described in \textit{Isis Unveiled} as a tree growing in reverse. The branches extend down and the roots up, the former typifying the external world of the senses or the visible universe, while the latter represent the invisible world of spirit, the roots having their genesis in the heavenly regions. A pyramid with its apex in heaven is also cited by Blavatsky as a symbol of this process.\textsuperscript{205} This emanatory notion, whether articulated by d’Olivet, Von Dalberg or Blavatsky, can be recognised in the Western tradition as a reworking of Plato’s allegorical creation myth in the \textit{Timaeus}, with its musical scale descending from the divine realm.

Blavatsky’s cosmology is both emanatory and vibratory; she writes that all natural phenomena manifest through vibration, an idea that has parallels with the Pythagorean and Platonic tradition as well as the Hermetic one.\textsuperscript{206} Emanation of the human soul is linked to the concept of evolution and, as will be shown in the course of this thesis, the evolutionary ideas of Blavatsky and later Annie Besant (1847–1933) and C.W. Leadbeater (1854–1934) had a significant influence on composers such as Scriabin and Cyril Scott, and the speculative writings on music produced by Rudolf Steiner and Corinne Heline.

Evolution is at the core of Theosophical teaching. It is not confined to physical evolution in the Darwinian sense, but is the evolution of consciousness that can be equated with a form of spiritual evolution. It could therefore be said that Theosophy “spiritualized” evolution by arguing that all things – including the individual soul – go through a process of involution, descending or emanating from the “Absolute”, which is

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\textsuperscript{203} R. Head, “Holst and India: Maya to Sita”, \textit{Tempo}, No. 158, 1986, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{205} Blavatsky, \textit{Isis Unveiled}, Vol. 1, pp. 153–54
\end{flushleft}
all “mind”, down into matter which then proceeds on an evolutionary journey back to spirit. Blavatsky noted that all things “have their origins in spirit”. 207

In his book *Theosophy*, Robert Ellwood gives a clear and precise exposition of Theosophical teachings. 208 In summarizing Ellwood’s various comments on evolution, we can conclude that many aspects of Blavatsky’s teachings stem from this one central idea. Theosophy teaches the notion of the perfectibility of the human soul, a process that takes place over vast stretches of time. This task was not considered possible in one lifetime; therefore, in order to accomplish this process, the concept of reincarnation was incorporated into the teachings, along with its primary mechanism of karma. Blavatsky’s evolutionary and cosmological scheme is essentially septenary in nature; therefore, the whole system of human involution and evolution was said to take place in seven stages. This gave rise to the notion of seven Root-Races or stages in the evolution of humankind, with each Root-Race being said to have inhabited a specific continent. The concept of Root-Races explains the emphasis Theosophical writings place on lost, mythical civilisations such as Lemuria and Atlantis, as well as the appropriation of the Romantic notion of a past “Golden Age”. This whole human evolutionary system is said to be guided and overseen by Masters, Adepts or Mahatmas, who are described as beings who have transcended the realm of ordinary karma and act as helpers to humanity. 209 The concept of the Masters could be interpreted as having a similar function to the spirit guide of Spiritualism – the Guardian Angel of New Age thinking or the Bodhisattva in Buddhism.

**The Masters**

It has already been suggested that the concept of Blavatsky’s “Masters” should be seen as a development of the notion of disincarnate spirits, which formed the basis of Swedenborgian teaching and the Spiritualist movement. The concept became necessary within the broader scheme of her evolutionary theories, which included the notions of reincarnation and karma. Blavatsky argued that humans have a seven-fold nature made up of a lower Quaternary consisting of the Physical body, the Vital Principal, the Astral body, and the seat of desires and passions; and an Upper Imperishable Triad, consisting of the Mind and Intelligence, the spiritual soul and the Spirit. They have emerged from

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209 Ibid.
more spiritual natures, undertaking a process of involution into gross materiality; the task is therefore to evolve back to spirituality through a series of rebirths.

According to Blavatsky many of the Masters, although they are said to have evolved past the lessons of this planet, choose to remain and aid the evolution of humanity, in the same way as the Bodhisattva of Buddhism. In later Theosophical literature, they are collectively referred to as “The Great White Lodge” or “The Great White Brotherhood”. Having completed normal human development and been voluntarily incarnated in human bodies, these Adepts occasionally accept individuals who meet certain criteria in order to act as their disciples. In a passage remarkable for its lack of spiritual humility, Annie Besant observes that:

The Masters ever watch the race, and mark any who by the practice of virtue, by unselfish labour for human good, by intellectual effort turned to the service of man, by sincere devotion, piety and purity, draw ahead of the mass of their fellows, and render themselves capable of receiving spiritual assistance.\(^\text{210}\)

Such, then, must have been the qualities possessed by Blavatsky, Olcott, Besant, Leadbeater and later Cyril Scott, as well as other Theosophical leaders, for they became the channels through which the Masters inspired Theosophical writings, either by direct dictation or by thought transference.

Having reached a certain initiatory level – and thereby becoming a Master in the science of esoteric philosophy – these Adepts are said to isolate themselves from society, living either in the mountainous areas of India or Tibet, or in other spiritual realms.\(^\text{211}\) If the Masters live in inaccessible areas such as the Himalayas, other planets or spiritual realms, how do they communicate their messages to those deemed worthy on Earth? The most common method of communication is called channelling, also known as mediumship. Hanegraaff offers a useful working definition:

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The term channelling refers to the conviction of psychic mediums that they are able to act as a channel for information from sources other than their normal selves. Most typically these sources are identified as discarnate “entities” living on higher levels of being.\textsuperscript{212}

There are various modes of channelling, including automatic writing, mentioned earlier with Blavatsky, or the receiving of messages through a third person or medium, with the latter being perhaps the most common. Another method of channelling is where voices can be heard in the head, as in the case of Joan of Arc, or more typically as happens in a modern-spiritualist context, the recipient of the message often entering first into a trance. Blavatsky’s preferred methods seem to have been either automatic writing or clairvoyant visions. An example of her channelling using clairvoyance is recorded by Colonel Olcott, who worked with Blavatsky on \textit{Isis Unveiled}. He tells how her pen would fly over the paper until she would stop, “look out into space with the vacant eye of the clairvoyant seer, shorten her vision as though to look at something held invisible in the air before her, and begin copying on her paper what she saw”.\textsuperscript{213}

He claims to have observed several variations in her handwriting, which he attributes to the influence of different masters.\textsuperscript{214} Blavatsky herself, while claiming that much of her work was inspired by the Masters, also insisted that at no time was she unaware of what was taking place, arguing that when in contact with the Masters they would simply hold manuscripts before her which she was then allowed to copy. Any suggestion that she received messages while in trance is dismissed; she said she was never “unconscious for a single moment”.\textsuperscript{215}

For Blavatsky and the Theosophists, the “truths” revealed by the Masters were claimed to be part of an ancient wisdom, consisting of the principal themes and ethical ideas constituting the basis of the world’s religions. The writings of Blavatsky and other leading Theosophists encapsulate the core teachings of these enlightened masters who make up what is referred to as the “Great White Brotherhood”, many of whom are claimed to have been persons of human origin, achieving perfection through a series of rebirths. This exclusive community includes founders of religious movements such as Jesus, Buddha, Confucius, Moses and Lao-tzu, as well as many of the great mystics of

\textsuperscript{212} Hanegraaff, \textit{New Age Religion and Western Culture}, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{213} Olcott, \textit{Old Diary Leaves}, Vol. 1, p. 209.
\textsuperscript{214} Ibid.; see pp. 202–54 for full description of Blavatsky writing \textit{Isis Unveiled}.
\textsuperscript{215} Ibid., p. 214.
the past, such as Cagliostro, Roger and Francis Bacon, Pythagoras, Plato and the Comte de Saint-Germain. What then are the attributes of an “Ascended Master”? According to the Theosophist Hugh Shearman:

The Superman or Adept is one who has completed the human part of his experience and has achieved as full a realization of his identity with the universal self as human life can give. He has passed beyond our particular level in the hierarchy of life. Everything that we possess, every human power and quality, is contained within him and is transcended into the Superhuman.\textsuperscript{216}

Theosophy teaches that each individual soul eventually makes this journey in order to become one with the universal self or Over-Soul referred to by Shearman. Blavatsky described this in \textit{The Voice of the Silence}, making specific allegorical reference to music while at the same time demonstrating the fundamental identity of all souls with the universal Over-Soul. She says:

Before one sets foot upon the ladder (scale) of mystic sounds, one must hear the voice of one’s inner God or higher self in seven ways:

The first is like the nightingale’s sweet voice chanting a song of parting to its mate.

The second comes as a sound of a silver symbol of the Dhyanis, awakening the twinkling stars.

The next is the plaint melodious song of the ocean-sprite imprisoned in its shell and this is followed by the chant of a Vina.\textsuperscript{217}

The fifth like the sound of bamboo-flute that shrills in thine ear.

It changes next into a trumpet-blast.

The last vibrates like the dull rumbling of the thunder cloud. The seventh swallows all the other sounds. They die, and they are heard no more

When the sixth are slain and at the Master’s feet are laid, then is the pupil merged into the one;\textsuperscript{218} becomes that one and lives therein, Behold! Thou hast become the light, thou hast become the sound, thou


\textsuperscript{217} The Vina is an Indian stringed instrument similar to a lute.

\textsuperscript{218} One with Brahma or The Atman.
art thy master and thy God. Thou art Thy Self the object of thy search, the voice unbroken, which resounds throughout eternity, exempt from change, from sin exempt, the seven sounds in one, *The Voice of the Silence. Om Tat Sat*. 219

**Root-Races**

Blavatsky’s evolutionary scheme encompassed the idea of humanity evolving through a number of Root-Races, seven in all. Each of these Root-Races has seven sub-races, which in turn have a further seven family groups or “ramifications”. 220 According to Theosophical teaching, each Root-Race represents an important phase of development or evolution in human consciousness. Those of the First Root-Race were composed of an etheric substance and appeared when the Earth was in a formative state. 221 The Second Root-Race is called the Hyperborean, and its people are said to have had loose-knit watery bodies and inhabited a continent that stretched “southward and westward from the North Pole”. 222 The Third Root-Race was the Lemurian, which coincided with the division of male and female and sexual reproduction as we now understand it. They are said to have inhabited a continent in the South Pacific and Indian Oceans, and are the ancient ancestors of those who inhabit Africa and parts of Asia. 223 The Lemurians are said to have eventually gone into decline and from the remnants emerged the Atlanteans, representing the Fourth Root-Race. Besant has argued that the Atlanteans, within the evolution of the Fourth Root-Race, led humanity down to, and represent, the nadir of physical development and materiality. 224 Due to their gradual corruption and moral decline, they were eventually destroyed in a great deluge, which Plato dated to nine thousand years ago. However, the Secret Doctrine makes clear that the term Atlantis for Theosophists does “not refer to Plato’s island alone” but “was a fragment of a great continent”. 225

As mentioned in relation to d’Olivet, the notion of a lost civilisation of Atlantis was part of a general alternative history. It is first mentioned by Plato in his *Timaeus and...

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223 Ibid., p. 7
225 Ibid.; see also Ellwood, *Theosophy*, p. 91.
Critias, and was said to be situated beyond the “Pillars of Hercules”. While no evidence to support the existence of such a place or race of people has been found, within New Age circles and some alternative spirituality groups, interest in the mythical Atlantis remains unabated to the present day. Blavatsky incorporated the notion into her evolutionarily scheme, making the Atlanteans part of the Fourth Root-Race. The acceptance of an Atlantean civilisation can be seen in the writings of later Theosophists such as Besant and Leadbeater, as well as the “alternative” histories of esoteric musical theorists such as Steiner, Scott and Heline.

Besant claimed that the area known today as China was once peopled by the survivors of the fourth sub-division of the Fourth Root-Race, who later became the Mongolians, the last sub-division of that race. According to Besant, this was why the Chinese still had traditions from ancient days that preceded the settlement of the Fifth or Aryan race in India. This Atlantean connection to China is taken up later by the author and mystic Corinne Heline, who claims that “most like the music of Atlantis is the music of China, where the former’s civilization is perpetuated through direct descent”. The present fifth Root-Race, or Aryans, which is claimed to be the current stage of humanity, is said to be on an ascending evolutionary projection that, upon reaching the sixth Root-Race, will “grow out of the bonds of matter”. The Anglo-Saxon race is said to be the fifth of seven sub-races of the Aryan Root-Race; Blavatsky claimed that the beginnings of the sixth sub-race could already be recognised in the people of the United States.

As will be observed as this study progresses, the third and fourth Root-Races, which involve the continents of Lemuria and Atlantis respectively, become increasingly prominent in the writings of later theosophists such as Besant, Leadbeater and the Arcane School of Alice Bailey. According to Rudolf Steiner, Atlantis plays an important role in the history of music; he claims that music at that time was arranged on a succession of intervals of the seventh which transported listeners into another world. The writings of Cyril Scott and Corinne Heline also include discussion of the social conditions of these supposed lost civilisations, as well as information on the nature and influence of their

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226 Plato, *Timaeus and Critias*.
228 Ibid., p. 6.
229 Heline, *Music*, p. 44. Heline is the subject of Chapter 6 of this thesis.
231 Ibid., p. 464.
232 Steiner, *The Inner Nature of Music*, p. 51. Whether these intervals were Major or Minor Sevenths is not mentioned.
music theory and practice – information obtained through clairvoyance, past life regressions or channelling. This will be discussed further in later chapters.

**Music in Theosophical Sources**

While writers of a Theosophical persuasion developed metaphysical theories of music relative to their own emerging concepts, incorporating such Hindu and Buddhist ideas as reincarnation and karma, it will be noted that the origins of their theoretical ideas always remained rooted within the Western musical tradition, and did not incorporate Eastern musical traditions, either in scale forms or through instrumentation. This is further highlighted by the fact that, while Theosophists often used Eastern religious thought as a basis for their general spiritual philosophy, within their creative output – theoretically and musically – there is an absence of anything relating to Eastern musical thought or practice. In other words, in musical terms our subjects are purely Eurocentric in outlook.

Madame Blavatsky’s writings on music fall into two areas: those that have an Eastern flavour, such as the earlier example taken from the *Voice of the Silence*, and those that are a reworking of the notions held within the Pythagorean, Platonic and Hermetic traditions. Blavatsky wrote little concerning the technical aspects of music; however, while her comments are minimal, they are important due to the powerful influence that the overall teachings of the Theosophical Society has had on subsequent generations of occultists and esoterists.

Blavatsky offers a number of mythological personages as the inventors of music: “Thoth” in Egypt, “Enoch” among the Jews and Orpheus among the Greeks – the last of whom, we are told, “changed his name with every nation”.233 Later, Besant developed Blavatsky’s Orphic notion, incorporating the Theosophical concepts of subtle bodies; she tells us that “the playing of Orpheus purified and expanded the astral and mental bodies of his disciples drawing the subtle bodies away from the physical, setting them free in the higher world”.234 Further Theosophical notions are suggested when it is claimed that such was the power of Orpheus’s music “that the Devas drew nigh to listen to the subtle tones”.235 Within Theosophy, the Devas constitute one of the ranks or orders making up the hierarchy that rules the universe. They form an important part in Steiner’s musical

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235 Ibid.
theories, as well as those of Heline (Chapter 6) and Cyril Scott (Chapter 7), who claim that Devas have influenced many composers throughout the centuries.\textsuperscript{236}

In Blavatsky’s writing concerning the inventors of music, she makes no mention of Jubal, who in Genesis is credited with being “the father of all such as handle the Harp and Organ” (Genesis 4:21). It is possible that Blavatsky saw Jubal as the father of only “instrumental music”, which is a human invention, as opposed to vocal music – the voice being seen as God’s instrument. This is supported by the emphasis Blavatsky places upon the linkage between tones and vowel sounds. She states that all of the letters in the Sanskrit language are arranged in a sacred order, and should be thought of as musical notes, and goes on to say that the whole of the Sanskrit alphabet and the Vedas are musical notations reduced to writings.\textsuperscript{237} The implication in Blavatsky’s writing is that Sanskrit is the language of the Gods, an idea being developed further by Besant and Leadbeater, who claim that its origin is extra-terrestrial and that it was brought to Earth from Venus by beings referred to as The Lords of the Flame, who are said to be “advanced beings in the Hierarchy of Masters whose origin is Venus”.\textsuperscript{238} Leadbeater writes: “It appeared that the language brought from Venus by the Lords of the Flame was this Mother-Sanskrit, truly a divine language”.\textsuperscript{239} The idea of extraterrestrials appears in William Q. Judge’s \textit{Ocean of Theosophy}, the claim being that the brighter planets such as Venus are home to more “progressed entities”, which is reminiscent of Swedenborg’s claims.\textsuperscript{240}

Sanskrit was apparently not the only thing The Lords of the Flame brought with them from Venus. Wheat, bees and ants were also imported, and we are informed that the nature-spirits in charge of animal and vegetable evolution were responsible for some unpleasant results when attempting to imitate these things with the limited resources of this planet. Besant and Leadbeater claim that these mutations caused wasps to come from bees and white ants or termites from ants.\textsuperscript{241} While these notions are not connected to music as such, the idea of an extra-terrestrial origin of many things on Earth is common among Theosophists, and the concept of music being of divine or other-worldly origin supports this.

\textsuperscript{238} Ranson, \textit{A Short History of Theosophy}, pp. 47–48.
\textsuperscript{239} Besant and Leadbeater, \textit{Man}, p. 258.
\textsuperscript{240} Judge, \textit{The Ocean of Theosophy}, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{241} Besant and Leadbeater, \textit{Man}, p. 137.
Returning to musical references within the work of Blavatsky, she is consistent with the Hermetic tradition by acknowledging music as a powerful force in the universe, stating that: “Music may be produced of such a nature that the pyramid of Cheops would be raised in the air, or that a dying man, nay, one at his last breath, would be revived and filled with new energy and vigour.”242 In this statement, she both recognises the power of music and vibration to act on physical matter and affirms its use as a therapeutic tool, thereby aligning herself with the teachings of the ancients and the Western esoteric tradition since the Renaissance.

Blavatsky made constant use of ancient sources in support of her ideas. The notion that music has the power to move inanimate objects was an ancient one. A well-known example from Greek mythology is Amphion, a son of Zeus, who had also been given a lyre by Hermes; it was said that in the process of fortifying the city of Thebes, Amphion’s playing of his lyre caused the stones to move effortlessly into place, suggesting that the walls of the seven gates of Thebes were raised through the power of music.243 Blavatsky’s reference to the pyramid of Cheops echoes this Greek myth.

The theme of sound having an effect on matter is likewise the subject of the Old Testament story of Joshua and his army taking the city of Jericho. In the case of Joshua, the power of sound and vibration is seen to be used in a destructive way rather than a constructive one. We are told Joshua ordered the people to first march around the city walls seven times:

So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets; and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout that the wall fell down flat. (Joshua. 6:20).

Blavatsky also alludes to music as a healing agent, therefore being consistent with the teachings of all major civilisations that have embraced the idea of music as therapeutic. An example in ancient Jewish literature is the story of David’s curing of Saul’s depression:

243 Cited in Godwin, Music, Mysticism and Magic, p. 11.
And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul that David took a harp, and played with his hand; so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him. (Samuel 16:23)

Blavatsky was aware of the tradition of music and healing, noting in *Isis Unveiled* that:

From the remotest ages the philosophers have maintained the singular power of music over certain diseases, especially of the nervous system, it draws out disease, which streams out to encounter the musical wave, and the two, blending together, disappear in space.\(^\text{244}\)

Besant elaborates on this subject, arguing that disease is the result of discordant vibrations; she is in agreement with d’Olivet and Von Dalberg when she says that all things have their own rhythmic vibration or tone, due to the body being made of finer or coarser materials. Elaborating on this theme, Besant suggests comparing the body of a butcher to that of a “refined student”; presumably the butcher is made of coarser material due to the nature of his trade, and therefore vibrates at a lower rate or tone. Besant and Leadbeater maintain that a pure body such as “a refined student” repels coarse particles due to the vibrational rate of the particle being discordant with that of the “student”; a coarse body, however, attracts them because their vibrations are similar.\(^\text{245}\) No allowance seems to have been made in the argument for the “refined student” to be working as a part-time butcher. Despite the dubious nature of these ideas, these themes became more prominent as the century progressed and can be recognised today within some alternative spirituality groups – especially if they espouse vegetarianism. They can be recognised clearly in the writings of Steiner, Scott, Heline and David Tame who, in the context of explaining their theories of reincarnation and karma, have all embraced the notion of good or bad vibrations being attracted to the body or soul. This idea has been used further in order to explain the variations that exist between the moral and ethical behaviour of individuals and races, and will be discussed in later chapters

**Cosmic Intervals**

Blavatsky made a number of allusions to the musical quality of the universe, which finds its genesis in the Pythagorean concept of the *Music of the Spheres*. She contends that


Pythagoras developed his doctrine of the Music of the Spheres on the number 7, and gives a summary of the intervals that sound between the planets. Blavatsky – presumably quoting Nicomachus – writes that the Pythagorean scale is made up of the following intervals: the distance between the Moon and Earth would sound as a tone; the Moon to Mercury and Mercury to Venus are both a half tone; Venus to the Sun is one and a half tones; the Sun to Mars a tone; Mars to Jupiter a half tone, Jupiter to Saturn likewise half a tone and to the stars of the Zodiac a tone, thereby making seven tones. Referring to these cosmic tones, which make up a musical scale, she states that: “All the melody in nature is in these seven tones, and therefore it is called the Voice of Nature.” She goes on to say:

The Doctrine of the Spheres ruled by the seven sacred planets shows the seven powers of terrestrial and sublunary nature, as well as the seven great forces of the universe, proceeding and evolving in seven tones, which are the seven notes of the musical scale.

While Blavatsky points out that some scales in the Secret Doctrine start from the lowest note, she emphasises that the reason is that the lowest tone represents the material plane and is therefore the first step in the evolutionary process or the return of the soul to the Divine. However, from a more embracing perspective, the scales discussed in The Secret Doctrine should be thought of as allegories for the principal of emanation proceeding from high to low in a similar fashion to those of the Pythagoreans and Plato’s scale in Timaeus. The Greeks did not think of their scales as being calculated from low notes to high, but rather the opposite, suggesting that creation was emanatory in nature. Their cosmology was constructed on the principle of cosmic emanation which being Divine should later serve as a model for humankind. This emerges again during the Renaissance within the Hermetic axiom of “as above, so below”, and in turn is the model used by Blavatsky, who applied the concept to her theory of evolution, arguing that “evolution can only begin after a period of involution or the descent of spirit into matter.

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246. An Interval is the distance or gap between any two notes – for instance, a black note next to a white note on a piano is called a semi-tone, which is the smallest interval used in Western music.


which comes down from the spiritual to the material world”. In this way, the scale – by analogy – becomes an aural representation of the cosmic process of creation.

The musical scale as a model of cosmic harmony was of the utmost importance in Pythagorean and Platonic thought because the experiments on the monochord had confirmed the importance of a numerical limit in the indefinite realm of manifestation and suggested that if mathematical harmony underlines the realm of tone and music then number must account for other phenomena in the cosmic order. It was claimed that this order could be observed in the movement of the planets, whose movement within their orbits created tones, the harmony of which could be related mathematically back to the harmony of the musical scale.

Like that of the Pythagoreans, Blavatsky’s system of music involves a connection with number, and it is through this relationship that the idea of a musical basis of the universe, with harmony being its natural state, can be recognised. The universe, she says, is constructed “according to the principles of musical proportion”, which is why “knowledge of music and geometry were obligatory in the school of Pythagoras”.

**Colour and Music**

An important element within the tables of correspondences shown in the *Secret Doctrine* is the relationship between music, number and colour. In combining the nature of color and sound, Blavatsky emphasised that “one needs a perfect knowledge of the correspondences between colors, sounds and numbers in order to see in man the same potential powers that exist in the creative forces of Nature”. This was of interest to the Russian composer and Theosophist Alexander Scriabin who like a number of artists such as the painter Wassily Kandinsky, experienced synesthesia, a physiological condition in which the various senses become combined – in their case, the simultaneous hearing of sounds with a matching colour.

*The Secret Doctrine* states that in the music of the spheres we can find the perfect scale, with correspondences to both colours and numbers. These numbers, being determined by the vibrations of colour and sound, are said to “underlie every form and guide every sound”. In this way, Blavatsky claimed that “we find the summing up of the

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254 Ibid., p. 439.
255 See the discussion of Scriabin in Chapters 4 and 8 of this thesis for the application of these ideas by present-day authors.
manifested universe”.  She goes on to illustrate these correspondences, pointing out that as our plane is an illusionary one – being one of reflection – the various notations are reversed and should be counted from the bottom upwards. The musical scale, colours and principles, according to their number of vibrations, proceed from the world of gross matter through seven planes to that of spirit, as shown in Figure 3.1.

**Figure 3.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principles</th>
<th>Colours</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>States of matter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chhaya, Shadow or Double</td>
<td>Violet</td>
<td>B or Si</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Ether</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manas (Higher Mind or Soul)</td>
<td>Indigo</td>
<td>A or La</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Critical state Air</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auric Envelope</td>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>G or Sol</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Steam or vapour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Manas or Animal Soul</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>F or Fa</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Critical state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhi or Spiritual Soul</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>E or Mi</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prana or Life Principle</td>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>D or Re</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Critical state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kama Rupa (Seat of Animal Life)</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>C or Do</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two points of interest arise within the above table: first, no upper note (C or Do) is assigned to *Atma*, as the Supreme Spirit *Atma* is believed to include all other principles.  Second, according to the *Secret Doctrine* Kama Rupa corresponds to the low Do or “C” in the scale, and is said to become the starting point on the material plane containing all potentialities of matter. It is further claimed to “commence the notation on every plane, as corresponding to the matter of that plane”.

One must assume that “C”, as the starting note, is an arbitrary choice that has no relation to any specific or “absolute” pitch as we understand it today and that the intervallic system for Kama Rupa is for that plane only, corresponding to our “C” Major scale. Assuming this is the case a problem arises within the scheme. If, as Blavatsky claims, Do “starts the notation on each plane” with the note given, on reaching the second level, Prana, there would have to be a change in “mode”; however, no advice is given as to what scale or mode should be operating. If we start D, second plane with “Do”, on reaching “F” we would have a minor third, which does not maintain the intervallic system started on “C”; F # would need to be inserted for

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258 Ibid. For a more extensive set of correspondences involving the above plus metals, planets and days of the week See diagram between p.452 and 453
259 Ibid., p.475.
consistency. If left as “F”, we have an intervallic system corresponding to today’s “Dorian Mode”, which is different in its effect to the “C” Do in the first plane (Kama Rupa). Indeed, a change in mode would occur on every level. One can only assume that Blavatsky either did not understand the full theoretical implications of attempting a musical analogy for her evolutionary scheme or is vague in her instructions for the interpretation of the system. One further point is that no advice is offered as to whether the intervals are based upon Pythagorean or Equal Tempered tuning – a crucial point, one would think, when dealing with cosmic vibrations and numbers that represent universal constants.

Concerning human evolution and music, Madame Blavatsky has said that “sound is the most potent and effectual magic agent and the first of the keys which opens the door of communication between mortals and the immortals”.260 In her earlier writings, she describes music as “the combination and modulation of sounds, and sound is the effect produced by the vibrations of the ether”.261 These impulses in the ether, when coming from different planets, are said to produce different tones, which Blavatsky says can be likened to the tones produced by the different notes of a musical instrument. Each note is said to have a different effect upon the soul.262 With a nod towards the art of astrology, she suggests that certain planetary aspects create a disturbance in the ether of our planet, while others promote rest and harmony.263

Except for her silence on the tuning controversy, all Blavatsky’s pronouncements on music show her to be very much within the Pythagorean tradition. She makes a number of references to the idea of the “music of the spheres”, claiming that it is “something more than a mere fancy” and that the world had been called forth out of chaos by sound or harmony.264 Her writings therefore reflect a similarity to the existing esoteric ideas on music discussed within the work of Von Dalberg, D’Olivet and others, which includes attributing specific sounds to planetary orbits. This theme will be examined further below in relation to the work of subsequent authors.

261 Blavatsky, Isis Unveiled, p. 275.
262 Ibid., p. 275.
263 Ibid. This idea is elaborated on by later writers of esoteric musical theories such as Rudolf Steiner, Corinne Heline and Dane Rudhyar.
Thought Forms

An important part of Theosophical teaching that has influenced speculative musical ideas since the early twentieth century is the notion of thought-forms. This was first articulated in the work of Blavatsky and later developed by Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbeater in a small book entitled Thought Forms, first published in 1901. Blavatsky said that “Thought is Matter” and every thought, in addition to its physical accompaniment, exhibits an objective aspect on the astral plane. The concept of thought forms is as follows: each definite thought that we have produces a double effect in the mental and astral realms, a radiating vibration and a floating form. In humans, these realms are referred to as the Aura, and consist of cloud-like substances that make up the higher bodies; they are said to interpenetrate each other, extending beyond the confines of the physical body. Two of these bodies, the mental and desire bodies, are those mainly concerned with the appearance of thought-forms. According to Blavatsky, every thought gives rise to a correlated set of vibrations in the matter of these bodies, which in their turn are accompanied by a display of relevant colours. For example, if a thought is “pure and simple” or of a “noble” character, the form is said to become “a living entity of intense activity animated by the idea that generated it”. To the clairvoyant, the thought is said to be surrounded by pure bright colours. On the other hand, when the energy flows outwards towards external objects of desire, or is involved in passion or emotional activities, the colours are “dull in hue, browns and dirty greens and reds playing a great part in it”.

There are a number of allusions made in relation to the shape of the forms, which are determined by the vibrations that are set up by a particular thought. Comparisons have been made between the clairvoyantly perceived shapes and figures of thought-forms and experiments conducted using sand on a metal disc, which when scraped by a violin bow creates a musical sound in which the particular vibrations makes the sand arrange itself into geometric shapes. Besant writes that “forms are shaped by vibrations set up by thought, just as on the physical plane we find figures which are shaped by vibrations set up by sound”.

265 Ibid., p. 149.
266 Besant and Leadbeater, Thought Forms, p. 11.
267 Ibid., p. 7.
268 Ibid., p. 8.
269 Ibid., p. 9.
270 Besant, The Ancient Wisdom, p. 60; Besant and Leadbeater, Thought Forms, p. 8.
Besant is probably referring to the work of Ernest Chaldni, an eighteenth-century scientist who, around 1800, developed what became known as Chaldni plates.\(^{271}\) The experiments involved a number of plates being evenly covered with sand; a violin bow was then drawn across at certain points on the edge of the plate, which activated the material. The results showed that the sand moved into various patterns activated by the vibrating plate. Plates of other shapes and materials gave the same effect in rendering vibratory waves visible. According to Besant and Leadbeater, this was proof that vibration – and therefore, by extension, music – does indeed have an effect on material objects and, following that line of reasoning, the physical body. If one substitutes sound waves for thoughts, these vibrations are said to set up movement in the mental and astral bodies and present “clearly before us the *modus operandi* of the building of forms by vibrations”\(^{272}\).

The study of the effects of vibration – including various musical works – was taken up in the last quarter of the twentieth century by the Theosophist Geoffrey Hodson and the Swiss scientist Hans Jenny, who gave the name “Cymatics” to this discipline.\(^{273}\) More recently, Masaru Emoto has produced a collection of photographs that demonstrate the effect of human thought on ice crystals. Emoto uses the medium of music in many of his experiments to create crystals of various shapes.\(^{274}\) Emoto’s work, while considered controversial, is interesting due to his use of musical genres in his experiments. He claims that crystals exposed to classical music create beautiful and well-shaped forms, whereas those exposed to “heavy metal music” are disfigured and unbalanced in form.\(^{275}\) Heline, Scott and Tame could claim this to be scientific proof of their theory concerning the effect of “bad music” on the body and mind, and justification for music to be censored as had been suggested by Plato.

It has already been noted that sound is associated with colour, not only in the table of correspondences suggested by Blavatsky, but also in reference to the physiological condition of synesthesia experienced by, among others, the composer Alexander Scriabin. Extrapolating from the argument that thought, sound and colour are related in the superphysical world, Besant and Leadbeater applied the occultic law of correspondences, claiming that sound will produce form as well as colour. They claimed that every piece of music leaves behind an impression of its nature in the ether, which lasts for a period of

\(^{272}\) Besant and Leadbeater, *Thought Forms*, p. 19.
\(^{275}\) Ibid.
time after the piece has been played. They point out, however, that it is only “clearly visible and intelligible to those who have eyes to see”.\textsuperscript{276} This presents an epistemological problem, as it pre-supposes that the viewer must therefore possess the faculty of clairvoyance, which would allow for any number of claims as to the shape, size and colour of the form to be made by the particular viewer, none of which could be verified scientifically or otherwise by any independent person not possessing this faculty. This is similar to the claim that only an initiated few – as was the case with Pythagoras – had the ability to hear the Music of the Spheres.

The difficulty of accepting the pronouncements of clairvoyants such as Leadbeater has created many problems for Theosophists from the period of Besant’s presidency until the present. In 1919, H.N. Stokes, a prominent Theosophist at the time, felt compelled to write a parody of the society’s third objective, which is “To investigate the unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man”. Stokes argued it should now read “To accept without investigation the unproved assertions of clairvoyants about the unexplained laws of nature, and the powers which they claim for themselves”.\textsuperscript{277} The problem of the “unproved assertions of clairvoyants” remains with Theosophy to the present day; clairvoyance is prominent in the work of Steiner, Scott, Heline and Dane Rudhyar, thus making their work difficult to evaluate within a standard and verifiable historical and musicological framework.

Besant herself had some reservations concerning the assertions of clairvoyants, at one point casting doubt on whether music forms can technically be classified as thought-forms, but settled in the affirmative by arguing that the form created by a piece of music is the result of “the thought of the composer expressed by means of the skill of the musician through his instrument”.\textsuperscript{278} Obviously a number of variations are possible here, ranging from which instrument or instruments play a work to the manner and quality of the performance. If the same piece is played exactly as it was the time before, then presumably the same form will be built.\textsuperscript{279}

Three pieces are illustrated in Thought Forms, the first by Mendelssohn – which has a form rising above the church where it is being performed and rises to about 100 feet (30 metres). The second, a chorus by Gounod, is said to rise fully 600 feet (180 metres) above the church tower. The third piece, a work by Richard Wagner, creates a form like a

\textsuperscript{276} Besant and Leadbeater, Thought Forms, p. 67; Hodson, Music Forms.
\textsuperscript{277} Cited in Campbell, Ancient Wisdom Revived, p. 127.
\textsuperscript{278} Besant and Leadbeater, Thought Forms, p. 67.
\textsuperscript{279} Ibid.
“marvelous mountain range, each peak with a splendid splash of vivid color, glowing with the glory of its own living light, spreading its resplendent radiance over all the country around”. This lyrical description probably has as much to do with Wagner’s stature and reputation as the great musical genius of the age than the piece or the performance. As the forms that result from various works are said to become larger with bigger ensembles, Wagner’s work would create the largest thought form as, in the examples given, his work requires the largest resources.

Following on the work of Besant and Leadbeater, the Theosophist Geoffrey Hodson in 1976 produced a book that incorporated the Cymatics of Hans Jenny and a more extensive treatment of music forms. Included in Hodson’s book are his clairvoyant representations of works by Bach, Mozart, Haydn, Handel and two by the ubiquitous Wagner. Hodson accounts for the phenomenon by arguing that the composer originates and establishes the form, partly by his consciousness during composition, and partly by his performance of the piece. The form is therefore a combination of an expression in superphysical matter of the composer’s inspiration with the superphysical effects of the physical sound. This is said to allow for a measure of the composer’s “egoic life” and consciousness to be incarnated by what Hodson calls an “ensouling” principle that creates a permanent entity. Hodson argues that whenever a composition is performed, an instant rapport with the composer’s form and therefore with his life and consciousness is established with the audience.

Hodson’s theory creates more questions than answers, especially with jazz and popular styles that are hardly ever performed the same way twice, and in certain instances have little resemblance to the original. However, judging by the choice of genre and the composers mentioned, it would be safe to assume only Western classical music is being thought of as a model by Hodson, as it was by Blavatsky, Besant, Leadbeater and all of the selected writers in this thesis. Their musical emphasis is purely classical and Eurocentric, especially with the composers discussed within this thesis, for despite their sympathetic Eastern philosophical leanings no authentic Eastern musical content is ever used. There is also within their work a consistent Eurocentric and elitist approach that can be observed in their attitude to the question as to what constitutes “good” music as opposed to “bad”, which it could be argued would be a natural position taken by a group

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280 Ibid., pp. 71-75.
282 Ibid., p. 19.
283 Joe Cocker’s version of The Beatles’ “A Little Help From My Friends” is a good example.
of people who seem to regard themselves as spiritually and intellectually superior in relation to the masses.

It seems to be a human trait to regard the music of one’s own preference to be superior to that of others; this idea can be traced back to Plato and perhaps the Egyptians, if Plato’s source is to be believed. Plato was firmly on the side of censorship, as he made the assumption that music and the arts in general affect moral character. Plato placed restrictions upon the types of instruments that could be played in his Republic with only the lyre and cithara – the instruments of Apollo, permitted in his city. The reason for this Platonic censorship is due to his belief that music was the most “imitative” of all the arts. He says that:

It is not only the most celebrated but is the most dangerous as well. A mistake in handling it may cause untold harm, for one may become receptive to evil habits. Remember that poets, who do not have the muse’s skill, sometimes wrongly separate or combine words, melodies, dance figures and rhythms. Where only melody and rhythm combine, as in the use of solo cithara or Aulos, it is extremely difficult to recognise any meaning or the imitation of any worthy object in the rhythm and mode … solo instrumental performances display every sort of crudity and trickery.284

Theosophists from Blavatsky onwards have adhered to this Platonic aesthetic. Therefore, the type of music discussed in a thesis such as this becomes limited to virtually one genre (classical or art music); the effects of popular genres – whether regarded as good or bad, on the spiritual development of people, cannot be assessed fully. When genres such as jazz are mentioned – as, for example, by Scott and Heline – they are always as an agent of moral decay and a means by which inferior races undermine the superior Aryan one.285 As Scott points out, “the dissemination of jazz was definitely put through by the Dark Forces” and at its height “very closely resembled the music of primitive savages”.286

285 For the evil effects of jazz, see Heline, Music, p. 109. Scott, Music, pp. 142–43.
286 Scott, Music, p. 142; Tame, The Secret Power, p. 194. Tame’s work includes the relationship between Voodoo and the origins of jazz, and the decline in sexual morality among young girls.
As has been already noted, some Theosophists have argued that when a piece of music is performed there is an immediate link between the composer’s consciousness and the audience. Applying this to jazz, David Tame attacks the jazz performer for his “long improvised solos”, which he argues present a stream of negative consciousness, denying “all higher laws of art or of submission to a higher will”. This is in contradiction to Besant and Leadbeater’s view: without being aware of the later problem presented by modern genres, they would seem to support more popular styles of creativity by noting that in Atlantis there was no written music and that musical skill was not the ability to interpret the work of a master, “but simply by fertility and resource in improvisation”. This suggests that the Atlanteans must have used the same method of musical creativity as jazzmen, folk and rock musicians today – which in some quarters could be seen as a certain harbinger of doom for our own age as well as being suggested as a reason for the destruction of Atlantis.

This chapter has outlined the fundamental esoteric theories of sound and music that existed within the early teachings of the Theosophical Society, and that subsequently were influential in shaping the esoteric ideas of twentieth-century writers such as Rudolf Steiner and Cyril Scott. It has been noted that although Blavatsky wrote very little on the subject of music itself, those musicians drawn to her overall philosophy show her influence – if not in their musical works, then certainly in their metaphysical ideas concerning music.

This thesis will now address the question posited in the introduction: How is this influence apparent within the metaphysical musical theories of composers and authors? The following chapter will examine the work of three musicians from three different European countries: Russia, France and England.

288 Besant and Leadbeater, Thought Forms, p. 193.
289 One could make fun of these arguments by pointing out that there are no scholarly studies dealing with the influence of Atlantean improvisary techniques or their role in the moral decay and destruction of Atlantis due to a lack of original sources.
Chapter 4
Examples of Theosophical Influence in Russia, France and England

This chapter examines the influence of Theosophy during the *Fin-de-Siècle*, focusing on three composers: the Russian Alexander Scriabin (1872–1915), Edmund Bailly (1850–1916), an important figure within Parisian occult and Theosophical circles, and the English composer Gustav Holst (1874–1934). Musically, they represent the end of an era that had been dominated by German Romanticism and the towering figure of Richard Wagner; from the perspective of speculative music, they demonstrate various aspects of the Theosophical tradition and the range of sometimes subtle ways in which it manifested.

Scriabin’s Theosophical credentials have been well documented – indeed, such was his admiration of Blavatsky and Theosophy that while in London during the spring of 1914 he is said to have sought out and dined with the secretary of the society, which led him to claim that he had visited “the woman in whose arms Blavatsky had died”.290 Edmond Bailly, according to Godwin, was a “lifelong and faithful Theosophist”.291 His inclusion in this study is not so much due to his musical output, which was minimal, but rather his theoretical ideas concerning music. Further, Bailly is important due to the influence of his bookshop, L’Art Indépendant, which became a meeting place for occultist, Symbolist poets and musicians during the *Fin-de-Siècle*.292 In addition to the bookshop, Bailly ran a publishing house that published the works of poets Jules Bois and Stephane Mallarmé, as well as early works of Debussy, and even a setting of five poems by Baudelaire.293 Gustav Holst’s inclusion is justified due to the external Theosophical influences in his life rather than any admitted association with the Theosophical Society. His step-mother was an ardent Theosophist, he demonstrated a lifelong interest in Eastern religions, and during his adult life many of his closest friends were Theosophists. Holst was also a contributor to the Theosophical magazine *Quest*. Therefore, while he may not

have been open about any direct Theosophical association, a number of factors combined point to an underlying influence.

A number of competing influences were current during the post-Romantic period, first among them being an emerging nationalism that spread across Europe, strongly evident in the music of composers from countries such as Russia, Spain, Hungary, England and the United States. Second, a new school of composition arose in France, whose foremost exponent was Claude Debussy (1862–1918). Debussy’s music, according to the art historian William Fleming parallels the style of the Symbolist poets, whereby broken fragments of melody suggested rather than defined atmospheric effects. This was often helped by suggestive titles, which in turn appealed to the listener’s subjective imagery – in much the same way that has been suggested in relation to supposed “esoteric” pieces of music in the Introduction to this thesis. Third, a number of influential avant-garde artistic movements emerged at this time, including Expressionism, Primitivism, Surrealism and the Symbolist movement. The latter was credited with having had as significant an influence on Scriabin as Theosophy.

**Alexander Scriabin (1872–1915)**

Alexander Scriabin could be said to be the ultimate Theosophical composer. He is unique among major composers in his attempt to incorporate Theosophical notions into his musical works in symbolic form. However, Malcolm Brown’s 1979 paper “Scriabin and Russian Mystic Symbolism” claims that Theosophy was only one of a number of major influences on his work. Brown argues – as does Simon Morrison – that the ideas of the Russian Symbolist movement also influenced Scriabin’s aesthetic ideas, together with the philosophy of Schopenhauer and the Wagnerian notion of a synthesis of the arts. The evidence presented will show that while Scriabin was not a Theosophist in the sense that he accepted all of the teachings of Blavatsky et al., he used Theosophical notions to explain his mystical and philosophical ideas. While acknowledging these influences on

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Scriabin, I contend that his thought processes were eclectic and that fundamentally his mind sought a synthesis of the various esoteric ideas available. I therefore argue that Theosophy – and in particular the idea of “spiritual evolution” – can be shown to be his most important influence.

Scriabin never wrote an autobiography or any systematic explanation of his ideas, so primary source material is confined to a collection of letters and some incomplete drafts of various texts he wrote for use in his musical works. Although many books and articles have been produced that discuss Scriabin’s music, those dealing with his mystical ideas have been limited. The most reliable and informative sources are three works that examine his mysticism and its impact upon his creative thought processes. Among them is a biography of Scriabin by his brother-in-law, Boris De Schloezer. While De Schloezer’s biography is one of the most perceptive concerning the evolution of Scriabin’s musical and philosophical ideas, a criticism is that, being based upon De Schloezer’s personal memories concerning conversations with Scriabin, the work suffers from a lack of referencing.

The second source is an article by Malcolm Brown, who argues that in the latter part of Scriabin’s life, Russian mystic symbolism was more influential than Blavatsky’s Theosophy. Third, in his article “Scriabin and the Impossible”, Simon Morrison builds upon Brown’s thesis while making a more in-depth analysis of the conceptual development of Scriabin’s plans for his Mysterium and the Preparatory Act. While other texts will be used, the three mentioned above demonstrate the competing influences on Scriabin’s thinking.

Musically, Scriabin’s Theosophical ideas can be observed in three works, only one of which was ever completed and performed: Prometheus (The Poem of Fire), Opus 60, for orchestra, piano, chorus and color-organ, to be discussed below. The outlines of the incomplete texts of two further works that were never finished but are full of Theosophical concepts and symbolism will form the main area of discussion in this thesis, to demonstrate Scriabin’s Theosophical ideas; these are the Mysterium, first

301 Brown, “Skriabin and Russian ‘Mystic’ Symbolism”, pp. 42–51. This is the primary thrust of Brown’s argument.
302 Morrison, “Skryabin and the Impossible”. 
conceived in 1902 and the Preparatory Act, (started 1914) which was to act as a preliminary to the Mysterium.  

**Early Years**

Alexander Scriabin was born in Moscow, and is said to have shown remarkable musical gifts early in childhood. Following studies at the Conservatorium in Moscow, he became a concert pianist, giving recitals throughout Europe. His early style, according to P.H. Lang – both pianistic and compositionally – was influenced by the Polish composer Frederic Chopin (1810–1849). In his later years, Scriabin’s harmonic ideas came under the influence of the chromaticism of Franz Liszt and Richard Wagner, from which he ultimately evolved a harmonic language peculiar to himself. An example of his harmonic ideas can be seen in his often-used construction of chords in fourths (quartal harmony) rather than thirds. While he was not the first to use quartal harmony, his motivation was informed by his spiritual ideas as well as musical ones. Faubion Bowers has argued that, as Scriabin believed the ultimate purpose of music was revelation, he made use of musical motives to symbolise or express esoteric ideas – for example, he employed a descending minor ninth to represent the descent of spirit into matter, or an alternating whole tone up and down to represent the breathing in and out of the Creator, a descending semitone represented human sorrow.

Philosophically, his early influences included Wagner, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer and the Russian Symbolist poets Vladimir Solovyov (1853–1900) and Vyacheslav Ivanov (1866–1949). An example of Russian Symbolist thought that can be recognised in Scriabin is Solovyov’s view that true reality can only be viewed by the feeble mind of the human race through a synthesis of religion, philosophy and science – in other words, faith, thought and experience; this was a similar notion to that held by Blavatsky, being the sub-title of her *Secret Doctrine*. This perspective resonated with the young Scriabin, and can be observed in his mature ideas. Solovyov had also claimed that “art must be a

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309 Brown, “Skriabin and Russian ‘Mystic’ Symbolism”, p. 44.
real force, enlightening and regenerating the entire human world".\footnote{Morrison, “Skryabin and the Impossible”, p. 44.} The idea that art is linked to some divine power was in keeping with the young Scriabin’s own philosophical and aesthetic ideas, as is evidenced in the text to the finale of his First Symphony, “O, marvellous image of the Deity, Pure Art of Harmonies, We praise thee ardently With ecstatic emotion”.\footnote{Ibid.} This deification of art and his fascination with ecstasy is elaborated upon by his friend, Leonid Sabaneev, who wrote:

Scriabin regarded music and art as worthy of attention only when employed for ecstatic and not aesthetic ends. For him the rapture of artistic felling is only the framing of religious rapture. Art springs from the depths of mysticism and soars to the heights of religion; essentially it is not of this world.\footnote{L. Sabaneev, “Scriabin and the Idea of a Religious Art”, \textit{The Musical Times}, Vol. 72, No. 1063 (1931), p. 790.}

Scriabin’s mystical philosophy seems ultimately to be one of synthesis; according to De Schloezer, he used any ideas – Symbolist or Theosophical – that fitted or agreed with his grand scheme. This led Scriabin to be somewhat discerning in what he read, for when discussing the composer’s philosophical library, De Schloezer states that Scriabin would read only those works that were in harmony with his own views.\footnote{De Schloezer, \textit{Scriabin: Artist and Mystic}, p. 71.}

De Schloezer notes that from Scriabin’s early years he was convinced that he was destined to perform an important task in which he had a sacrificial role.\footnote{Ibid., p. 55.} As he developed as an artist, so too did his conception of this task, which ultimately led him to the conclusion that his life’s purpose was to create a work encompassing a vision of an apocalyptic ecstasy and the end of the world. This work was to be in the form of a grand opera, one of even larger proportions then even Wagner could have imagined. In its original conception, it was to resemble an immense liturgical rite, would be titled \textit{The Mysterium} and would be performed in India. The performance was to last for seven days and combine music, dance, theatre, poetry and ritual, including the burning of large amounts of incense. Its ultimate aim was to help create a synthesis of the sensual and spiritual, which would then usher humanity into a new and more spiritual plane of

\footnote{310 Morrison, “Skryabin and the Impossible”, p. 44.}
\footnote{311 Ibid.}
\footnote{313 De Schloezer, \textit{Scriabin: Artist and Mystic}, p. 71.}
\footnote{314 Ibid., p. 55.}
existence. The work, while embracing Blavatsky’s evolutionary ideas concerning the spiritual development of humanity, condensed the process into a much shorter timespan.

**The Mysterium**

It is ironic that, from an esoteric and Theosophical perspective, Scriabin’s fame rests to some degree upon works that were never realised but were so immense in their conception that they dominated most of the latter part of his creative life. De Schloezer has argued that any examination of Scriabin’s creative output must begin with *The Mysterium*, even though it was never fully developed, for the aesthetic and philosophical ideas of his entire career are contained within its design.316

*The Mysterium* could be said to encapsulate Scriabin’s understanding of world history, which he saw in Theosophical terms. This embraced the history of the races of humanity and the evolutionary cycles to which humanity is subject in its quest to return to the purity of oneness. Scriabin believed that, when performed, *The Mysterium* would hasten the dream of the universal reunion of humanity with divinity, whose agent he believed himself to be.317 It was to be the ultimate eschatological mystery that would transfigure the universe, freeing the human creative spirit and resolving life’s dissonances into perfect harmony.

In the production of *The Mysterium*, his vision incorporated all those who were present. He wrote: “There will not be a single spectator at this artistic event, all will be participants.”318 Therefore, at the final ecstasy, all present would be merged into a unity. This meant the removal of the barrier that usually separates audience and performers, thus creating conditions suitable for spiritual communion and the unity of all humanity. *The Mysterium* would therefore involve all present as votaries in a ritual enacting the miracle of terrestrial and cosmic transformation.319

Scriabin believed that the performance of *The Mysterium* would actually lead to a cosmic collapse and universal death, and that from this apocalypse a new race of humanity would be born. *The Mysterium* was therefore to trace the “anthropogenesis” of humanity, from the past to the future or from individual consciousness to communal

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The concept was so vast, Morrison contends, that by 1913 Scriabin began realising the extent of the problems that the production of his *Gesamtkunstwerk* would entail, and subsequently informed his friends that he would be unable to continue with *The Mysterium*. Part of the problem lay in the uncertainties that had arisen in his mind concerning his role as both author and participant in the same work, and his failure to reconcile this dual role. How could he be priest and sacrificial offering at the same time? Until he was able to resolve this problem, he felt unable to continue; therefore, in its place he decided to compose what Morrison calls a “Mystic Symbolist” prelude, a *Preparatory Act*, to test “the mystic responsiveness of contemporary humanity”.

Scriabin’s daughter, Marina, notes that the libretto describes the evolution of humanity from the “first race” that rebelled against the Over-Soul to the seventh race that embraces it. This, as Morrison observes, involves a Theosophical parable concerning humanity’s journey from matter back to spirit. Morrison gives credit to the Symbolist influence by arguing that Scriabin’s libretto is “Theosophical in plot but Symbolist in content”. It is evident from the literature that there are similarities in the language and outlook of Symbolists and Theosophists. As Maria Carlson has observed, the “mystic Symbolists defined their world view in Theosophical terms as a synthetic religious and philosophical doctrine informed by ancient occult dogmas”.

Like many musicians of the period, Scriabin was very much a follower of Wagner, who in his essay *The Art Work of the Future*, had argued that “a musician should be held in higher reverence than other artists” – indeed, to “claim to rank as holy, for his art in truth, compares with a communion of all the other arts as religion with the church”. If Wagner had imagined that he was holy and close to being divine, Scriabin took the idea one step further, claiming that he *was* God. In his journal, he writes:

> All that exists comes from my consciousness, is the product of my action … the world is my creative act, and my creative act comprises the world …Oh, if only I could give to the world a particle of my joy

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320 Ibid., p. 300.
322 Scriabin, undated diary entry. Cited in ibid., p. 284.
… I want to seduce the world by my creative power, by its divine beauty … I want to engulf all in myself…you do not exist, you are but a sport of my free fantasy … I am God.\textsuperscript{327}

In his diary entries prior to 1903, Scriabin argues that “the unity of existence is the aim of a creative effort, all must coalesce with all, achieving oneness, because all is one by its very nature”. He continues: “Therefore, everything, the entire visible world, is a creative act, which is \textit{my} creative act, the only one, the result of my untrammeled volition.”\textsuperscript{328} Thus, at the end of \textit{The Mysterium}, his ultimate ecstasy would consume all things and peoples, for “Man, is my individual consciousness in objective form”.\textsuperscript{329} With this in mind, it is easy to grasp how he saw it as possible to bring the world to an end, for everything was a mere product of his own mind; there was no orientation towards a transcendental object for this object was imminent in his consciousness. Subject and object became merged and all existed within his own creative imagination. De Schloezer says:

The entire mass of Scriabin’s creative work represents the revelation and incarnation, in terms of our own world, of some form of clairvoyance, of a spiritual act that is not a function of the intellect, a state of contemplation or a sensory impression, but a superior entity transcending the mind, the emotions, and the senses while subsuming them.\textsuperscript{330}

\section*{Scriabin’s Finding of Theosophy}

Theosophy, identified as a primary influence on Scriabin’s personal metaphysical doctrine, can be dated from a letter he wrote in 1905 from Paris to his partner Tatiana Schloezrer, saying: “\textit{La Clef de la Théosophie (The Key to Theosophy)} is a remarkable book; you’ll be astonished how close it is to my thinking.”\textsuperscript{331} This letter to Tatiana supports the view that Scriabin’s mystical and eschatological ideas were already in embryonic form before he became acquainted with Blavatsky’s work. However, having

\textsuperscript{327} De Schloezer, \textit{Scriabin: Artist and Mystic}, p. 329.
\textsuperscript{328} Ibid., p. 197.
\textsuperscript{329} Bowers, \textit{The New Scriabin}, p. 118.
\textsuperscript{330} De Schloezer, \textit{Scriabin: Artist and Mystic}, pp. 157–58.
\textsuperscript{331} Brown, “Skriabin and Russian ‘Mystic’ Symbolism”, p. 46,
discovered Theosophy, De Schloezer – who was Tatiana’s brother and therefore Scriabin’s brother in-law – argues that Scriabin used Theosophical notions as a framework for his ideas. He wrote: “Scriabin used Theosophical terms quite loosely. He adapted them to his own ideas, aspirations, and yearnings and employed theosophical postulates as formulas to describe his own experiences.” Theosophy therefore could be said to have created a framework and a terminology that established a link with the esoteric tradition of which Scriabin was already a part.

However, Malcolm Brown argues that, for Scriabin, the ideas of Blavatsky, Wagner or Nietzsche could not completely provide the essential substance for his eschatological mystery; therefore, he drew upon ideas from the Symbolist movement to help supply him with the most compatible doctrine for his vision. As has been noted previously, the Symbolists defined their world-view in Theosophical terms; it is therefore probable that Scriabin, with his eclectic way of thinking, drew all the strands together in a grand synthesis. It was in Paris in 1906 that a friend had pointed out that The Mysterium, with its theme of the unio
divinity and the return of the world to oneness, had much in common with Theosophy, with which Scriabin had recently become acquainted. De Schloezer maintains that this phase of Scriabin’s spiritual development owed most to Theosophy, and quotes him as admitting that “Mme Blavatsky’s ideas helped me in my work and gave me the power to accomplish my task”.

It has already been noted that Scriabin had become aware of Theosophy earlier, but it seems the realisation of the similarity between Theosophical doctrine and his own creative ideas concerning The Mysterium led him to study the works of Blavatsky, Besant and Leadbeater intensively. He was drawn to such things as the notion of the seven Root-Races incarnating in space and time in a gradual descent of spirit into matter, and their subsequent evolution back to spirit. According to Theosophical doctrine, we currently belong to the fifth Root-Race, with the sixth and seventh still to come. Scriabin, while accepting this idea, hoped to hurry this process along, with the supreme ecstasy coming at the conclusion of his Mysterium dissolving the physical plane immediately rather than in eons to come.

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332 De Schloezer, Scriabin: Artist and Mystic, p. 67. Scriabin and Tatiana met through her brother who, throughout their lives, is said to have been very close to them both.
335 Ibid., p. 69.
336 Ibid.
After his discovery of Theosophy and his subsequent acquaintance with its literature, he set about incorporating the Theosophical ideas with which he agreed into what was a previously formulated eschatological scheme. Scriabin’s adoption of Theosophical ideas seems to have had a modifying effect upon his general eschatological scheme. In his early writings, the cosmic process would complete itself in a single cycle and, having proceeded from nothingness, it would return forever to nothingness. Theosophy, on the other hand, postulated a multiplicity of cosmic cycles, with spirit going through a number of evolutionary stages – or Root-Races – in order to achieve ultimate union with the absolute. In accepting this Theosophical idea, Scriabin had to abandon the notion of a final and absolute universal ecstasy and be content with an individual “private ecstasy”. He still felt that the artist representing the microcosm could affect the macrocosm, but he abandoned his more megalomaniacal ideas such as being God. Scriabin therefore reduced his role in *The Mysterium* from creator to facilitator. Individual success in reaching the new reality was to be based on personal desire – or, as Blavatsky hypothesised, “Each atom, we say, may reach, through individual merits and efforts, that plane where it re-becomes the one unconditioned All”.

With Scriabin’s discovery of Theosophy, its influence can be recognised in his expanding interest in Indian religious practices. An example is his undertaking the study of Sanskrit, from which he hoped to construct a new language for the text of *The Mysterium*. He also took up yoga, becoming very serious about yogic breathing exercises. In conversation with Sabaneev, he said:

> It will give me remarkable powers. We don’t know how to breathe, nor eat nor sleep … We learn such stupid things in school, and don’t touch on importance’s. In Indian schools, it’s just the opposite. In the first grade, they learn to cultivate the soul, meditation, memorization … We must have physical health in order to be able to control our bodies wisely. I must, must, must live as long as possible.

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337 Ibid., p. 199.
339 Bowers, *The New Scriabin*, p. 92. This is similar to Gustav Holst, who also undertook the study of Sanskrit.
340 Ibid.
Scriabin never went to India, so his utopian view of its education system is probably based upon some romantic notion that had been supplied by Theosophical literature. De Schloezer questions the influence of the deeper aspects of Indian philosophy on Scriabin, noting that the type of material he read concerning India – being mainly Theosophical tracts – would be insufficient for a real understanding of the subject.\footnote{De Schloezer, \textit{Scriabin: Artist and Mystic}, p. 69.} This may be true, for Scriabin did not have a scholarly interest in things Indian, but took an interest only in those romantic notions that conformed to his existing mystical ideas, which could readily be found within Theosophical works. His interest in going to India was quite serious, however, and it is recorded that he bought a white suit and a sun helmet, and spent hours in the sunshine in order to accustom himself to India’s tropical climate.\footnote{Ibid., p. 93.}

Like Wagner, Scriabin had always been drawn to the idea of a synthesis or unification of the arts, and in this context he hoped his omni-art would illuminate and transfigure humanity. The notion of the oneness of all things, or the unity of all being, fascinated him. De Schloezer suggested that one reason for Scriabin’s later admiration of Madame Blavatsky was due to her courage in attempting a synthesis of philosophy, religion and science as well as the breadth and depth of her concepts, which he likened to “the grandeur of Wagner’s music dramas”.\footnote{Ibid., p. 68.}

In a similar way, he also followed Wagner’s thinking in seeing art as a form of religious rite. Music for music’s sake was of no interest to him. He once said that “it would be terrible to remain nothing more than a composer of sonatas and symphonies”, and “to be regarded merely as a musician would be the worst fate that could befall me”.\footnote{L. Sabaneev, “Scriabin and the Idea of a Religious Art”, \textit{The Musical Times}, Vol. 72, No. 1063 (1931), p. 790.} He is said to have refused to separate art from religion, and argued that art organises the soul, imparting a sense of harmony, enchantment and expansion of the psyche.\footnote{De Schloezer, \textit{Scriabin: Artist and Mystic}, p. 246.} To be worthy, music must be used for ecstatic and not simply aesthetic ends – or, as Sabaneev observed, for Scriabin, art “sprang from the depths of mysticism and soared to the heights of religion”.\footnote{Sabaneev, “Scriabin and the Idea of a Religious Art”, p. 790.} Art is regarded as a sacrament that produces a positive influence on the soul of individuals and, ultimately, races. Recognisable in this idea is the notion of music as a moral determinant, echoing the Platonic theory of \textit{ethos}. Likewise, it finds expression...
in the writings of Besant and Leadbeater who argue that, by the use of music; the evolution of mankind is “enormously uplifted, intensified and brought into direct relation to the Logos”. The same idea will be found in the works of Steiner, Scott and Heline.

**Symbolism and Music**

*The Mysterium* and the *Preparatory Act*, while separate works, should be thought of as being linked through Scriabin’s overall mystical vision, with the latter being conceived of as a dress rehearsal of the former. As previously noted, Scriabin died young and never wrote his memoirs, so there is no personal account of the thought processes that explain the systematic formulation of his creative doctrine. The text for the *Preparatory Act*, which can be found in four notebooks designated A–D, offers some clues. Within notebook “B” can be found some incipits relating to the *Mysterium*. A few are as follows:

- The basic idea is conveyed as a mood.
- He did not exist, but his poem was already being created.
- The living principle of the world through weariness lies within us.
- Love, loving itself, love creates itself with love! O desire! O life, your divine light is ignited, the universe takes shape!
- O holy secret of dissolution, secret of the conception of a new universe.

Simon Morrison contends that these incipits are based almost exclusively on Blavatsky’s writings, and reflect “material illusions of a project that exists in the noumena of reality, they embrace Blavatsky’s ideas about the origin and destination of the universe”. They certainly encapsulate one of the central tenets of Theosophical teaching, which is to enable humankind to recognise Maya, or the illusory nature of the material world, and to start the journey back to spirit – Maya being one among a number of concepts Theosophy borrowed from Eastern religion and incorporated into the Western tradition. A further example of Theosophical notions can be deduced from his opening of the *Preparatory Act*, in which a bass soloist outlines the plot of the work in a form of

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348 Brown, “Skriabin and Russian ‘Mystic’ Symbolism”, p. 43.
350 Ibid.
Recitative. He describes himself as the “Pre-Eternal”, or that which was before the beginning, and proclaims the descent of the Infinite into the Finite and that Spirit will infuse with Matter. Even the seven-day, seven-night length of The Mysterium, for which the Preparatory Act was to be a precursor, has echoes in the Secret Doctrine, arguing that humans, the cosmos and history are septenary in form. As already stated, Theosophical doctrines gave a concrete terminology to Scriabin’s ideas; however, it should be remembered that in its general outline, his philosophy of history and cosmology had been formulated long before his discovery of Blavatsky’s work.

The one completed work that can be described as Theosophical in its symbolism is Scriabin’s Prometheus: The Poem of Fire, Opus 60. Bowers describes it as the most densely theosophical work ever written, one in which “he invests his notes, scales, and chords with exact and magical purpose”. It has been described by Godwin as a self-portrait of the composer in light of his seeing himself as a Promethean-type figure.

Scriabin experienced a condition known as synesthesia, which he called “color hearing”, the commingling of the aural and visual senses. Blavatsky and Leadbeater had written on this condition, with Blavatsky charting correspondences between colors and sounds. In Prometheus, Scriabin places at the top of the score a clavier a luce, or “keyboard of lights”, an instrument that was not even invented at the time and that was calibrated to specific tonalities and pitches that corresponded to the colour he would experience in his mind when hearing the work. He intended to use this device in a more extensive way in the Preparatory Act, in which he hoped that the synesthetic stimulation of a sense (sight) in conjunction with the stimulation of another (sound) “would offer a vision of the reality underlying reality”.

A further Theosophical concept that can be observed appears in the final movement of Prometheus, when the choir is introduced. The chorus chants EA, O HO A, O HO. In his book The New Scriabin, Bowers states that these are non-meaning

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351 Recitative means sung speech; it was often used to explain the plot or the scene in an opera or oratorio prior to an aria or further action. The masses and oratorios of J.S. Bach and G.F. Handel are excellent examples.
356 See Chapter 3. and Chapter 7 on Cyril Scott.
358 Bars 467–503 of the full score.
sounds; however, while this may be true to some degree, the word OEAOHOO is found in the *Secret Doctrine*, where it is explained as “Father-Mother of the Gods” or “The six in one” or “The septenary Root from which all proceeds”. It also appears in stanza 3:5 of the *Stanzas of Dzyan*, which reads: “The Root remains, the light remains, the Curds remain, and still OEAOHOO is one.” The sacred name of the Root of all things is therefore introduced at the end of *Prometheus*. It can be seen that there is a slight variation between Scriabin’s use of the term and that of Blavatsky; however, as there is no note from the composer concerning this, it is probable that the variation was for musical reasons.

One other important Theosophical notion that Scriabin embraced was that of the Akashic records, which Hanegraaff describes as a universal cosmic “memory bank”, which can be tapped into by clairvoyant means. This involves the future as well as the past; from a creative perspective, the idea involves the notion that all works of art already exist, the artist or composer needing only to “tune in”. De Schloezer says that Scriabin had no doubt that his work existed outside of himself; and that in his view he did not compose it, but only removed from it a veil, translating it from a latent to a manifest state. The problem for Scriabin was in his not distorting or obscuring the image he had perceived.

The concept of the Akashic records is very ancient, being introduced into Theosophy by Blavatsky and later forming an important aspect of the clairvoyant visions of C.W. Leadbeater. They present a problem for Theosophists, because if everything is “written”, the idea of “free will” is compromised. The notion that compositions already exist would imply that no composer is genuinely original: they are all simply conduits and channels for pre-existing music. This raises the questions: Why did the music of different parts of the world develop so differently? Why is there an ongoing development in the West regarding harmony and form that is not paralleled in the East? And why is there a presumed disparity between the ability and talent of composers? Despite these questions that are never raised, let alone answered, the notion of the Akashic record is prominent not only in the writings of Besant and Leadbeater, but those of many of the

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Theosophists examined in this thesis, such as Edmund Bailly, Rudolf Steiner, Corinne Heline and Cyril Scott.

Very little has been written concerning Scriabin’s views on the Theosophical notion of The Masters. One of the few comments comes from De Schloezer, who notes that “Scriabin found some vindication for his mission in the lives of consecrated missionaries who had been sent to Earth to reveal the secret truth for the benefit of humanity.”\(^{364}\) It is also recorded that Alexander Brianchaninov, a wealthy publisher, planned to send Scriabin to India to have him “consecrated by Mahatmas”.\(^{365}\) However, from the little that appears in Scriabin’s notes, it could be assumed he was not very comfortable with the idea of “Masters” – especially as he believed for much of his life that all things arose from his own consciousness, implying that the “Masters” owed their existence to him in the first place. Towards the end of his life, however, he did modify his view, speaking of his mission being “ordained by a higher being”.\(^{366}\)

**Twentieth-century View of Scriabin’s Mystic Ideas**

The musical symbolism used by the likes of D'Olivet, Von Dalberg and Scriabin has not excited the imaginations of mainstream musicologists. Writing on Scriabin, Paul Henry Lang offers the unsympathetic view that: “Scriabin’s whole art and life was a mere experiment, a supernatural dream, his mind, possessed by demonic forces, penetrated deeper and deeper into the mire of mystical speculations, hallucinations and dementia.”\(^{367}\) Donald Grout sidestepped the problem by stating simply that Scriabin’s compositions were intended to express a “mysterious Theosophical cast”, no explanation of which is given.\(^{368}\)

Scriabin’s mysticism also proved a problem for the authorities in the Soviet Union. In 1940, at a Soviet music congress, he was found guilty of “acute and morbid neuropathic egocentricity, being totally un-Russian in his themes and more anti-people than anything in the whole of Russian music”.\(^{369}\) By the 1970s, with the Cold War raging, the authorities had re-evaluated Scriabin’s mysticism, his metaphysics now being seen as “prophetic physics”. Space travel is said to have been anticipated when Scriabin said to a student, “play, as fast as possible, to the limit of possibility, so that it will be flight, the

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\(^{364}\) Ibid., p. 218.
\(^{367}\) Lang, *Music in Western Civilization*, p. 1027.
speed of light, straight to the sun, to the sun”. Likewise, the bells that Scriabin wanted suspended from the clouds over the Himalayas to summon both spectators and participants to his Mysterium were later interpreted by the Soviets as a premonition of stereo and quadraphonic sound systems.\footnote{Ibid.}

Music historians often seem rather conservative when it comes to what they will accept concerning a composer’s influences. Whilst accepting as worthy of interest many of the mystical experiences or “magical” theories of the Middle Ages or the Renaissance (which can then be dismissed as outmoded relics of a bygone age), more recent speculations along similar lines by composers and theorists are considered either the musings of the insane or as of no consequence. Scriabin’s mystical fantasies, as I have noted previously, have been mostly ignored; however, considering him insane is no reason to ignore his fantasies if they form part of his creative process. It was generally agreed that he had some mental problems, as concern for his mental health was apparent among his friends. Ivanov notes that ‘Scriabin is unstable … He has something wrong with him, a serious spiritual ailment.”\footnote{Cited in Morrison, “Skryabin and the Impossible”, p. 291.} Sabaneev decided that he was “clinically insane, either despite or because of his genius”.\footnote{Bowers, The New Scriabin, p. 12.}

It could be argued that in certain instances supposed artistic genius has gone hand in hand with some form of mental illness or eccentricity, ranging from depression to outright madness, in order to generate the creative energy required to give birth to great or at least interesting works. When this condition is linked to a religious or mystical philosophy, as in the case of Scriabin’s Mysterium, the conception can become so vast and all-embracing that it can only exist in the imagination: as Morrison has observed, “the music he wanted to hear could not be heard, much less created, in the real world”.\footnote{Morrison, “Skryabin and the Impossible”, p. 310.}

Being so intensely personal and stemming from a deeply held mystical and philosophical position, Scriabin’s musical ideas never generated the kind of following that Wagner’s did. After Scriabin’s death, the Russian composer Prokofiev observed: “Scriabin cannot have disciples. He must stand alone. He is a solitary genius.”\footnote{Bowers, The New Scriabin, p. 83.} For Theosophists, however, he is highly regarded – always being claimed as one of their own.\footnote{No evidence exists to confirm that Scriabin was ever an official member of the Theosophical Society.} He represents to them a clear example of one who has been sent to Earth by the Great White Brotherhood to assist humanity on its evolutionary path. It is not uncommon
for movements such as the Theosophical Society to readily claim well-known individuals as part of the movement and to attribute various qualities to them – for example, Scriabin was said by the prominent Theosophist Cyril Scott to be “the greatest exponent of Deva-music who so far has been born”.\textsuperscript{376}

As stated previously, a number of influences can be identified in Scriabin’s thought, with Theosophy being only one of them. The argument could therefore be made that, considering his tendency to think in terms of a broad synthesis within the arts, his philosophical and mystical outlooks should be seen as a synthesis, drawing together elements of Theosophy, Wagner, Nietzsche and the Russian Symbolist movement. This in no way diminishes the importance of Theosophical thought on his work, but rather puts it in a better perspective by recognising that in Theosophical notions he saw a framework that allowed him to describe his own mystical visions. It could therefore be said that although music was his profession and his means of earning a living, his spiritual or destined calling was found in Theosophy, which provided him with an interpretation of the cosmos, as well as the foundation, the justification and a systematic framework upon which to base his vision of the future.

**Edmund Bailly (1850–1916)**

One of the leading personalities in Paris during the *Fin-de-Siècle* was the Theosophist Edmund Bailly, who took up many of the esoteric musical themes already alluded to, adapting them to his own inner vision and interests. According to Godwin, Bailly was a lifelong Theosophist, a gifted amateur composer and an important figure in Parisian occult circles.\textsuperscript{377} On a less complimentary note, Victor Emile Michelet said he also:

\begin{quote}
Belonged to that category of men on whom the gods have bestowed multiple gifts, while forgetting to add another small, mysterious, and secondary gift without which they will remain obscure: Talent.\textsuperscript{378}
\end{quote}

Be that as it may, his contribution to *Fin-de-Siècle* esotericism lay more in his organising and publishing ability than his musical skill. According to Godwin, somewhere around 1885, Bailly opened a bookshop, L’Art Independent, which played a leading part in


\textsuperscript{377} Godwin J. *Music and the Occult*, p. 152. For a list of Bailly’s compositions, see pp. 152–53. A facsimile of the score of *La Tristesse d’Ulad* for voice and piano can be found on pp. 227–34.

\textsuperscript{378} Cited in ibid., p. 152.
propagating esoteric and avant-garde artistic ideas.\textsuperscript{379} The bookshop, which also served as a publishing house, attracted artists, poets and musicians such as Claude Debussy and Eric Satie, as well as Symbolists, occultists and esotericists of every kind. They came to buy books, publish their own works, hold séances, and especially chat and listen to music. Debussy is said to have often played his new compositions on a piano in a back room of Bailly’s bookshop.\textsuperscript{380}

Roy Howat suggests that Bailly’s influence may have been partly responsible for the upsurge of interest in occult matters at this time. In 1937, concerning Debussy, Michelet wrote:

Debussy was able to express himself freely there; he let himself be thoroughly impregnated with Hermetic philosophy (involving ancient Egyptian theories of magic and alchemy). Besides his reading on that subject and conversations with Edmond Bailly, who was a student of the esoteric side of both Occidental and Oriental music, he became acquainted with the sacred music of the Hindus through frequenting the Sufi Inayat Khan and his two brothers.\textsuperscript{381}

Turning to Bailly’s musical theories, it has been said that his “world was filled with sound, ranging from the microscopic tones of empty sea-shells to the harmonies of the vast spheres”.\textsuperscript{382} Bailly writes:

In the annals of universal knowledge, the sacred books where the thoughts of all humanity are condensed … we see sound as contemporary to the origin of all things, and all cosmogonies agree in recognising it on promoting the manifestations of the divine will.\textsuperscript{383}

Thus Bailly places himself in the Pythagorean and Platonic tradition of seeing music as being linked to the creation of the universe and of divine emanation. Like d’Olivet and Blavatsky, he allocates specific tones to specific planets, but rather than work on the

\textsuperscript{379} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{380} Ibid. Claude Debussy’s dates are 1862–1918; Eric Satie’s are 1866–1925.
\textsuperscript{382} Godwin, \textit{Music and the Occult}, p. 155.
\textsuperscript{383} Ibid. The original text translated by Godwin is E. Bailly, \textit{Le Son dans la nature}, Paris: Librairie de l’Art Independent, 1900.
system of Pythagorean fifths, he supports his ideas by finding cosmic harmony in modern science. His solution is Bode’s law, which calculates the mean distance of the planets from the Sun. In Table 4.1, the numbers under the planets represent their distance from the Sun, shown by a progressive approximation of perfect octaves. The problem with Bailly’s system is that he is obliged to move some planets by a few million miles to “improve” the celestial harmony and make them fit the scheme. As Godwin has observed, “Bailly was another victim of the idea of a universal harmony, which starts on the basis of facts but ends in fantasy”.

Table 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sun</th>
<th>Mercury</th>
<th>Venus</th>
<th>Earth</th>
<th>Mars</th>
<th>Asteroids</th>
<th>Jupiter</th>
<th>Saturn</th>
<th>Uranus</th>
<th>Neptune</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Bb</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Ab</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>Eb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unlike Kepler, who accepted the dissonances in the planetary ratios as examples of the unfathomable will of God, Bailly was happy to move the planets around, making them fit into the laws of music. To make musical sense of Bailly’s symbolic use of these notes, which he says “represent two different tonalities and two different modes”, we must divide the above table into two parts, C through B – or Sun to Mars – and C (Asteroids) through Eb, (Neptune). Bailly argues that by dividing the solar system into two regions around the Earth, it is possible to find a satisfying symbolism. First, he mentions a low chord, C, C’, Bb, E, which he says “Presented in so gracious a manner that hearing it readily transports us to the happy times of the Golden Age”. However, this leaves the B at the top of the first grouping, which creates a false relation to the Bb. Bailly claims this clash is the origin of the “strife of violence with gentleness, matter with spirit and is engendered when the B natural of fierce Mars collides with the gentle Bb of the planet that engenders love”. With musical symbolism, Bailly therefore introduces into his cosmic scheme both the origin of evil and the genesis of the involution of spirit down to matter.

384 Godwin, Music and the Occult, p. 156.
385 Ibid., p. 155. For the Asteroids, the placement has been changed by Bailly from 28 to 32, his argument being that a planet should have formed at 32.7 but was prevented by the gravitational force of Jupiter.
386 Ibid.
387 Ibid. The symbol ‘ after the second C indicates C an octave higher.
388 A false relation is where two notes, B, Bb, have the same letter; the spelling or designation of the chord therefore becomes impossible.
389 Godwin, Music and the Occult, p. 155.
The second or higher chord is the minor mode, C, G, Eb and Ab. The symbolism here is equally dense, requiring some theoretical musical knowledge. Bailly claims that Jupiter’s Ab gives the feeling of an appoggiatura, requiring resolution downwards by semitone to G, which is in accordance with the usual way an appoggiatura would move. However, he then goes on to suggest that Neptune’s Eb wants to resolve upwards to E natural in the same way as Mars’ leading note B tends towards C in the first series. This, he says, “Would re-establish peace and order in the bosom of our discordant Decacord (ten note chord) and also, I hope, among mankind”. While it is true that the leading note has a tendency to be pulled gravitationally towards the upper tonic, the same cannot be said for the third of a minor chord – Eb in this case – which, if resolving itself, would create a major chord. Bailly says that the ten-note planetary system begins by sounding a cosmic dissonance, and needs the suggested resolutions to restore order to both the cosmos and to humankind.

Theoretically, if we look at the two chords together, what we have within this assumed cosmic scheme are the tones C, C’, E and Bb, suggesting the dominant seventh chord (the fifth G being implied) of the key of F. This dominant chord is itself a discord, and requires resolution – which is acknowledged by Bailly when he says “If the fundamental ‘C’ were to resolve to F and Jupiter’s tone (Ab) moves down to G, it would engender, as a whole, a very extraordinary chord of the major ninth (F to the G an octave higher), which, according to Bailly would be an originator of a new cycle. The problem with this logic is that the major ninth is a compound interval that is reducible to a major second. The two notes sounded together, according to accepted musical theory, produce a discord, which hardly seems an auspicious start for a new cycle, unless the new cycle is meant to start with discord – but this is not explained.

The musical symbolism used here is similar to that used by Scriabin in Prometheus, such as the descending minor ninth representing the descent of spirit into matter. A point of interest in this cosmic tuning is that Bailly wants C to resolve to F and designates the F tone as the “Tone of Nature”. According to Blavatsky, this tone was considered by the Chinese to be the tone of major rivers and waterfalls, and is mentioned

390 On the fundamental C, this is a minor triad C, Eb, G with an added minor sixth. Ab above the root.
391 The Appoggiatura is a grace note or decorative note played before an important note in the melody, creating a dissonance. Each one of the above resolutions involves only one semi-tone or the equivalent of a white note to its next-door black note on the piano.
392 Godwin, Music and the Occult, p. 155.
393 Ibid.
394 A compound interval is one greater than the octave – for example, C to D is a second, C to the D up an octave is a ninth, 2+7, and is called a compound interval.
as such by Blavatsky in the *Voice of the Silence* – indeed, she informs us that “the sound of nature, such as heard in the roar of great rivers or the waving tops of trees in a forest is a definite single tone of quite an appreciable pitch”.\(^{395}\) She continues saying that the Chinese recognised the fact thousands of years ago when “the waters of the Hoang-Ho rushing by, intoned the Kung called ‘the great tone’ in Chinese music”.\(^{396}\) Blavatsky, also in her table of correspondences between tone and colour, links the note “F” with green – Bailly’s tone of nature.\(^{397}\)

The tone of Nature is included in Bailly’s writing concerning ancient cultures. Taking his cue from Blavatsky, he tells us that in 2600 BCE, Ling Lun discovered the note of the river Hwang Ho and fixed the musical scale by it: the note is F.\(^{398}\) He further cites Benjamin Silliman’s *Principles of Physics* (1889), according to which the sound of a distant city such as Paris or a great forest is perceptible as middle F on a piano.\(^{399}\) This citing is taken from *The Voice of the Silence*, in which Blavatsky, quoting a contemporary physics professor, argues that the tone “F” is “considered by modern physicists to be the actual tone of nature”.\(^{400}\)

If there is a problem with all this exactitude, it is that a worldwide standard of absolute pitch was not agreed upon until 1939 when 440 Hz, or vibrations per second, was adopted for what we now call “Concert A”.\(^{401}\) In 1858, the French government had adopted a standard pitch of 435 Hz, and this is probably what Bailly was working with. While this is a very small difference, it still makes it difficult to accept any claim for the power or representation of any absolute tone prior to 1939, as today’s “absolute pitch” would be different from any period prior to 1939. The point is that throughout history, “absolute pitch” has varied with culture and geography, to argue a pitch for “nature” that would be consistent over time and place would be a fantasy.

**Bailly’s Theosophical Thought**

Bailly demonstrates a number of Theosophical concepts within his writing; we find reference to the “Masters” when he writes:

\(^{396}\) Ibid. The Kung is then broken into twelve parts (our chromatic scale), each note being assigned to an astrological sign.
\(^{397}\) See Chapter 3.
\(^{398}\) Godwin, *Music and the Occult*, p. 156.
\(^{399}\) Ibid., p. 174, n. 20.
\(^{400}\) Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, p. 89.
Today a radiant intelligence, Pythagoras, has held out his hand to me across the twenty-five centuries that separate us, and my joy is boundless in this communion with one of those whom M.Edouard Schuré calls so nobly “The Great Initiates”.  

This would suggest that he felt himself to be among an elite group who had been chosen by the great adepts to bring spiritual messages to humanity. He also refers – although not literally – to the Theosophical notion of the “Akashic Records”, to which adepts and clairvoyants are assumed to have access, saying:

I do not believe that the artist is a creator … It is easier for me to admit the existence of some immense reservoir in which from all time and forever is stored the ideal material of all imaginable manifestations of thought … The artist creates nothing, but causes to reappear on the screen of the physical world things that have long been written on the indestructible screen of the past.

This is a similar notion to that referred to earlier concerning Scriabin, who is said to have remarked that music existed outside of himself in images that defied normal language; Scriabin claimed that he himself did not create the music out of nowhere but merely lifted the veil that obscured it.

Like Scriabin, Bailly was interested in using the human voice musically to create vowel sounds, and in 1906 composed a work for women’s choir, flutes and harps, Le Chant des Voyelles, to be performed at the Theosophical congress in Paris. The concept of wordless music had been an important component of the Romantic aesthetic experience. E.T.A. Hoffmann had said that “when one speaks of music as an autonomous art, one should always think of instrumental music”. The use of vowel sounds in chant was not an original Theosophical notion, being found in many ancient cultures including Egypt and the Greco-Roman world; however, the idea of chants using vowel sounds became a popular technique among composers with Theosophical leanings – possibly due

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402 In Godwin, Music and the Occult, p. 156; originally Bailly, Le Son dans la nature, p. 36.
403 Ibid., pp. 153–54.
404 De Schloezer, Scriabin: Artist and Mystic, p. 85.
405 Godwin, Robert Fludd, p. 51.
to their appearance within the various tables of correspondences. During the period under discussion, we also find Debussy using a wordless female choir in the third part of his *Nocturnes* for orchestra, *Sirènes*. While Debussy used female voices, he did not use actual vowel sounds; however, in a later recording of the *Nocturnes*, the conductor Pierre Boulez has the singers vary the sounds to make vowels match the various orchestral colours. Later, Gustav Holst was to use a wordless female choir in the final movement of his *Planet suite, Neptune the Mystic*.

Theosophy exHORTs its followers to explore the nature of science and religion; therefore, in true Theosophical fashion, Bailly views humankind as a microcosm of the universal order, and seeks a system of correspondences to explain it. He says:

> If we now meditate on the general constitution of the human being, we can easily understand that it is possible for him to act on all the vibratory modes of earthly nature; even extra-terrestrial nature, because we know that man comprises in himself all that vibrates in the bosom of our universe.  

This embodies the idea of a holographic universe in which the sum of all things exists in each atom. Human beings are said by Bailly to have the vibratory nature of a universe that is in turn created by the vibrations of the primordial word. He wrote: “there is, in the bosom of the universe, not a single atom that does not have a corresponding tone” and inversely, “every tone communicates its own vibration of every particle of matter able to emit this same tone or any of its harmonics”. This is the idea of universal harmony linking Bailly to the esoteric ideas of Von Dalberg and d’Olivet. For Bailly, it is also the explanation for the power of sound over matter that Blavatsky mentioned.

In his writings, Edmund Bailly demonstrates a strong Theosophist orientation along with an understanding of all the major esoteric musical themes discussed so far. The only omission is that there is no mention in his work of music being used as a healing modality, although it is implied by his comments on the beneficial and magical properties of sound. As mentioned earlier Edmond Bailly was a “lifelong and faithful Theosophist”.

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407 Godwin, *Mystery of the Seven Vowels*, p. 50.
409 Cited in Ibid.
and any study of his writing suggests that its influence cannot be in question. This influence went beyond the standard musical esotericism, for in 1909 he founded a monthly journal, Libres Etudes, which offered a forum to second generation Theosophists such as Annie Besant, C.W. Leadbeater and Rudolf Steiner. His bookshop became a rendezvous where artists and esotericists of all persuasions could meet and discuss their ideas, which in turn influenced a number of composers – the most famous being Debussy, who became one of the most influential composers of the twentieth century. Some composers influenced by Theosophy were not as public in their involvement as Scriabin or Bailly; one of those was the English composer Gustav Holst.

**Gustav Holst (1874–1934)**

Not all composers said to be influenced by Theosophy went on to create a systematic esoteric philosophy around their work, but rather demonstrated in their overall output the “form of thought” or “world-view” alluded to by Faiivre. One such composer with a distinctly esoteric and Theosophical outlook was Gustav Holst, who was one of a small but influential group of English composers with similar occultic interests – among them John Foulds, Peter Warlock and Cyril Scott. Although these composers shared a similar outlook, being deeply committed to Eastern philosophical beliefs, they never formed a group or established more than tenuous links. Scott, aware of the esoteric influence on Holst, commented that: “Holst like Scriabin wrote his music under an occult influence.” It is possible that Scott could have been referring to the influence of a Master such as K.H., who is claimed by Theosophists to oversee the arts and music. It is interesting to note that, despite their mutual theosophical and mystical leanings; Scott does not include or make comment on Holst in any of his writings on musicians that he claims were sent to the earthly plane by the Great White Brotherhood to assist in human spiritual evolution. It should be stated at the outset that there is no evidence linking Holst to a belief in The Masters or any other of the notions beloved of Theosophists, such as Root-Races or Thought Forms. He did, however, have a strong leaning towards Eastern religious

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412 Ibid., p. 157.
415 See Chapter 7 on Cyril Scott.
thought, including a belief in karma and reincarnation as well as his personal Dharma, or duty.

**Early Life**

Gustav Holst was born in the town of Cheltenham in 1874, into a middle-class Anglican family. His father was said to have been a brilliant pianist and the “most highly respected musician in Cheltenham”. Holst’s mother died when he was eight years old, and three years later his father remarried. His stepmother was a Theosophist and, according to Raymond Head, the family home was used regularly as a meeting place for local Theosophists. This is supported by Holst’s daughter, Imogen, in her biography of her father: she describes how he would “Listen to the long conversations that went on in the drawing room, and then discussed the possibilities of reincarnation with his friends at school”.

Although it is impossible to know his opinion of Theosophical doctrines during his teens, a number of friends in later life were prominent Theosophists. It is therefore not unreasonable to assume the genesis of his lifelong interest in Indian religious and philosophical thought stemmed from his childhood experiences of conversations he heard of a Theosophical nature. Unfortunately his later opinions on Theosophy are not mentioned within the works of Imogen Holst or Michael Short, both regarded as authorities on Holst; likewise, no reference is made to either Blavatsky or Theosophy in the index or body of their works. A more recent work by Jon C. Mitchell claims to be a comprehensive biography of Holst, but manages to mention Theosophy only once in its 609 pages, and that is to observe that his step-mother “has been described as a Theosophist”. Mitchell goes on to introduce an element of negativity into this fact by suggesting that her interest in philosophical and religious subjects led to a neglect of family matters. Indeed, among biographers of Holst – Raymond Head being the exception – there seems to be silence on the subjects of either Theosophy or his other “dubious” interest, astrology.

In Holst’s general behaviour and personal relationships with others, there appears not to have been any overt demonstration of his mystical beliefs; however, his religious

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ideas were very much influenced by Indian philosophy. His brother Matthias wrote that Gustav’s religious ideas were based on Buddhism, and that he believed in “detachment from love and hate, pleasure and pain”. He goes on to say that “this influence reached him and me from the same source, it colored his whole life and music”.  

It is not unreasonable to assume that the reference to “the same source” refers to Matthias’s mother, Gustav’s step-mother.

**Interest in Indian Philosophy**

As an adult, Gustav became a keen student of Hindu philosophy, teaching himself Sanskrit in order to translate texts from the *Rig Veda*. His interest in Hindu thought can be seen to be the motivation behind all his Sanskrit works, which included the operas *Sita* (1906) and *Savitri* (1908), the *Cloud Messenger* (1910) and the four sets of *Hymns from the Rig Veda* (1912).  

It is interesting to note that, despite his interest in Indian themes, Holst never attempted to use traditional instruments such as the *Sita*; nor did he experiment with the tonal inflections or scale forms of the Raga system. His “Indian works” should therefore be seen as a peripheral exotic fancy rather than a full commitment to a foreign art form.

One area of Indian content that Holst did incorporate was Sanskrit, which raises a question concerning studies of the language. Michael Short suggests that Holst took up the study of Sanskrit for “relaxation and mental stimulation”, a strange pursuit to take up in order to “relax” – especially in what seems to have been a very busy period of his life. His daughter does not seem to agree with Short, and quotes her father as saying that “as a rule I only study things that suggests music to me, that’s why I worried at Sanskrit”. It is possible that Holst was studying Sanskrit for a quite different reason, which was to improve the text of his works based on Hindu themes that used Sanskrit, such as his operas or the *Rig Veda* Hymns. He may also have even been aware of Blavatsky’s statement that the “Sanskrit letters and alphabet, as well as the Vedas, are musical notations reduced to writings”. Unfortunately, there is no evidence to say whether this was the case.

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It is likely that Theosophy was not the only factor stimulating Holst’s interest in Indian culture at this time. In 1886, the India and Colonial Exhibition was held in London, attracting over four million people; a similar exhibition was held in Glasgow in 1888, and 1895 saw London host the Indian Empire Exhibition. In Paris, similar exhibitions had taken place in 1889 and 1900, with the former being said to have made a deep impression on Debussy and Delibes. It is also probable that Scriabin would have been aware of these exhibitions, and in his frequent travels to both London and Paris visited one or more.

One of Holst’s early heroes was the composer Richard Wagner who, under the influence of Schopenhauer, had embraced Buddhist ideas; it is from the writings of Wagner that Holst is said to have gleaned some of his knowledge of Buddhism. Another important influence on Holst was the mystical poetry of the American Walt Whitman (1819–92). Whitman had a lifelong interest in Indian culture, as evidenced in his poem *A Passage to India*, sections of which were later set by Holst’s lifelong friend, the composer Ralph Vaughan Williams, as the subject-matter for the fourth movement of his first symphony, *A Sea Symphony*. Whitman used the metaphor of the voyages of sailors exploring the ocean to capture the journey of the human soul. In this vein, his work also provided the text for Vaughan Williams’ *Towards the Unknown Region*, which again depicts the soul’s journey. Holst’s fascination with Whitman’s work is demonstrated by the number of times he set his poems to music. In 1904, he started work on *The Mystic Trumpeter* for soprano and orchestra; the words were from Whitman’s poem “From Noon to Starry Night”. Later, he and Vaughan Williams, in a personal competition, both set the same text, “Darest Thou Now O Soul” from *Whispers of Heavenly Death*, with the prize for the best setting going to Vaughan Williams – who, according to Holst, is said to have declared, “The prize was awarded by us to me”. Other settings by Holst of Whitman include the “Dirge for Two Veterans” (1914) and the “Ode to Death” (1919). Previously he had written a tribute to the poet, the *Walt Whitman Overture* (1898); however, this remained unperformed until the 1980s.

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426 Head, “Holst and India”, p. 2.
427 Ibid.
428 Ibid., p. 3. Head suggests that Holst may have been introduced to Schopenhauer by Vaughan Williams, but without evidence this must remain mere conjecture.
429 Head, “Holst and India”, p. 3 is misleading when commenting on the text for the *Sea Symphony*, “A Passage to India” is used only in the fourth movement; the first three movements are from “Leaves of Grass”, and can be found in Whitman, *The Complete Poems*, pp. 288–91 and 431–37.
431 Head, “Holst and India”, p. 3.
Whitman was never a member of the Theosophical Society; however, it has been said that the principles of Theosophy underlie all of the central images of his work. A primary idea that runs through Whitman’s work is “unity”, or the “oneness of all being”; this is best expressed in his poem, “On the Beach at Night Alone”, which contains sentiments that would have resonated with both Vaughan Williams and Holst, and is set by the former in his Sea Symphony.

A vast similitude interlocks all,
All spheres, grown, ungrown, small, large, suns, moons, planets,
All distances of place however wide,
All distances of time, all inanimate forms,
All souls, all living bodies though they be ever so different, or in different worlds,
All gaseous, watery, vegetable, mineral processes, the fishes, the brutes,
All nations, colors, barbarisms, civilizations, languages,
All identities that have existed or may exist on this globe, or any globe,
All lives and deaths, all of the past, present, future,
This vast similitude spans them, and always has spanned them, and shall forever span them and compactly hold and enclose them.

This is similar in tone to an article Holst wrote for the theosophical magazine The Quest, entitled The Mystic, the Philistine and the Artist. He writes that:

All mystical experiences seem to be forms of union. The highest mystic is, I suppose, one who experiences union with God. Is he alone a Mystic? Or is Whitman a Mystic in his intense felling of unity with all men, all life? What of the wonderful feeling of unity with ones pupils when teaching, a feeling of contact with their minds other than the contact occasioned by speech? What of being awakened at night by a thunderstorm and not knowing if one is oneself or the thunder? Of

\[\text{\footnotesize \textsuperscript{432}}\text{W. Raubicheck, “The Theosophical Whitman”, Quest Magazine, July–August 1999, p. 12.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize \textsuperscript{433}}\text{Whitman, The Complete Poems, pp. 288–89.}\]
reaching an indescribable state of existence where sound and color are one?  

One can confidently say that composers such as John Foulds and Cyril Scott would have agreed with him with respect to oneness and unity, also recognising his reference to sound and colour, which were such an important part of Scriabin’s world and discussed by Blavatsky in *The Secret Doctrine*, ideas that were later developed further by Besant and Leadbeater.

Holst’s Hindu beliefs imbued him with a strong sense of *Dharma*, or dutiful path in life. He saw his role as a teacher and composer as part of his personal *Dharma*, admitting in a letter written in 1926 to Vaughan Williams that:

I still believe in the Hindu doctrine of *Dharma* which is one’s path in life. If one is lucky to have a clearly appointed path to which one comes naturally whereas any other one is an unsuccessful effort, one ought to stick to the former … I am convinced that Dharma is the only thing for me.

There is a touch of resignation about that statement – it has been suggested that throughout his life Holst tended towards depression and self-doubt, and any setback could “leave him floundering and questioning the basis of life”. This negativity was best expressed in 1914, when he confided to a friend, Clifford Bax – himself a Theosophist and astrologer – that he was “looking forward to *Devachan*”, a term Theosophists use to describe a blissful state after death.

In the same year, Holst started work on his most popular work, *The Planet Suite*, which he had been planning for some time. Although he would have been aware of astrology from his youth, it is suggested that his interest in astrology, on a more practical level, could have been stimulated by his friendship with G.R.S. Mead (1863–1933), a classical scholar and translator of Sanskrit literature. In 1917 Holst had set a Gnostic text translated by Mead entitled *Hymn of Jesus*. In terms of evaluating Holst’s links to Theosophy the friendship is important, as Mead was not only interested in Theosophy and

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436 Head, “Holst and India”, p. 17.
437 Ibid., p. 17.
occultism, but in 1887 had become Blavatsky’s secretary in London, editing the second edition of *The Secret Doctrine*.\textsuperscript{438}

Mead was also a friend of the astrologer Alan Leo (1860–1917) who, according to Head, had published a number of authoritative books on the subject.\textsuperscript{439} Leo was a Theosophist and had been a member of Blavatsky’s closed circle in London.\textsuperscript{440} It is suggested that Leo’s books, *The Art of Synthesis* (1912) and *How to Judge a Nativity*, inspired the composition of *The Planets*. In the former, he devotes a chapter to each planet, outlining its qualities and characteristics, such as Mars the energiser, Venus the unifier and Neptune the mystic – the last of these the same as the description Holst was to use.\textsuperscript{441}

The qualities and characteristics of the planets used by Leo have an antecedent in the writings of Marsilio Ficino (1433–99), who wrote that:

> The planets with malignant influence do not have music but rather voices, Saturn being slow, deep, harsh and plaintive, Mars is the opposite, quick, sharp, fierce, and menacing; the Moon has music in between. The beneficent planets are described thus; Jupiter’s music is deep, earnest, sweet and joyful with stability. Venus is voluptuous with wantonness and softness. The music of the Sun is venerable, simple and earnest while Mercury is less serious due to its gaiety.\textsuperscript{442}

According to Jamie James, Holst’s *The Planet Suite* is almost a literal rendering of Ficino’s sketches of the planetary music, although if music is as non-representational as James has suggested, this must be viewed as a purely subjective statement on his part.\textsuperscript{443}

Holst was always guarded on the subject of astrology, which he called his “pet vice”. Imogen Holst informs us that he loved to cast horoscopes for his friends, but “there were very few people with whom he could discuss astrology, and he seldom mentioned it for fear of embarrassing his listeners”.\textsuperscript{444} This guarded approach also applied to *The Planets* which in the years immediately following their composition were described by

\begin{footnotes}
\item[438] Ibid.
\item[439] Ibid.
\item[440] Ibid., p.18.
\item[441] Ibid., p. 18.
\item[443] James, *The Music of the Spheres*, p. 121.
\item[444] I. Holst, *Gustav Holst*, p. 43.
\end{footnotes}
him as “a series of mood pictures”. His reticence in placing a more esoteric interpretation on the work earlier may have been due to the 1917 prosecution of Alan Leo under the Vagrancy Act, which declared all astrologers, palmists, clairvoyants and mediums “common thieves and vagabonds”.

The description of *The Planets* as a series of mood pictures is accepted by Michael Short who claims that the order of the movements was to obtain “maximum musical effectiveness”. However, in 1927 Holst admitted that the suite deals with the “seven influences of destiny and constituents of our spirit”. The order of the planets in the work, which begins with Mars, followed by Venus, Mercury, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune, is said to symbolise the unfolding experience of life from the cradle to the grave. This order makes more sense astrologically than simply being a series of “mood pictures”. Holst depicts the qualities of each planet and his understanding of the subject. If the “mood picture” interpretation were the case, there would not have been much point in changing the order of the planets and omitting the Sun and Moon. Likewise, there is no evidence to support Short’s contention that the order was for maximum musical effectiveness. In support of a more theosophical interpretation, it could be argued that there are seven movements in the suite, suggesting that he was aware of, and adhering to, Blavatsky’s notion of the septenary nature of the cosmos.

The non-acceptance or non-understanding by academia of the more esoteric interpretation of the *Planet Suite* was in evidence when in 2000 the Halle Concerts Society of Manchester commissioned the composer Colin Matthews to write an eighth movement, *Pluto: The Renewer*. It is probable that Holst would have seen no reason to add another movement to the suite, depicting a planet discovered in 1930, for two reasons: first, it would upset the septenary nature of the work, with any addition destroying its unity; and second, musical factors must be considered. An examination of the score reveals that the opening and closing movements (*Mars* and *Neptune*) mirror each other. The opening bass pedal on G of *Mars* is echoed by the high G pedal in *Neptune*’s chorus entry; also, both sections are united by their metre of five beats per

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447 Short, *Gustav Holst*, p. 121.
449 Head, “Holst and India”, p. 19.
At the end of the final movement, with the chorus becoming softer and trailing off into aural infinity, a musical and aesthetic cycle is completed. If one accepts the septenary number of movements as a nod towards Theosophy and the order of the planets depicting the stages of life rather than existing for musical effect, the work must be recognised as being more motivated by astrology then by astronomy.

Although never becoming a member of the Theosophical Society, Gustav Holst seems to have adhered to those tenets of the order that have their source within the Indian tradition, such as karma, reincarnation and Dharma. In all probability, these reflect the influence of his step-mother and her circle, and can also be observed in the conduct of his life. His daughter, Imogen, wrote that he lived frugally, being a non-smoker, teetotaller and a strict vegetarian. There is no evidence to suggest that he was interested in metaphysics, cosmology (other than his interest in astrology) or those other speculative aspects that are prominent within Theosophical teaching, such as evolution through Root-Races or the “Masters”. Indeed, Imogen says that “he had no use for psychical research in any shape or form”. He seems to have been the archetypal reserved, English gentleman, never allowing himself to succumb to the mystical excesses of a Scriabin or Cyril Scott.

This chapter has argued that the teachings of Theosophy had, to varying degrees, an influence on a number of prominent composers. In the case of Scriabin, it is evident in his written acknowledgement of Blavatsky’s ideas being similar to his own, his general admiration of her work and his incorporation of Theosophical concepts, such as Root-Races and the septenary nature of spiritual evolution into his grand cosmological design, as well as his membership of the Belgian chapter of the society. Bailly’s Theosophical credentials can by recognised not just by his willingness to compose for the Theosophical congress, but also his choice of musical symbolism to explain his cosmological ideas as well as his fostering of Theosophists and their works through both his café and his publishing company.

Gustav Holst is perhaps the most ambiguous of the composers in this chapter, as he made very little mention of Theosophy or any occult topics outside of astrology. However, with his Theosophical step-mother allowing him to sit in on the conversations of Theosophical meetings as a child, and his discussions with school friends on related topics, it is reasonable to assume that Theosophical notions informed his early thinking.

453 Ibid., p. 43.
In later life, many of his closest friends were Theosophists and he was a contributor to the Theosophical magazine, *Quest*. His profound interest in Indian religion and philosophy, while not necessarily coming directly from Theosophy, could also be seen as an outgrowth of his early influences, as can his references to Devachan.

We now turn to a non-composer whose theories of music and its place in the evolution of humankind could be said to stand at the extreme of speculative ideas: Rudolf Steiner.
Chapter 5
Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) and Anthroposophy

Although not a composer, Rudolf Steiner is included in this survey due to his contribution to the esoteric literature concerning the role of music in the spiritual evolution of humankind. This incorporated what he called Eurhythmy, the use of movement and music for both the spiritual and physical development of the individual. A further reason for his inclusion is his links to the Theosophical Society and his use of Theosophical concepts within the teachings of his Anthroposophical Society. Whilst a number of biographies of Steiner can be sourced, they are mostly written by anthroposophists, and are therefore sympathetic in nature; Olav Hammer has stated that “there are no scholarly biographies of Steiner”. 454 This has allowed Steiner’s pronouncements on the metaphysics of music to go mainly unchallenged, and the radical nature of some of his ideas to be dismissed without much comment by musicologists.

This neglect on the part of objective commentators has led to the unfortunate consequence that Steiner’s ideas – like Scott’s and those of Corinne Heline – have found their way into many popular and New Age works of literature as authoritative facts that no longer require scrutiny. This chapter, while showing that Steiner’s ideas are embedded within the Western occultic and Theosophical traditions, will therefore undertake a more critical look at the nature of his music theories relative to his overall spiritual philosophy.

Rudolf Steiner was born in 1861 of Austrian Catholic parents. As a child, he is said to have been solitary, serious and reflective, and it is claimed that from his youth he displayed an awareness of a world beyond the material by communing with spirits in the hills near his home. 455 There seems little doubt that, as he grew up, he developed what Campbell calls a “romantic and mystical orientation”. 456 As a young man, he became immersed in philosophy, scholarship and editorial work, editing the scientific works of Goethe. John Covach claims that by the age of 23 he had built a reputation as a leading


455 Washington, Madame Blavatsky’s Baboon, p. 146.

456 Campbell, Ancient Wisdom Revived, p. 155.
young scholar of Goethean science. During this time, he became a frequent visitor to establishments frequented by artists and intellectuals. One such establishment was the Café Griensteidl in Vienna, where occult historian James Webb tells us: “Theosophists, Wagnerians, vegetarians, Pythagoreans, poets and artists congregated.” His circle of friends consisted of characters such as Friedrich Eckstein, a devout Wagnerian who, according to Covach, had made the pilgrimage to Bayreuth on foot and in sandals, had followed Wagner’s lead in turning to vegetarianism, and had become the head of a group of Pythagoreans dressing in all-cotton gowns, and wearing shoulder-length hair and long beards. It is in this intellectual and rather eccentric mix that Steiner developed his interest in occultism, being particularly attracted to an esoteric understanding of Christianity. Unlike many Theosophists of his day, Steiner’s general philosophy was not Eastern orientated, which has led Campbell to suggest that Steiner’s spiritual thinking was always Western and Christocentric in orientation.

In 1902, Steiner formally joined the Theosophical Society. That same year, he was appointed general secretary of the German Section of the society, a position he held until leaving that organisation in 1912. When he joined the society, he called it “the only institution that could be taken seriously in its search for spiritual life”. However, by 1912 the Eastern orientation of the society under Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbeater, and the tensions engendered by the promotion of Krishnamurti as the next World Teacher, created a rift that could not be resolved. The gulf between Steiner and the Theosophical Society became such that Besant was said to have observed that “he teaches the Christian and Rosicrucian way, which is different to ours”. In 1912, Besant revoked the charter of the German Section, causing a major split within the Theosophical Society. According to Bruce Campbell, Steiner took 56 of the 69 German lodges with him and founded his own society, the Anthroposophical Society.

460 Campbell, Ancient Wisdom Revived, p. 156
462 For a more expansive discussion on the schism within the Theosophical Society see Campbell, Ancient Wisdom Revived, Chapter 4, also pp. 155–58.
463 Cited in ibid., p. 156.
The Anthroposophical Society was formed in 1913. It has been described as an eclectic occult system that attempts a fusion of Theosophical ideas, traditional Western occultism and German idealistic philosophy.\textsuperscript{465} The term \textit{Anthropos}, meaning “man” and \textit{Sophia} meaning Wisdom was for Steiner a necessary prelude in understanding the “wisdom of God”. In Anthroposophical literature, Steiner often refers to his teaching as Spiritual Science, suggesting a Blavatskian synthesis of the occult and modern science. The \textit{Anthropos} also refers to the Theosophical notion of the perfectibility of man; Steiner says that “knowledge of the Spiritual science can be acquired by every man for himself”.\textsuperscript{466}

Steiner was a prolific writer and teacher, and is said to have delivered almost 6000 lectures on a diverse number of topics, such as education – a field in which he established what are known as the Waldorf Schools. These consisted of a system of private schools emphasising the value of art, drama and individual expression. In health, he advocated new methods for the treatment of physically and mentally disabled children. His interests extended to agriculture, developing what he called the bio-dynamic method, a system of gardening that takes into account the rhythms of the Earth and the influence of the heavenly bodies on plants. His lectures also included a range of other interests including architecture, movement (Eurhythmy) and, importantly for this study, music.\textsuperscript{467}

Steiner’s philosophical influences include Goethe, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Wagner, but his lectures on music, while containing important aspects of Schopenhauerian and Wagnerian thinking, contain key Theosophical concepts. These link music with such ideas as after-death and before-birth states, karma, reincarnation and the spiritual evolution of humankind – which, similar to Theosophy, is claimed to take place through seven stages including the Lemurian, Atlantean and Aryan Root-Races. In a similar fashion to Blavatsky, Wagner and Scriabin, Steiner’s aim was to create a fusion or synthesis of science, religion and art, which he believed had existed in the ancient mystery schools. His primary wish was therefore to create a form of synthesis that could be understood by and was compatible with the modern Western mind.\textsuperscript{468} As in the writings of d’Olivet, Blavatsky and Bailly, Steiner looked for correspondences linking colors and planets with the seven notes of the diatonic scale.\textsuperscript{469}

\textsuperscript{465} Ibid., p.157.  
\textsuperscript{467} Godwin, \textit{Harmonies of Heaven and Earth}, p. 251.  
\textsuperscript{468} Campbell, \textit{Ancient Wisdom Revived}, p. 158.  
\textsuperscript{469} Blavatsky, \textit{The Secret Doctrine}, Vol. 3 includes a number of tables outlining the various correspondences.
Steiner’s lectures on music were given during two separate periods of his life, with the first group of three lectures presented in 1906. These were Schopenhauerian and Theosophical in content, the former being used to support his theories of tone within the evolutionary process and why he considered music to hold a special position among the arts. This included the Schopenhauerian notion of music having its archetypal origin in the spiritual rather than the physical world. The Theosophical influence is evident in his explanation of the various stages of consciousness relating to the human being, life in the Devachanic world and the notion of Root-Races. Steiner delivered a further group of four lectures between 1922 and 1923, in which he discusses in more detail the development of the human race, its experience of the world of Tones and a more developed theory of the role this has played in the course of human evolution.

The Influence of Arthur Schopenhauer

Although Theosophical ideas could be said to be the primary framework upon which Steiner hangs his musical theories, his published lectures on music also demonstrate the strong philosophical influence of the German Romantic philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), and any analysis of Steiner’s musical ideas would not be complete without some discussion of the form this influence took. Steiner was not alone in his admiration of Schopenhauer’s philosophy of music. Many of the great musicians of the time also held him in high regard – for example, Schopenhauer’s philosophy is said to have had an enormous effect on Richard Wagner, precipitating fundamental changes in his life and work, particularly during the writing of Tristan and Isolde and the Ring Cycle. On Wagner’s reading of Schopenhauer’s The World as Will and Representation (1818), which he claimed to have read four times in one year, Wagner (in a letter to Franz Liszt) claimed that “Schopenhauer’s philosophy came to me as a gift from Heaven”. In the same vein, Gustav Mahler said that Schopenhauer had written “one of the most profound works ever written on music”. Similar references to the philosopher’s thought can be

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471 Steiner, The Inner Nature of Music, p. v. The first two lectures were given in Berlin on 12 and 26 November 1906 and the third in Köln (Cologne) on 3 December 1906. Lecture 4 was given in Dornach on 2 December 1922, Lectures 5 and 6 at Stuttgart on 7 and 8 March 1923 and Lecture 7 at Dornach on 16 March 1923.


found in the writings of Prokofiev, Schoenberg, Brahms, Liszt and, as has been noted, Scriabin; all were influenced in their metaphysical views regarding the nature of music by Schopenhauer’s ideas. In the field of esoteric speculations on music, it could be argued that he was the most influential philosopher of the Romantic period.

Steiner was in complete accord with Schopenhauer’s argument that music is superior to the other arts as it is the only art that is non-representational; he claimed that it was the voice of the metaphysical “will”. According to Schopenhauer music stands apart from the other arts in that we do not recognise a copy or repetition of any idea within nature. Steiner accepted the Schopenhauerian view that music, being a direct copy of the will, has no model in the physical world. To demonstrate this, Steiner argued that when a sculpture, painter or poet creates a work, the inspiration comes from the idealised reality of the physical world; however, if this approach were to be applied to music, the composer would hardly achieve any results at all. In support of this position, Steiner compares Schopenhauer’s view with that of another of his major influences, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832). Goethe said that “in nature, it is the intentions that are significant”. Schopenhauer would have concurred, believing that in all the creative arts, other than music, mental images must be combined before the hidden intentions of nature are discovered. This is said not to be necessary with music, as music is “nature’s direct expression”.

In Schopenhauer’s view, the composer becomes a great metaphysician, penetrating to the centre of things and revealing, “the innermost nature of the world and expressing the profoundest wisdom, in a language that his reasoning faculty does not understand”. Schopenhauer further states that music expresses in an “entirely universal language”, using nothing but tones with the greatest directness and truth, “the innermost being of the world and of our own self”. On the surface, the metaphysics of Schopenhauer have little in common with those of Blavatsky; however, on closer inspection a number of areas of consensus appear. Both claim that our everyday world is an illusion – or Maya – and is thus something to be transcended. This illusion is brought about by what Schopenhauer calls the Universal Will, from which all things emanate. He

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475 Ibid.
476 Magee, The Tristan Chord, p. 171.
478 Cited in ibid., p. 12.
479 Ibid., p. 13.
481 Schopenhauer, The World as Will, p. 256.
advocates a “denial of the will” as the purpose of life, a notion that has much in common with Buddhist teaching concerning the final negation of the ego.

There is some debate about how much Schopenhauer was influenced by Indian philosophy when writing The World as Will, as translations of Hindu and Buddhist scriptures had only recently begun to appear in Western European languages.\(^{482}\) We do know that he was aware of Hindu thought at a relatively early stage, being introduced to the Upanishads by his mother five years before the publication of The World as Will, and he is said to have remained very much influenced by Eastern religious thought throughout his life.\(^{483}\) Magee claims that Schopenhauer was amazed when he realised that his ideas in The World as Will were central to the philosophies of Hinduism and Buddhism.\(^{484}\) Why he should be is not clear as an examination of the index of the work reveals eighteen references to Hinduism, 21 to Brahmanism and 30 to Buddhism, which demonstrates at least some awareness of Indian philosophy on Schopenhauer’s part while writing the work. Further evidence of his sympathy towards Indian thought can be found in his contention that the ancient wisdom of the human race has its origins in India. This wisdom, he writes, “will not be supplanted by the events in Galilee”; on the contrary, “Indian wisdom will flow back to Europe, and will produce a fundamental change in our knowledge and thought”.\(^{485}\) This is a view later articulated by Blavatsky in the Secret Doctrine and endorsed by Annie Besant and later Theosophists.

The Eastern orientation observed in Schopenhauer’s work made it easy to be absorbed into the thinking of Theosophists such as Steiner, Scriabin, Scott and Besant; however, it would seem that from the minuscule number of references to him in the Secret Doctrine that Blavatsky herself was not a great admirer, and does not appear to have been influenced directly.\(^{486}\)

Schopenhauer’s universe, like the Platonic and Hermetic one, is a hierarchical system ranging downwards from pure will to the most inanimate object. This suggests a similarity to Blavatsky’s ideas, whereby everything that exists – whether rational or not – emanates downwards into matter and participates in the ultimate oneness of being. For Schopenhauer and Steiner, this emanating universe could be expressed musically.

\(^{482}\) Magee, The Tristan Chord, p. 164. As this chapter is on Steiner and not Schopenhauer, for a more comprehensive analysis of Schopenhauer’s philosophy, refer to Magee, The Tristan Chord; B. Magee, The Philosophy of Schopenhauer, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983; Young, Schopenhauer.

\(^{483}\) Magee, The Tristan Chord, p. 165.

\(^{484}\) Magee, The Tristan Chord, p. 164.


\(^{486}\) Only three references to Schopenhauer appear in the index of The Secret Doctrine.
Schopenhauer argued that music, having direct access to the Will, can give us an immediate copy of it, while Steiner claimed that “a tone lies at the foundation of everything in the physical world. All objects have a spiritual tone at the foundation of their being.”\(^{487}\) In this, Steiner is using the language of Von Dalberg and the Western esoteric tradition by attributing an individual vibrational tone or frequency to all things.

Throughout the Western philosophical tradition, the questions of music’s origin and why it seems to have such an impact on the emotions have often been debated. In Schopenhauer’s philosophy, music is seen to be “as immediate an objectification of the whole Will as the world itself”.\(^{488}\) Indeed, he goes on to say that the world is nothing but the phenomenon of appearances of the (Platonic) ideas in plurality; however, music passes over the ideas – it is independent of the phenomenal world and “could exist even if there were no world at all”.\(^{489}\) This, he argues, cannot be said of the other arts, which is the reason Schopenhauer regarded music as being superior to all the other arts – for whereas arts such as painting or sculpting represent images from the every day world, which he claims is ultimately illusionary, music does not. Schopenhauer argued that a painting of a tree or a sculpture of a man is a second or third hand copy of an archetypal idea contained within the mind of God – or, as he saw it, the Universal Will – but music is not a copy of anything in nature; it therefore has no model in the physical world.\(^{490}\)

In this sense, it could be argued that music is non-representational, an argument that led the philosopher Leibniz to claim that “music is an unconscious exercise in arithmetic in which the mind does not know it is counting”.\(^{491}\) This could reduce music to a system of sounds, without meaning or reference to anything beyond itself. Schopenhauer dismissed this idea, arguing that music is a universal language, saying something of the utmost profundity. For Schopenhauer, music is therefore representational and related to reality as a “copy” – but a copy of what? If music is not a copy of the world of objects within a dualism of representation and will, then it must be a copy of the will, “the thing-in-itself” – for, as he says, “only music has direct access to the Will, and provides us with an immediate copy of it”.\(^{492}\) Concerning music as the “language of the Will”, Schopenhauer argues that:

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\(^{487}\) Steiner, *The Inner Nature of Music*, p.5.


\(^{489}\) Ibid.


\(^{491}\) Schopenhauer, *The World as Will*, p. 256.

\(^{492}\) Ibid.
Music if regarded as an expression of the world, is in the highest degree a universal language which is related to the universality of concepts, much as they are related to the particular things ... In this respect it resembles geometrical figures and numbers, which are the universal forms of all possible objects of experience and applicable to them all *a priori*, and yet are not abstract but perceptible and thoroughly determined.\(^{493}\)

Following Schopenhauer, Steiner argued that all of the arts except music pass through a mental image stage, therefore giving us pictures of the will. Music’s superiority to the other arts is described by both men as being due to its “direct expression of the Will itself without the interpolation of the mental image”.\(^{494}\) The composer “puts his ear to the very heart of nature itself; he perceives the will of nature and reproduces it in a series of tones”.\(^{495}\) Steiner goes on to say that humankind therefore stands in an intimate relationship to the “thing-in-itself”, penetrating to the innermost essence of things. The closeness a person feels to this essence when listening to music, according to Steiner, accounts for the deep contentment he experiences during that act.\(^{496}\) There is a similarity here to Schopenhauer’s contention that the relation music has to the true nature of all things can be discerned when “suitable music played to any scene, action, event or surrounding seems to disclose to us its most secret meaning, and appears as the most accurate and distinct commentary upon it”.\(^{497}\) He goes on to say:

Music is distinguished from all the other arts by the fact that it is not a copy of the phenomenon, or, more accurately, the adequate objectivity of will, but is a direct copy of the will itself, and therefore exhibits itself as the metaphysical to everything physical in the world, and as the *thing-in-itself* to every phenomenon. We might just as well call the world embodied music as embodied will.\(^{498}\)

\(^{493}\) Ibid., p. 262.
\(^{494}\) Steiner, *The Inner Nature of Music*, pp. 2–3.
\(^{495}\) Ibid., p. 3.
\(^{496}\) Ibid.
\(^{498}\) Ibid., pp. 262–63.
For both Schopenhauer and Steiner, the musician is closer to nature and the world than other artists, a view that can best be summarised in Steiner’s comment that “music is the expression of the Will of nature while all the other arts are expressions of the idea of nature”.\footnote{Ibid.} Being close to the heart of the world, music is therefore said to affect the human soul, which is why Steiner argued that “the effects of music on the human soul are so direct, so powerful, and so elemental”.\footnote{Ibid.}

**Theosophical Ideas in Steiner**

As Alexander Scriabin used Theosophical notions as a framework within which to legitimise his own ideas, it could be argued that Steiner used both Theosophical ideas and the Schopenhauerian metaphysics of music in the same way. By the time he gave his lectures on music at the age of 45, he had developed his occultic philosophy in such a way as to have grafted Schopenhauer’s ideas and Theosophical notions together. Between 1914 and 1923, his lectures on art and music incorporated the notion of correspondences between tone and colour – an idea embraced by Blavatsky and the Theosophists, but a position to which Schopenhauer was unsympathetic, as he regarded the eye as inferior to the ear and had called early experiments with the color-organ “a ludicrous mistake”.\footnote{Schopenhauer, *The World as Will*, Vol. 1, p. 31. This comment was probably referring to one of the first attempts to combine color and music by Louis Castel (1688–1757), who constructed a “Harpsichord for the eye”. His work was later translated and published by Telemann in German in 1739. P. Scholes, *The Oxford Companion to Music*, London: Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 206.}

We have observed that, for Steiner, music was the product of a spiritual realm, which he called the Devachan – sometimes referred to as the mental world.\footnote{Steiner, *The Inner Nature of Music*, p.1 5. Devachan is a term used by H.P. Blavatsky, meaning the place of the Devas (angels or lesser Gods).} This world is said to be beyond the astral world, which according to Steiner is itself a world of colour; however, he tells us that the essential characteristic of the Devachanic world is tone.\footnote{Steiner, *The Inner Nature of Music*, p. 16.} Steiner argues that the great composer is able to bring forth faithful copies of the Devachanic world, which gives humankind a foretaste of this spiritual world.\footnote{Ibid., p. 18.} This is not unlike the ideas of Edmund Bailly, who argued that the artist created nothing but caused things that were already created to reappear in the material world.\footnote{See section on Bailly, Chapter 4.} This notion suggests the reading of the Akashic records referred to earlier and that appears often in Theosophical literature. According to Steiner, it is during sleep that we enter the astral
and Devachanic worlds, where the soul absorbs into itself the world of tones. He claims that the pleasure we experience from certain pieces of music occurs when certain Devachanic harmonies and melodies, which the soul has absorbed in the dream state, correspond to music we are hearing in the physical world.  

The notion of reincarnation is introduced into this scenario, for the dream state is considered not to be the only time we are exposed to Devachanic music. The Devachanic world is also said to be our primeval home, being a place of rest between incarnations. The music to which we listen and from which we derive pleasure in our daily lives represents an echo of what has been absorbed by the soul, not only in previous lives but in our after-death state prior to rebirth. Steiner says that “these echoes pervade the lower world with inklings of a glorious and wonderful existence; they churn up man’s innermost being and thrill it with vibrations of purest joy and sublime spirituality”.  

He goes on to say that only an initiate or those advanced on the spiritual path can have any conscious knowledge of this state. For the uninitiated, he says, the knowledge of the Devachanic world can only be vaguely discerned as a type of shadow image, which is then made manifest in the physical plane – but only by those with what is called “Genius”. This may account for Cyril Scott’s assertion that the composers Grieg and Tchaikovsky, not being initiates, portrayed Deva music only as they thought it should be rather than how it actually was.  

Steiner’s theory concerning the nature of musical genius is one that incorporates the after-death state, reincarnation and physiology. Musical talent, he says, is transmitted purely within physical heredity, and in particular needs a special configuration of the ear – or what he calls “a musical ear” – for without this attribute “all musical talent is meaningless”. In order to demonstrate this, Steiner points to the Bach family – which, over a 250-year period, is said by Steiner to have produced “twenty nine more or less gifted musicians”. Musical souls, he says, are drawn into the physical world to incarnate by a family having the correct physical attributes that will allow that particular soul to fulfil its specific task. Musical talent therefore is able to run in families over generations because the family passes on, from one generation to the next, physical features such as the special

507 Ibid., p. 20.
510 Ibid. p.22. Concerning the Bach family there seems to be disagreement between Steiner and W.Q. Judge, who contends that heredity counts for nothing, for Bach’s genius was not borne down his family line and gradually faded out. Judge, *The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 98.
configuration of the ear.\textsuperscript{511} In conjunction with this, the particular family exerts a powerful attraction from the physical plane on the individual musical soul in the Devachanic world, drawing it down into the physical. W.Q. Judge was later to offer a similar view, using Mozart as his example. Mozart’s extraordinary ability, according to Judge, was due to his being a musician reincarnated, with a musical brain that apparently was furnished by his family.\textsuperscript{512}

Steiner’s position on the nature of a musical genius raises an epistemological problem: assuming the soul has no physical body and therefore no ears, it is not clear how a soul can be “musical”, unless one concedes musical ability to be a characteristic of the particular soul itself. If so, this ability would therefore exist prior to incarnation into the physical body, therefore making unnecessary Steiner’s contention of needing a “special configuration of the ear”. Despite these technicalities, Steiner goes on to say that even if that individual soul’s spiritual rest still has “another two hundred years to run, once a suitable physical body becomes available, the soul is drawn to incarnate immediately”.\textsuperscript{513} In relation to the disturbed period of rest, Steiner assures us that the incarnating soul can make up the 200 years of lost rest the next time it is in Devachan.\textsuperscript{514} This again raises questions concerning the nature of time, and seems to suggest that Steiner saw time in Devachan operating in much the same way as in the physical world – in other words, in a linear fashion or “in time” rather than “outside of time”. This is in contradiction to earlier Theosophical writing on the subject – for example, W.Q. Judge, who previously had argued that there was no time, as we experience it, in Devachan.\textsuperscript{515}

The above problem was a matter of dispute between Steiner and other Theosophists. Steiner claimed his description of Devachan was based on actual perception gained through his clairvoyant experiences. He is critical of the writings of C.W. Leadbeater and other Theosophical books that attempt to describe Devachan, arguing that the descriptions given are not based on personal experience, are inaccurate and therefore are invalid.\textsuperscript{516} This implies a degree of self-belief that borders on arrogance, for how one judges the validity of another’s spiritual experiences has never been satisfactorily established. However, it seems

\textsuperscript{511} Ibid., p. 23.
\textsuperscript{512} Judge, The Ocean of Theosophy, p. 97.
\textsuperscript{513} Steiner, The Inner Nature of Music, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{514} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{515} Judge, The Ocean of Theosophy, p. 126.
\textsuperscript{516} Steiner, The Inner Nature of Music, pp. 15–16.
to be a common trait among self-styled “Initiated Ones” to accuse their fellow initiates of either being of a lesser spiritual status or indulging in exaggeration or fraud.\textsuperscript{517}

**Human Evolution and Music**

An important element within both Theosophical and Anthroposophic teaching concerns the evolution of the human race, which is said to take place in seven stages, including the Lemurian, Atlantean and Aryan. Using his clairvoyance, Steiner claimed to be able to read the Akashic record, the universal memory of the World-Soul, and from these readings discern the path of human evolution, which he maintained was based on the experience of tone and the predominance of various intervals.

In the course of evolution Theosophists believe the soul of each individual descends deeper into the physical body, taking possession of the bodily nature. Each stage of this process is reflected allegorically in music, which over the centuries has developed into the musical forms we have today. Steiner sees humanity as inherently musical, saying that we have been created out of the cosmos according to musical laws and as we are therefore musically connected to the cosmos, we are ourselves musical instruments. He goes on to argue that “through our astral body the cosmos is playing our own being”.\textsuperscript{518} This idea is essentially Pythagorean, but appears in *The Secret Doctrine*, with Blavatsky stating that “the world was constructed according to the principles of musical proportion”.\textsuperscript{519} This cosmic musicality is connected to the development of speech. Steiner argues that humans learned to sing first and then to speak, saying that primeval speech was first primeval song.\textsuperscript{520} That music is the source of language is a belief Steiner shared with Wagner and Charles Darwin who, in his *Descent of Man*, argues that “the rhythms and cadences of oratory are derived from previously developed musical powers”.\textsuperscript{521} Darwin further suggested that our ancestors courted each other by the aid of vocal tones.\textsuperscript{522}

Like Blavatsky, Steiner explains human evolution as the descent of the spiritual self into matter, and through a process of purification back again to spirit. As this process is,
according to Steiner, related to tone, the music of any particular stage of human evolution is said to be recognisable by the predominant intervals making up that music. As an example, Steiner tells us that the Atlantean musical experience was based upon the interval of the seventh, therefore their music would have no similarity with the music of today as it was arranged according to a series of “continuing sevenths through the full range of octaves”. Upon hearing this music, Atlanteans would “feel free of earthbound existence undergoing the experience of being mentally transported to another world”.

What Steiner does not explain is whether these were major sevenths, minor sevenths or perhaps diminished sevenths, the last of these giving the aural impression of the major sixth. A further question that should be asked is whether melodies were constructed in leaps of the seventh or the scale was derived from a series of sevenths. From his comment, “going through the full range of octaves”, the latter seems to be the case. Theoretically, therefore, presuming they extended the octaves far enough, the Atlanteans should have found that after condensing the notes down to the range of a single octave, a complete chromatic scale would have been available to them. Therefore, the only way any significant change in musical effect could be achieved, other than form or harmonic use, would have been by reverting to Pythagorean tuning, which at least would have had the effect of producing mathematically correct notes that never repeated themselves, going to infinity. Accepting that the Atlanteans would have known nothing of Pythagoras, as he was far in the future, it is reasonable to assume that, given that the Atlanteans were said to be an advanced civilisation, the mathematical basis of pure tuning would have been available to them. However, nowhere in Steiner’s musical theories is there any suggestion that the Atlanteans used anything other than “equal temperament”. Steiner seems not to have been aware of the historical controversy concerning tuning – or if he was, he never mentions it. Had he included it in his survey of music history, in particular when dealing with the Greeks, the survey might have been more convincing.

We are informed that gradually during the post-Atlantean period the seventh became painful, and humanity entered the musical experience of the fifth, which corresponds to the civilisations of Egypt and ancient China. The scale given by Steiner at this point is one built in the same way as d’Olivet’s, being a succession of fifths, g d a e b, which when compressed within one diatonic octave becomes d e g a b, forming what we

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523 Steiner, The Inner Nature of Music, p. 51.
524 Ibid., p. 51.
now call a pentatonic scale. In the music of the fifth experience, we are informed that “a human being felt lifted out of himself, he could say “the angel in my being is beginning to play music”. To say “I am making music” or “I sing” is regarded as inappropriate at this stage, as the ego had not completely permeated the body that had to wait for what Steiner calls the third experience, which is our current stage of evolution.

It is only in this current stage that humanity has been able to feel music as a subjective element. As previously mentioned, Steiner equates the fifth experience with the civilisations of ancient Egypt and China; the “fourth experience”, he says, lies at the border of the fifth and represents the outer spiritual world, which is reflected in the music of the ancient Greeks, while the interval of the third, which is currently being experienced, reflects mankind’s inner being. With the “third experience”, major and minor keys become possible; according to Steiner, this creates a “bond between music and human subjectivity”. Humans can now colour the musical element in various ways: “he can be in himself or outside himself”, his soul can swing between “self-awareness and self-surrender”. Steiner goes on to argue that the musical experience of the second is for the future, as is the experience of the unison, which when expanded to the octave should complete the evolutionary cycle.

The evolutionary scheme for humanity has its parallels within the individual, and is outlined in Steiner’s lectures on healing and education. In an article on Steiner’s use of music in the evolutionary scheme, Hilma Walter, Director of the Rudolf Steiner Clinic in Aslesheim, Switzerland, says that up until the age of seven, the child is simply a sense organ, because the “sentient body” is still hovering around the organism. A child’s development up until the age of fourteen is of the utmost importance, for it is said that during this time the child recapitulates what the whole race has had to develop during the different epochs of civilisation. The child will be highly sensitive to music suitable for his or her age, which according to Steiner should be based upon “fifths” and the pentatonic scale, as the child “dwells in the mood of the fifth”.

525 Steiner, *The Inner Nature of Music*, p. 51. This gives a form of Pentatonic scale with scale degrees 1, 2, 4, 5, 6. This is unusual, as today’s scale would read 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, which is the scale used in many children’s nursery rhymes, folk songs and Chinese music. Another version would be 1, b3, 4, 5, b7, which is the pentatonic scale used in blues and rock music.
526 Ibid., p. 52.
527 Ibid.
528 Ibid., p. 61.
529 Steiner, *The Inner Nature of Music*, p. 52.
531 Steiner, *The Inner Nature of Music*, p. 58.
by this music forcing their way down from the head into the body, “giving rise to healthy formative impulses”.\textsuperscript{532} Diseases are said to be disturbances in this evolutionary process, either due to the soul descending too deeply into the bodily nature or only being able to unite imperfectly with the body.\textsuperscript{533} According to Walter, we therefore “have a most valuable agent in music when we find disturbances in the process of development or growth and difficulties in walking and speaking”.\textsuperscript{534}

By the age of nine, Steiner says that the interval of the third can be introduced as the soul has descended deeper into the body, thus allowing the child to distinguish him or herself as an individual being of soul and spirit and to experience itself as an entity within the limits of the body.\textsuperscript{535} This in turn gives the child experience of major and minor keys, or joy and sorrow, and should be cultivated between the ages of nine and ten. Listening to these harmonies is said to develop inner balance between both the soul’s relationship with the body and the outer world.\textsuperscript{536} At twelve and into puberty, appreciation of the octave is encouraged, the higher frequencies being closer to the “I”; it is therefore important to “push upwards into the Etheric body which in turn pushes upon the Astral body”.\textsuperscript{537} It is interesting to note that the experience of the third, according to Walter, should be “as it exists in our modern scale”; this seems to be evidence confirming Steiner to be firmly in the “equal tempered” camp as opposed to the Pythagorean.\textsuperscript{538}

According to Steiner, the life force is stirred by playing music with strong rhythms and beats, allowing the child to make the movements of Eurhythmy with his or her arms and hands; this is said to activate the metabolic system and lay a healthy foundation for the later development of the will.\textsuperscript{539} Eurhythmy, or “visible speech and song”, is a form of movement and remains a compulsory subject in Steiner Waldorf Schools from the lowest to the highest grades. Steiner, in comparing it to gymnastics, says that while gymnastics is concerned with the physical body, Eurhythmy combines body, soul and spirit, making them work harmoniously together, suggesting that it is an “esouled and spiritualized form of gymnastics”.\textsuperscript{540} This he calls Curative Eurhythmy, claiming it to be of “extreme value in the treatment of illness”, and that with these movements sick children can be restored to

\textsuperscript{532} Walter, “Music as a Means of Healing”, p. 212.
\textsuperscript{533} Ibid., p. 211.
\textsuperscript{534} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{535} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{536} Ibid., p. 213.
\textsuperscript{537} Steiner, \textit{The Inner Nature of Music}, p. 59.
\textsuperscript{538} Walter, “Music as a Means of Healing”, p. 213.
\textsuperscript{539} Ibid., p.213
health. Human evolution is therefore, according to Steiner, expressed by tone, and the various intervals that predominate within any historical epoch or stage of physical development reflect the level reached. In time, humanity will reach the level of the unison and its octave, 2:1 – which presumably is the ultimate spiritual state.

Surprisingly, in his music lectures Steiner says little regarding the changes taking place around him during the period when he was delivering them. He seems to have missed the fact that composers such as Scriabin and Debussy were already experimenting with new scale forms and chords built on the interval of the second, or that interest in Asian music had led to experiments with intervals smaller than a semi-tone (microtonal music), not to mention the movement towards atonality in the compositions of the Viennese composer Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951) and his followers, such as Alban Berg (1885–1935) and Anton Webern (1883–1945).

Steiner’s writing on music, besides indicating he had little formal training in music theory, suggests a predominantly Eurocentric Romantic perspective, portraying him as a rather conservative individual with parochial musical tastes. This is evident when, in seeking an example of a composer who lives “completely in the element of music”, his choice falls upon Anton Bruckner, a local Austrian composer of whom he says “something of the essentially spiritual, which lies at the basis of all music, still lived in Bruckner”. It is not the purpose of this chapter to discuss the work or spirituality of Bruckner, who is generally considered to be a fine composer, but rather to observe the degree of local bias in Steiner’s thinking. Bruckner is often regarded as a composer of secondary importance, who lived in the “shadow of Brahms” and who, in the view of fellow Theosophist Cyril Scott, “can hardly be regarded as a great master”.

A number of Steiner’s positions concerning music seem to reflect attitudes current at the time rather than the “timeless universal truths” one should expect from a clairvoyant able to read the Akashic Records. When discussing the experience of the fifth, he says that “for modern man the fifth has become empty because the Gods have withdrawn from human beings”. While not wishing to speculate on the agenda of the Gods, it could be argued that Steiner was hearing the fifth as empty because, in Western music, harmonic

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541 Ibid., p. 41.
542 For an account of these changes, see P. Griffiths, Modern Music: A Concise History from Debussy to Boulez, London: Thames and Hudson, 1986.
543 Steiner, The Inner Nature of Music, p. 75.
544 Grout, A History of Western Music, p. 607.
545 Scott, Music: Its Secret Influence, p. 137.
546 Steiner, The Inner Nature of Music, p. 86.
convention over the last 500 years has required an interval of a third to be inserted between
the root and the fifth in order to determine its mode, major or minor, and create a chord
richer in overtones. This aural “fullness”, coupled with the rich harmonic palette used by
composers of the German school at this time, such as Wagner and Mahler, would possibly
make a fifth seem empty, and as Steiner had had some training in music as a child, the
necessity to avoid “bare fifths” may have been stressed by his teachers from early on.

Another debatable point is his contention that humans feel pain when the minor
third is played, whereas the major third announces the “victory of the soul”. This is
highly Romantic symbolism in which, being an admirer of Beethoven, he may have been
thinking of the transition between the C minor and C major modes that takes place between
the third and fourth movements of Beethoven’s fifth symphony. This has often been seen as
the musical projection of Beethoven’s triumph over adversity. Steiner called Beethoven
the “Prometheus of the modern world”, and it is probable the analogy of minor to major or
“darkness to light”, as it is portrayed in the symbolism of Freemasonry, that could have
resonated with him.

Related to this “dark to light” notion is the view – obvious in Steiner’s writing, and
still taught to children and young people today – that a minor third sounds “sad” while
major is “happy”. Steiner’s comments could be seen as mere subjective interpretations, and
should have no place in the writings of one who sees himself as a spiritual guide to
humanity.

Steiner’s theories on music can be evaluated in two parts: those that pertain to
Schopenhauer’s influence and on the whole are reasoned, well-argued ideas synthesising
Schopenhauer with the more esoteric views current within the Western occultic tradition,
and those that have a basis in Theosophy. The Theosophical influence on Steiner’s musical
esotericism is clear, and can be recognised in his belief in Root-Races, Devachan and a
hierarchy of Masters who are referred to as Guardians of the Threshold, or Beings of the
Macrocosm. Unfortunately, as is the case with many within this field, their own
prejudices and fertile imaginations become entwined in their theories. This is most
definitely the case with Steiner, whose extrapolations on Blavatsky’s metaphysical
concepts concerning evolution, Devachan and music range from the insightful to the

547 Ibid., p. 19.
548 Grout, A History of Western Music, p. 537.
549 H.E. Lauer, “Mozart and Beethoven in the Development of Western Culture”, in J. Godwin, Cosmic
illogical and contradictory and at times the downright silly. This is not to suggest that all of
his work exhibits the same characteristics – in particular his work on education and the
treatment of the handicapped. However, care is required in evaluating esoteric theories,
particularly those pertaining to something as intangible and non-representational as music,
as they often reflect the personalities and biases of the writers as well as being coloured by
pre-existing community attitudes.
Chapter 6
Corinne Heline (1882–1975): The Rosicrucian Experience

Among the more popular authors dealing with notions of speculative and esoteric music is Corinne Heline. Her work represents a synthesis of Theosophical, Rosicrucian, astrological and New Age ideas. While many of her statements – like those of our other authors – are non-verifiable and demonstrate what could be viewed as an over-active imagination, her articulation of the three fundamental occultic propositions – vibratory emanation, music as a moral determinant and as a means of healing and spiritual regeneration – remain an important contribution to the subject of esoteric musical theories. Likewise the inclusion of evolution – spiritual and physical – through a number of stages, including the Lemurian and Atlantean, and the belief in a cosmic hierarchy, identified as the Lords of the Flame, place her within the doctrinal parameters of the Theosophical Society.\(^551\)

Heline’s writings on music used in this study were produced between 1943 and 1965. While she is often referred to as a New Age author, this is not strictly true, for the term ‘New Age’ as it is used in her books should be seen in the earlier Theosophical context, having the same connotations as when used by Blavatsky and Alice Bailey – the implication being that the New Age or the coming Age of Aquarius is in the future. Heline’s work is not the product of the so-called “New Age Movement” of the 1970s, which regarded the Age of Aquarius as having already arrived. This has created some confusion, as the current popularity of her writings has found her work erroneously placed in the last quarter of the twentieth century rather than the middle.

Early Years

Corinne Heline was born in Georgia in 1882 into the Duke family, an old prominent aristocratic family of the American South.\(^552\) She developed an interest in esotericism and the ancient mysteries at an early age – an interest that, judging from her extensive output, remained with her throughout her life. Writing many books on esoteric subjects, her major work is said to be the seven-volume *New Age Bible Interpretation*, which was

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\(^{552}\) Ibid.
completed in 1954.\textsuperscript{553} In true Theosophical fashion, she claimed that her books were channelled, written under the guidance of the Masters or “immortals” that overshadowed her, the primary one being the “Madonna”.\textsuperscript{554} The importance of the Madonna in her biblical writings suggests that, except for the doctrines of karma and reincarnation, Heline’s theosophy was of the type favoured by Alice Bailey (1880–1949) and Rudolf Steiner, incorporating a high degree of Christian esotericism with less emphasis on the Eastern direction taken by Blavatsky and Besant.

In biographical details issued by her publishers, Heline is said to have received a classical and religious education. As a child, she attended a Methodist school but is reputed to have spent hours visiting and admiring a statue of the Virgin Mary that stood in the Catholic Church situated across the street. The fascination with Mary seems to have had a profound effect on her, as her biographers claim that the young Heline had a vision of being at the Last Supper, at which she saw two celebrations taking place simultaneously, one for Jesus and his disciples and the other for the women followers who were headed by his mother, Mary. Assignments were handed out to the women, with Heline (in her incarnation of the time) being commissioned to write a revised up-to-date version of the Bible, a task to be undertaken when reincarnated in the twentieth century. For this, she would receive the help of the Virgin Mary, who would act as her channel.\textsuperscript{555}

The mention of a Bible prior to the crucifixion suggests that a Bible in some form was already in existence at the time of the Last Supper, even if only clairvoyantly perceived. If one accepts the notion of the Akashic record, then this assertion could be justified; however, it brings into question the past 200 years of historical and biblical scholarship by those who have traced the origins and evolution of the current Bible. It is more likely that, as with the other authors of the present survey, Heline, while being blessed with a fertile imagination, was not too interested in the evidence of history or the work of biblical scholars.

**Literary Output**

Heline wrote a number of books on the subject of music, including *Color and Music in the New Age* (1964), *The Cosmic Harp* (Reprinted, 1986), *Healing and Regeneration Through Music* (1943), *The Esoteric Music of Richard Wagner* (1948) and her most

\begin{footnotes}
\item[554] Ibid.
\item[555] Ibid., p. 3.
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popular work, *Music: The Keynote of Human Evolution* (1965). All of these works demonstrate a strong Theosophical basis, including the notion of human evolution guided by Masters taking place over eons through a series of Root-Races. She embraces the concept of a Golden Age, and accepts the notions of karma and reincarnation. Her work also places a strong emphasis on astrology. Much of Heline’s thought demonstrates the influence of Alice Bailey, whose own Theosophical ideas were influenced by a form of Christian mysticism.  

Bailey’s books were said to be channelled – in her case, by a Master she referred to as “The Tibetan”. Bailey argued for the existence of seven rays or types of energy that emanate from the Godhead and act as the force behind all that exists. This is a reworking of Blavatsky’s rays of emanation and, as with Blavatsky’s tables of correspondences, the Rays can be equated to the seven notes of the Diatonic scale. While recognising the septenary nature of the universe, Heline goes further than Bailey, arguing for twelve rays that would correspond to the chromatic scale, claiming that: “The divine energies emitted by ‘God’s Song’ are rayed out into our universe by the twelve zodiacal Hierarchies, which registers in earthly music as a note of the chromatic scale.” As discussed earlier in relation to Fabre d’Olivet, the numbers 12 and 7 were regarded by some occultists as sacred numbers, 12 being the product of 3 and 4, and 7 being the sum of those digits. Both numbers had astrological significance: 12 represented the number of signs in the zodiac and 7 the number of heavenly bodies as understood by the ancients. For Heline, one would assume, the twelve apostles would be part of this number symbolism.

Evoking the concept of “The Harmony of the Spheres”, Heline claims that the twelve semi-tones of the chromatic scale and the seven of the diatonic are numerical divisions that correspond to the cosmic pattern of our solar system and the zodiac, with the latter acting as a sounding board for the music played by the seven heavenly bodies. The number 12 is consequently said to be the highest spiritual emanation active in the universe, while the number 7 transforms that power into the building forces that operate on the physical plane.

Developing the importance of the number 7, Heline writes of the seven energy centres within the human body that “needs to be awakened”. Each centre is said to

557 For discussion of the work of Alice Bailey, which is outside the scope of this thesis, see ibid., pp. 150–54.
increase in power as it sounds its own tone, which is taken from the seven-note scale, the expanding consciousness releasing one note after another in an ascending series.\textsuperscript{561} This is similar to the notion of the seven chakras mentioned in Theosophical literature, which will be discussed in Chapter 8. In Heline’s work, the chakras or energy centres are symbolically arrayed along a monochord, which she likens to the spinal cord of an individual with the lower part connected to the generative organs (Earth) and the highest to the head (heaven), and states that “on the monochord, the interval between heaven and Earth is conceived as being spanned by the double octave”.\textsuperscript{562}

The imagery here is identical to the illustrations of the Rosicrucian Robert Fludd (1574–1637), whose illustration of the Divine Monochord also spans two octaves, starting in the material world on low G and finishing in the celestial realms on G two octaves higher, the Sun being the middle G. Each note represents a level of “being” on which is placed spheres, elements and creatures, with the Monochord itself being tuned by the hand of God.\textsuperscript{563} Heline’s system is the same, whereby the Earth, the Sun and the heavens all sound the same note but at higher octaves.

In accordance with the three fundamental propositions outlined in the introduction, Heline stands firmly in the hermetic and Theosophical tradition that sees music as a divine vibratory emanation creating matter on the lower material plane. She argues that “both the universe and man were created by tone”, citing the Gospel of John as her authority: “In the beginning was the word” (John 1:1), the Word being thought of as a vibratory emanation.\textsuperscript{564} Regarding music as a moral determinate, she argues that as each individual is in essence vibratory; containing their own tone, the music of the material plane to which each individual listens must affect that individual. She says that “music constitutes an integral part of the moral content of man’s character”, thereby playing a role in determining the morality of both the individual and society. If music acts as a moral determinate, it is therefore seen by Heline to be an agent in the physical evolution and spiritual regeneration of humanity.\textsuperscript{565}

In \textit{Music: The Keynote of Human Evolution}, Heline examines the effects of music on society, her basic premise being that all life is a vibration, differentiation being due to the “One Divine Life” vibrating at different rates.\textsuperscript{566} She claims that the Earth is “a vast

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{561} Ibid., p. 31.}\n\footnotesubscript{562} Ibid., p. 32.\n\footnotesubscript{563} Godwin, \textit{Robert Fludd}, p. 45. Also see Godwin, \textit{The Harmony of the Spheres}, pp. 236–49.\n\footnotesubscript{564} Heline, \textit{Music}, p. 13.\n\footnotesubscript{565} Heline, \textit{Healing and Regeneration}, p. 28.\n\footnotesubscript{566} Heline, \textit{Music}, p. ix.}
harmonic wave system which is built and sustained by unheard music” and that all great composers consciously or unconsciously have been connected to this source. In a similar vein to Scott she argues that the compositions of the Masters contain specific messages brought through from higher realms for “the definite purpose of improving world conditions and bestowing upon mankind greater illumination”. Heline cites three primary composers, each of whom has acted as a channel for a specific Ray; these are Bach, Beethoven and Wagner. She claims Bach was a Mercurian and the healing vibrations of his music were aimed towards the etheric body; Beethoven was a Martian reaching into the material body of humankind; while Wagner channelled the Ray of Uranus the healer and soul awakener. The above composers are therefore, according to Heline, the forerunners of the “divine music of the future”. Heline’s list of composers is broader than Scott’s in Chapter 7, but could be open to criticism due to her emphasis on composers whose works contain titles suggestive of fairyland or other invisible kingdoms. Gnomes and fairies dance in Grieg’s Hall of the Mountain King, water spirits play in the waterfalls during Sibelius’s The Swan of Tuonella and Respighi’s The Pines of Rome and Song of the Birds are said to qualify him as a “nature musician”. Heline’s poetic descriptions take full flight when describing Debussy’s Le Clair de Lune, which “for those with eyes to see” reveals:

Etheric beings of the fairy kingdom, Salamanders, or fire spirits, are seen resolving themselves into a huge gleaming ball, through which they swirl and dance like hosts of minute incandescent sparks. Sylphs, or air spirits, assume the form of a tenuous floating Grail Cup from which they pour lovely “airy essences” upon earth sprites, who then fashion themselves into a great golden heart whose modulated beats seem to pronounce a tender, multicolored benediction, which rays forth from the hearts of multitudes at prayer.

The “multicolored benediction” has much in common with a similar description in Man: Whence, How and Whither by Besant and Leadbeater, in which, during a devotional service and benediction involving the Chieftain of the Ray and the Devas, changes in

567 Ibid., p.135.
568 Ibid.
569 Heline, Healing and Regeneration, pp. 2728
570 Heline, Music, pp. 80–81.
571 Heline, Healing and Regeneration, p. 39.
colour during the ritual are observed clairvoyantly, accompanied by an appropriate sound. The Chief of the Ray then streams the sound towards the Solar Logos.⁵⁷²

The flowery poetic imagery employed by Heline for Debussy is at variance with the opinion of some concerning his work. The music historian Paul Henry Lang argues that Debussy’s compositions are free of the late nineteenth century’s tendency towards “whipped up passions, tearful sentimentalism, and noisy naturalism”, arguing that his tone pictures are never naturalistic scenes, whatever the title might be.⁵⁷³ Eric Salzman agrees, pointing out that although Debussy was often concerned with expressive subjects, programs and texts closely associated with the “Symbolist poets”, his intent should be understood in strictly musical terms.⁵⁷⁴ What Debussy would have made of Heline’s description of his work is anybody’s guess, but not being an “initiated one”, Heline would probably argue that he was unaware of his overshadowing by the Masters or the task his music was meant to fulfil.

Heline states that Beethoven’s consciousness was attuned to the music of the spheres, and therefore his music reflects a realm of high spiritual inspiration that brings about “miraculous healings and noble deeds of courage and valor in times of crisis”.⁵⁷⁵ Upon hearing his symphonies, “we are lifted closer to God”. She further argues that, as an Initiate-musician, his work describes some of the mysteries of nature and the relationship between the Earth and “those great beings of light who minister about the throne of God”.⁵⁷⁶ Beethoven is claimed to be the most “perfectly attuned to the rhythms of the Celestial Hierarchies”, and his deafness is considered by Heline as a “blessing in disguise”, as it shut out everyday discordant noise, allowing him to become a perfect channel to receive heavenly harmonies.⁵⁷⁷

A general comment could be made at this juncture: if any trend can be discerned in the choice of composers or works by Steiner, Scott or Heline, it is one in which the chosen composer embraces a veneration of nature that can be recognised as a form of Neo-Romanticism. This may explain why so little emphasis is placed in their writings on composers or works prior to the nineteenth century, outside Bach and Handel.

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In the Introduction to this study, it was suggested that there was no such thing as an esoteric piece of music, but that the inspiration the composer felt in its creation may have stemmed from a source that could subjectively be classified as mystical or esoteric. The term ‘esoteric’ is often applied by a listener relative to some association with a mood or subject suggested by the title, but this of itself does not make a piece “esoteric”. It was noted that esoteric as defined by Faivre implied a “form of thought” or world-view on the part of the composer or author and in the case of Heline’s literary output the criteria set by Faivre is certainly met. However, an analysis of the composers that are cited by Heline – although perhaps showing an interest in myth, legend and folkloric elements – would show that many had no particular interest in the areas of speculative musical metaphysics or Hermetic philosophy; instead, they demonstrated a mostly traditional Christian orientation and had little interest in “esoteric” or Theosophical ideas. In most cases, no specific interest in esotericism is evident within their writing, correspondences or overall philosophy. The counter-argument would presumably be that they are “overshadowed” by higher powers and are unconscious of being used.

**Wagner as a New Age Messenger**

This “overshadowing” was apparently the case with Heline’s favorite composer, Richard Wagner, whose music she places above all others. In a study of the esoteric meaning behind Wagner’s operas, she refers to him as a New Age Messenger of music, stating that a full understanding of his work belongs to the world of tomorrow, for his operas “are attuned to the rhythms of the coming Air Age”. In this, Heline could be seen to be in agreement with Scott, who proposed that the full effects of Wagner’s music would not be operative for nearly 200 years. According to Heline, an understanding of his operas should be the goal of every student of esotericism, as she claims that each opera marks a definite step in the evolution of humankind and the dawning of a New Age. She notes that his “celestial music” will only be truly appreciated when used in healing groups or by esoteric students attempting to awaken and stimulate the vital spiritual centres of the body.

In her book *Esoteric Music Based on the Musical Seership of Richard Wagner*, Heline states that the placement of Wagner’s music-dramas in her evolutionary scheme is

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578 Ibid., p. 11.
determined not by their date of composition or production, but in accordance with the steps they are said to portray in the progressive spiritual development of the individual and the race.\textsuperscript{582} The drawback of such perceived systems is that they run the obvious risk of appearing to be highly subjective orderings based upon the results of an active imagination and a grand personal cosmic scheme that, although lacking any concrete evidence, is firmly believed to be true by the perceiver.

In Helene’s scheme, the first step concerns Esoteric Brotherhoods and Schools of Initiation. She sees \textit{The Flying Dutchman} esoterically as depicting black and white brotherhoods and the way good overcomes evil, while \textit{The Mastersingers} represents musical schools of initiation. The second stage demonstrates the path of individual attainment. \textit{Tannhauser} represents regeneration through purity, \textit{Lohengrin} conscious invisible help, \textit{Tristan} the rite of the mystic marriage and \textit{Parsifal} the degree of mastership. The \textit{Ring of the Nibelung} is interpreted as depicting four steps of racial evolution within a broader concept of cosmic evolution. Helene links them to the four elements: \textit{Rhinegold} representing the water path; \textit{Valkyrie} the air, \textit{Siegfried} the Earth; and \textit{Gotterdammerung} the fire path.\textsuperscript{583}

\textbf{Musical Evolution}

In a similar fashion to Steiner and Scott, Helene traces musically the evolution of humanity, noting a causal link between any lowering in the quality of music with a corresponding decline in societal values; she argues that the music of any race or nation is a fair index of its physical, mental and spiritual condition.\textsuperscript{584} However, as historical and evolutionary progression never goes in a straight line, she notes that the occasional “falling off” must be expected, and argues that in the future New Age music will reverse this process as “we mount ever upwards on the spiral of growth”.\textsuperscript{585}

In tracing the musical and spiritual history of the world, Helene begins in Lemuria, observing that jazz has its origin in the rhythms of the music that accompanied the Lemurian fire ceremonies.\textsuperscript{586} It was, she says, “a strange, plaintive unearthly music”, echoes of which can still be heard in the music of Java and various South Sea Islands – which, she claims, are remnants of the Lemurian continent.\textsuperscript{587} In this she is at variance

\textsuperscript{582} Helene, \textit{Esoteric Music}, p. 2.  
\textsuperscript{583} For a full summary of this schematic outline, see Helene, \textit{Esoteric Music}, pp. 5–7.  
\textsuperscript{584} Helene, \textit{Music}, p. 125.  
\textsuperscript{585} Ibid., p. 137.  
\textsuperscript{586} Ibid., p. 29.  
\textsuperscript{587} Ibid., p. 31.
with Scott, who links the music of Java with Atlantis. While Besant and Leadbeater are not mentioned by Heline much of her writings on Lemuria and the fire ceremonies has much in common with their clairvoyant observations recorded throughout *Man: Whence, How and Whither*.

Heline is not concerned with intervals such as the “seventh”, as is Steiner, but claims that the importance of Atlantean music is its use in healing. Illness would be cured by an Initiate-Teacher who tuned into an individual’s personal note in order to replace any dissonance with harmony by intoning the correct frequency.\(^{588}\) Heline tells us that Atlantean speech resembled a form of singing speech or recitative, the intoned words projecting power into any named object, which could then be reshaped in accordance with an individual’s *will*. This, she says, was the origin of all subsequent chants and mantras in sacred and religious ceremonies.\(^{589}\) Heline claims that the misuse of these powers by the people and the development of their desire natures contributed to the destruction of Atlantis, but all was not lost. Through the intervention of the Lords of Mind, who over the centuries have sent great musical initiates to Earth to help spiritualise humanity, the human race is destined to recover the celestial harmonies it lost on Atlantis.\(^{590}\) This should not prove too difficult a task, as Heline contends that the civilisation of Atlantis was perpetuated in China through direct descent.\(^{591}\)

Demonstrating the influence of Cyril Scott Heline traces the evolution of the human race through changes in music. Beginning with Lemuria she continues he survey through Sumeria, ancient Greece, China, India and Egypt. She also writes on early Christian music, medieval music, modern church music and Native American music – through which, she claims, “nature’s harmonies are transmitted”.\(^{592}\) In this, Heline is echoing Rousseau’s “noble savage” idea and anticipating the recent fascination with Native Americans by describing them as the “children of nature”.\(^{593}\)

**Astrology and Music**

A further stream that emerged out of nineteenth century esoteric thinking was a more detailed account of the influence of Astrology and its relationship to musical tones. This corresponds to the inter-relationship between cosmic and planetary vibration and the

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\(^{588}\) Ibid., p. 34  
\(^{589}\) Ibid., p. 35.  
\(^{590}\) Ibid., p. 36.  
\(^{591}\) Ibid., p. 44.  
\(^{592}\) Heline, *Music*, p. 83.  
\(^{593}\) Ibid.
vibrations that make up any note. Interest in astrology has always been present in the Western esoteric tradition, especially since the Renaissance, as is evidenced in the work of Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499), Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), and Robert Fludd (1574-1637) to name but a few. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries however, Theosophists and occultists incorporated astrology within new and broader based systems of correspondences involving signs, planets, colors, musical sounds, emotions, minerals and physical ailments.

The correspondences Heline draws between music and astrology are a major theme in her work – this linkage that can also be found in the work of Blavatsky, Besant, Steiner and Bailly. Heline claims that Fire and Air signs sing in Major keys while Earth and Water signs sing in Minor keys, together forming the “Music of the Spheres”. We are informed that this cosmic chorus is not heard by the mass of humanity, as “hearing the music of the spheres is a transcendent initiatory experience for the spiritually illuminated”. Those who are “blessed with ears to hear” are also able to see a rainbow of colours accompanying the tones; among the illuminated, she lists Pythagoras, Plato, Shakespeare and St John.

The use of astrological symbols permeates Heline’s work – for example, in The Cosmic Harp a number of composers are listed relative to their personal astrological sign and several of their compositions are analysed accordingly. The hierarchy governing the sign is given as well as the keynote and corresponding colour – for example, Leo is governed by the Lords of Flame, its keynote is said to be A# major and the color therefore emanating from the music of Debussy (who was a Leo) is its corresponding color, jade-green.

A number of theoretical problems emerge from her list. Among them, a keynote cannot be designated major or minor; it requires the sounding of a chord (three or more notes sounded together). This may seem to be semantics, but describing a keynote as “C” major or minor is confusing. Likewise, her use of the scale of A# major, although theoretically possible, is an abstraction as no key signature is possible due to the necessity

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594 See Chapters 3, 4 and 5.
596 Ibid.
597 Heline, Music, pp. 46–51.
of using double sharps; therefore, it would always appear as its enharmonic equivalent, Bb. This, in turn, would create a problem with her system, as Bb is said to be the keynote of Aries. Adding to the confusion, some historical facts are wrong – for example she claims that Joseph Haydn (1732–1809) “gave to the world thirty or more symphonies”.

“More” is the operative word here, as Haydn wrote 104 symphonies.

Music as a healing modality is prominent in Heline’s work, which involves correlations between planets, signs and illnesses. For example, an illness of the nervous system can be cured by compositions in the key of F sharp, which is the keynote of Gemini and is in turn linked to Mercury, ruler of the nervous system.

The full system is given below; however, it should be noted that the tones assigned to the various astrological signs differ from those given by Blavatsky, Steiner and Scott, whose systems proceed by semi-tones. Heline’s system moves predominantly in tones with an augmented second between the Eb of Taurus and the F# of Gemini. Further to this, a number of inconsistencies can be observed if one compares the table given in *Music: The Keynote of Human Evolution* to the designated tones and signs she offers in *The Cosmic Harp*. In the former, the keynote of Aries is given as Db but becomes Bb in the latter, which should not happen as A# (enharmonic Bb) is designated to Leo. Virgo’s C becomes F, which is used again for Sagittarius and C is omitted completely.

Despite the inconsistencies, which may be due to printing errors, the main thrust of Heline’s argument at this point is that if our bodies and ego are fashioned by the music of the heavens, it would suggest that one’s individual star map or horoscope at birth would operate like a musical score, with a personal musical signature – similar to a Wagnerian Leitmotiv. Each ego, we are told, is attuned to the keynote of one of the planets, and as we grow spiritually this fundamental note increases in volume and intensity until it overcomes the dissonances of the squares and other opposing configurations contained within the chart.

In the future, she says, it will be possible to set one’s chart to music and cure physical and mental illness with specific tones in a manner similar to the legendary stories of Pythagoras.

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598 Ibid., p. 17.
603 Ibid., pp. 27–28.
Table 6.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sign</th>
<th>Note</th>
<th>Body part ruled</th>
<th>Most common disease</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aries</td>
<td>D Flat</td>
<td>Head</td>
<td>Cerebral Hemorrhage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taurus</td>
<td>E Flat</td>
<td>Throat</td>
<td>Tonsillitis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gemini</td>
<td>F Sharp</td>
<td>Lungs/arms</td>
<td>Tuberculosis/arthritis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cancer</td>
<td>G Sharp</td>
<td>Stomach</td>
<td>Ulcers/gallstones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leo</td>
<td>A Sharp</td>
<td>Heart/spine</td>
<td>Heart disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virgo</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Intestines</td>
<td>Appendicitis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libra</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Kidneys</td>
<td>Bright’s Disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scorpio</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Organs of procreation</td>
<td>Prostate gland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sagittarius</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Hips/thighs</td>
<td>Sciatica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capricorn</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>Knees</td>
<td>Swollen knees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aquarius</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Lower limbs/ankles</td>
<td>Rheumatism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pisces</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Feet</td>
<td>Malformation of feet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is admitted that in all astrological systems a number of variations are possible, especially when the influence of other planets and opposite signs, and their positions in the various houses, are factored in; however, Heline assures us that the competent spiritual scientist, having recognised the affliction of the patient, should be able to calculate the planetary keynotes and proscribe the correct therapeutic music.\(^{604}\)

All Heline’s books contain anecdotal accounts of the power of music to heal, and contain many examples and quotes from music therapists and doctors to support her claims. The problem that arises is one common to all the authors in this study: a total lack of referencing or documentary evidence in support of their claims. This is compounded by the use of examples that do not necessarily support an argument – for example, in discussing music as a universal healing agent, she cites a Chicago doctor who performed a caesarean operation on a patient, having administered only a local anesthetic. The patient was encouraged to listen to music through headphones and appeared to suffer no pain or discomfort during the procedure. Heline quotes the doctor as saying that “the music obviously caused a satisfactory distraction”.\(^{605}\) Music as a “distraction” is not supporting the case for music as an agent to heal.

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\(^{605}\) Heline, *Healing and Regeneration*, p. 22.
Musical Evolution and Jazz

We noted earlier the correlation Heline makes between Lemurian music and jazz, which from her writing is a genre for which she has an obvious dislike. She likens the human physical body to a musical instrument upon which the twelve hierarchies and their seven planetary messengers play in order to maintain spiritual and physical health. She argues that in the present material age, we have “fallen away” by playing jazz in “nurseries and schools”. She maintains that this damage can be reversed only by banning jazz, with the result being that “the average child will be transformed into a precocious one, and problems of delinquency will diminish”. 606 She repeats this theme in another work, saying “eliminate jazz and watch delinquency among youth decrease”. 607

Heline further argues that jazz or swing music should not be allowed in a sick room, “as the irregular currents of this so-called music act directly upon the desire nature”. 608 She cites a Russian concert pianist who, while playing solos to mentally ill patients, found jazz to be positively harmful, and she praises the Soviets who, for national and racist reasons, prohibited the sale of jazz records. 609 This may well have been a political move as much as a cultural one on the part of the Soviets; however, it could serve as convenient supporting evidence for a woman from the American South who may, consciously or unconsciously, be supporting a racial agenda and who, with Cyril Scott, sees jazz as the music of an inferior race. 610

Heline certainly had no sympathy for the Soviet Union; she argues that musicians have observed that the music of a totalitarian world is “heavier and more somber in character than that of the light and free rippling harmonies belonging to the lands inspired by the idealism of free spirited democracy”. 611 However, she fails to notice that Nazi Germany idealised the music of her personal favourite, Richard Wagner – who, it could be argued, is often “heavy and somber” rather than “light and free”.

The musical theories of Corinne Heline demonstrate a number of Theosophical components as well as addressing the three fundamental ideas outlined in the Introduction to this thesis. Music is seen as emanating from a divine source, it plays a prominent role in the spiritual evolution of humanity, and a full – if somewhat complicated – theory of musical correspondences is developed, which links astrology and music as a therapeutic

606 Heline, Healing and Regeneration Through Color, p. 12.
608 Ibid.
609 Heline, Healing and Regeneration, p. 20.
610 See Chapter 8.
611 Heline, Healing and Regeneration, p. 36.
modality. Her use of Masters, Root-Races, karma and reincarnation make her Theosophical credentials obvious, although this is modified by a Christ-centred esoteric Christianity. As with Steiner, a number of flaws and contradictions exist within her work, but these eccentric flights of imagination were never meant to be analysed by scholars searching for empirical data; rather, they are to be intuitively understood by those who possess Faivre’s “form of thought”. Although it is easy to be critical of Heline’s work due to the number of contradictions and inaccuracies it contains, it is perhaps the overall message, rather than the detail, that has resonated with so many, making her work both interesting and popular.
Chapter 7
Cyril Scott: A Theosophical True Believer

This chapter examines the Theosophist Cyril Scott who, within the field of esoteric music, is perhaps the most well-known author of the twentieth century. His book *Music: Its Secret Influence Throughout the Ages* (1933), which outlined his theory of the role that music has played in history, is among the most widely read and quoted in the esoteric music literature.\(^{612}\) The book has also generated a degree of criticism for example Mihae Ryu calls it “a strange mystic book” and that Scott’s “weird interest in Theosophy must be regarded as a negative aspect of his life and work”.\(^{613}\)

As a musician Scott has been called the “father of modern British music”, his work being greatly admired by Claude Debussy, Richard Strauss and Igor Stravinsky.\(^{614}\) In his biography of Scott, Eaglefield-Hull claims Debussy commented that “Cyril Scott is one of the rarest artists of the present generation”.\(^{615}\) The composer and author Norman Demuth later observed that Scott’s contribution to the literature of the piano was “even more significant than that of Scriabin”.\(^{616}\) Like Scriabin, Scott’s harmonic language was considered new and exciting, with his harmonic approach prompting George Bernard Shaw, in conversation with Sir Edward Elgar, to observe: “Why, Elgar, for a British composer you have become quite daring in your harmonies of late”, to which Elgar is said to have replied, “You mustn’t forget, it was Cyril Scott who started all that.”\(^{617}\) It has been suggested by Diana Swann that this comment, recorded by Scott himself in his autobiography, is probably related not just to the harmonic language of his compositions but also to his initiating the breaking away from the traditional manner of teaching harmony that formed the curriculum of British academic institutions.\(^{618}\) It should also be noted that Scott’s retelling of the opinions of others concerning his music – particularly within an

\(^{612}\) C. Scott, *Music: Its Secret Influence Throughout the Ages*, London: Rider and Co, 1958. When this work originally was written in 1928, its title was *The Influence of Music on History and Morals: A Vindication of Plato*.


\(^{617}\) Scott, *A Bone of Contention*, p. 147. This was in connection with Elgar’s second symphony.

autobiography written when he was 90 – may well be exaggerated and certainly cannot be verified.

While writing a large number of musical works, Scott also wrote 41 books and many articles on such diverse subjects as alternative medicine, ethics, philosophy, occultism and speculative theories of music. His output included two autobiographies, written 40 years apart, an anonymous trilogy entitled *The Initiate, By His Pupil*, published in the 1920s, and six volumes of poetry.  

**Early Years**

Cyril Scott was born near Liverpool on 27 September 1879.\(^{620}\) In his autobiography, he says that according to his mother he could play the piano before he could talk, and while still very young could play any tune he heard by ear.\(^{621}\) Eaglefield-Hull tells us that by the age of seven Scott could write his musical ideas down; however, this is information that may well have been provided by Scott himself.\(^{622}\)

From Scott’s own account, he was an extremely nervous, weak and sensitive child who, when listening to his mother singing or to organ music at church, was often reduced to tears. He tells us that on first hearing the large sound of the church organ, he burst out screaming and became so agitated that his mother was obliged to forcibly remove him from the church.\(^{623}\) He claims to have been rather effeminate as a child, preferring to play with his favourite toys, a large collection of dolls, rather than with tin soldiers.\(^{624}\) For a career, he harbored ambitions to grow up and become a hairdresser, which for the son of an upper middle-class Victorian family was not considered a respectable pursuit – indeed, it was a career, he informs us, that was actively discouraged.\(^{625}\) His sense of rebellion often led him to refuse to dress in male clothing, dressing instead in his sister’s clothes.\(^{626}\) His extreme sensitivity led him to experience severe bouts of melancholy, which he says was the “worst...
of my afflictions”. Paul Chandley suggests that these periods of depression, as well as a number of reported psychotic episodes, might now be classified as schizophrenia.

At the age of twelve, his musical talent was such that he was sent to Germany, where he studied at Dr. Hoch’s Konservatorium at Frankfort-am-Maine, initially staying for eighteen months and returning there in 1896 to study with Ivor Knorr, regarded by some as one of the finest composition teachers of his day.629

Contact with Theosophy

Scott came into contact with Theosophy and Eastern mysticism at the age of 25 – an event that, according to Eaglefield-Hull, “changed the whole tenor of his inner life”.630 Scott tells us that his first encounter with Theosophy was attending a lecture by Annie Besant, and that he was struck by the “unassailable logic of her utterances”.631 He then read all of the Theosophical literature he could find, including Blavatsky’s Secret Doctrine and Isis Unveiled.632

Under this new influence, he wrote works with esoteric and Oriental titles such as Lotus-Land, Sphinx, Two Chinese Songs and similar pieces. It was at this stage that Eaglefield-Hull says that his compositional style began moving away from diatonic tonality to a more chromatic-orientated style, which included his advocating the abandonment of time signatures, key signatures and many of the old forms.633 There is no evidence to suggest that Theosophy had anything to do with the evolution of his musical style in the practical sense – indeed, throughout his life he seems to have mainly kept his spiritual beliefs in a separate compartment to his music, arguing that the spiritual in music must be looked for in metaphysics. In his autobiography, written late in his life, he makes the point that “I cannot plead guilty to having deliberately attempted to express through the medium of music any occult or mystical facts”, and goes on to say that “he would not know how to even if asked”.634 However, in his Outline of Modern Occultism, first published in 1935, he says that music is the most occult of all the arts, and that the study of occult science

628 Ibid., p. 10.
629 Eaglefield Hull Cyril Scott, p. 15.
630 Ibid., p. 21.
631 Scott, A Bone of Contention, p. 132.
632 Ibid., p. 133.
634 Scott, A Bone of Contention, p. 195.
undoubtedly assists the creative faculty.\textsuperscript{635} As argued earlier in this thesis, there can be no such thing on the practical level as an esoteric piece of music; esotericism can only exist within the realm of theory and metaphysics, which may also surface in the subject-matter or title of the work – such as those of Scriabin, the operas of Holst or the evocative titles to a number of Debussy’s works. Scott’s comments cited above support this view.

Cyril Scott is a good example of a composer who created a philosophy and history of music, but who – while heavily influenced by Theosophical teachings – managed to develop his personal musical style along conventional aesthetic lines. His musical esotericism lies not in any manipulation of notes or chords that might suggest some mystical idea, but rather in the role of music in his theory of history and the role the Masters play in that history, guiding the evolution of humankind by means of the compositions of great composers, which they send to Earth for that purpose.

It could be argued that the innovations that exist in Scott’s music arise in part from Scott’s own rebellious temperament which he justifies by explaining how he views a creative artist, and particularly himself. In his Philosophy of Modernism, he places musicians into three categories: the classicist, who he likens to a pedestrian embarking on a walking tour with the intention of keeping to the roads; the futurist, with the opposite intention of keeping off the roads; and the romantic, “who starts out with a perfect freedom of choice to follow or leave the road as he thinks fit, unbound by fetters”.\textsuperscript{636} Scott’s writing leaves no doubt that he saw himself exemplified by the latter. In a Schopenhauerian vein, he states that in art there are no rules, merely conventions, and that music is more “ruleless” than the other arts because it has no connection with matter or material expression.\textsuperscript{637}

Scott’s Theosophical Beliefs

Scott’s Theosophical beliefs are explained in his An Outline of Modern Occultism (1935), summed up in a short exposition early in the work.\textsuperscript{638} He maintains that humankind is in the process of evolving from imperfection to much higher states of physical and spiritual perfection, and that this process is directed by a hierarchy of Intelligences who have themselves reached this level. He further believed that the material world we perceive with our senses is only a small portion of a much larger world that can only be perceived

\textsuperscript{637} Ibid., p. 28.
\textsuperscript{638} Scott, An Outline of Modern Occultism, pp. 8–9.
by a trained occultist, and that this larger world contains the inner and higher planes of consciousness. The physical body is viewed as merely a “garment” of the immortal soul, and he describes more subtle bodies, composed of rarified matter, which interpenetrate and surround it. The whole universe, he argues, consists of pure vibratory energy, and that all things – from the elements to both embodied and disembodied beings – are storehouses and transformers of this energy. All things in the universe are subject to the law of cause and effect, or karma, which he says governs the entire cosmos, both visible and invisible. The vibratory energy of which Scott speaks permeates the universe, and can be recognised on the physical plane as music. He states that the vibrations of music have a marked effect upon the physical body; however, showing the influence of Besant and Leadbeater, he expands the principle to include the emotional and astral bodies, for they are “composed of a very rare form of matter, and are susceptible in the highest degree to vibratory influence”. Extrapolating from this, he poses the question: Can music have a moral effect on the individual and therefore society? Can it inspire moral feelings without directly expressing them? His answer is “yes”, echoing Plato’s views on music outlined in the Republic.

Arguably his most popular and groundbreaking work is Music: Its Secret Influence Throughout the Ages (1933). In the original version, a sub-heading was added: A vindication of Plato. This had been dropped by the time of the revised edition in 1958, but the Platonic theory of Ethos and the role of music as a moral determinate are still very much in evidence. In this work, Scott shows his full Theosophical credentials, setting out the theory that the moral and spiritual evolution of humankind has been overseen and guided by a hierarchy of great sages, initiates and adepts known as the Great White Lodge or Brotherhood.

Part One of the book concerns itself with the occult interrelationship between world history and music, arguing that any innovation in musical style invariably is followed by innovations in politics and morals. This argument is consistent with those of Plato and Confucius, which were introduced in Chapter 2. Scott sums up the argument with what has become a very popular quote among Theosophical and New Age writers:

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640 Scott, The Philosophy of Modernism, p. 101. Also see Besant, The Key To Theosophy, pp. 51–52.
641 Scott, The Philosophy of Modernism, p. 100. See also, Plato, The Republic.
642 Scott, Music: Its Secret Influence, p. 42. This concept, as explained in earlier chapters, was also the view of the ancient Egyptians, Plato, D’Olivet and Blavatsky in Isis Unveiled, Vol. 1. See also Besant and Leadbeater, Thought Forms, and A. Besant and C.W. Leadbeater, Man: Whence, How and Whither, Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House., 1913.
Music affects the minds and emotions of mankind. It affects them either consciously, subconsciously or both. It affects them through the medium of suggestion and reiteration. It affects them either directly, indirectly or both. Therefore, as in music, so in life. 643

Parts Two and Three are designed to offer supporting evidence for Scott’s version of history by arguing that throughout human history, the Masters have sent to the earthly plane composers whose purpose has been to create music that will influence the moral and spiritual evolution of the particular race. Scott’s thesis is therefore a reversal of the accepted linear historical view, which argues that a composer’s work reflects, and is, a product of the environment in which he creates. Scott’s reversal of the process sees a composer’s work as influencing the morals of the society in which he lives, therefore – providing that influence is positive – contributing to the moral evolution of the race. Concerning this reversed historical process, Scott writes:

Each specific type of music has exercised a pronounced effect on history, on morals and on culture; music is a more potent force in the molding of character than religious creeds, precepts or moral philosophies; for although these show the desirability of these qualities, it is music that facilitates their acquisition. 644

Part Four of the book describes the occult characteristics of ancient music from India, Egypt and Greece, and ends with a brief perusal of Western music from the development of polyphony to the time of Handel. Part Five offers an overview of what Scott considers the “Music of the Future”, which he claims will bring us into closer contact with the Devas whose benign influence will be felt by those of us “spiritually advanced enough to attend concerts” – which are meant, one must assume, to be “classical” concerts and not those of popular genres. 645 Unfortunately, the full plans of the Masters cannot be revealed until they have observed what reception Scott’s book gets; only then, he says, will they “feel justified in making more known”. 646 As it seems that we are not much wiser than

643 Scott, Music: Its Secret Influence, p. 43.
644 Ibid., p. 40.
646 Ibid., p. 199.
before, it must be assumed that the Masters were not impressed with the reception the book received from the general public.

**Music: Its Secret Influence Throughout the Ages**

Scott’s primary book on music was allegedly channelled via a clairvoyant medium, Nelsa Chaplin, who worked with him for seven years.\(^{647}\) What we know of her comes from Scott himself, who says that from her earliest years she had been in touch with the Master Koot Hoomi, a High Initiate who took a special interest in the evolution of Western music.\(^{648}\) Nelsa Chaplin is said by Scott to have been a “remarkable seer”.\(^{649}\) She not only had the gifts of clairvoyance and clairaudience, she also had the power to leave her body and transport herself to the higher planes. She also claimed to have visited the Master Koot Hoomi’s house in the Himalayas, where she listened to his improvisations on the organ.\(^{650}\) She herself was very musical, for Scott says that she could “play and improvise upon the piano in a most phenomenal manner”.\(^{651}\)

Scott tells us that: “Master K.H. intimated that the time had come when it was desirable to make known the esoteric aspects of music, and that the Masters wished to use my pen for that end … Mrs. C would ‘listen into’ K. H. while I would write in my notebook what he had communicated.”\(^{652}\) With what we know of Nelsa Chaplin and reading Scott’s own account of how the book came to be written, it could be argued that the work is that of Chaplin herself, who merely dictated her own views to Scott – unless, of course, we are prepared to accept K.H. as a real entity. Allowing for the fact that Scott was totally dependent on what Nelsa Chaplin told him, one could be forgiven for thinking that Scott was therefore not the author of the work but acted only as a scribe. However, ignoring such finer points, he says: “In this way the book came to be written, inspired and sponsored by Him who in a former life had been the great philosopher and musician, Pythagoras the sage.”\(^{653}\)

After Nelsa Chaplin’s death, communication with K.H. ceased for a short while. According to Scott, personal contact was made with the Master in 1921, and was thereafter

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647 Ibid., p. 35.
648 Ibid., p. 32.
649 Ibid., p. 158. A full account of Nelsa Chaplin is given in by Scott in Chapter 30 of Bone of Contention, pp.158-63.
650 Scott, Music: Its Secret Influence, p. 32.
651 Ibid., p. 33.
652 Ibid.
653 Ibid., p. 36.
maintained until Scott’s death in 1970. Scott’s “personal” relationship with Koot Hoomi is said by him to go back to ancient Greece; however, Scott writes of a meeting in his current life with Koot Hoomi at the country estate of a person he identifies only as “Sir Thomas”. The story reveals Scott’s mission in life and how he clairaudiently heard celestial music from another realm of existence. Scott often wrote himself into the dialogue of his books, disguised under a false name. In The Initiate in the Dark Circle, from which this account is taken, he has been identified as the composer Lyall Herbert. He writes:

From far away I heard the strains of an Organ with which was mingled the sound of voices so pure and ethereal as to suggest the chanting of a celestial choir … The music was unlike any music I had heard before … Sir Thomas stated, my brother Koot Hoomi is playing his Organ. And the voices you hear are those of the Gandharas … Listen well for one day you will give forth such music to the world. After the music had faded there was a silence and two beings appeared through the haze. One was Koot Hoomi and the other another Tibetan adept, the Master D.K. Koot Hoomi said he needed Lyall’s music to start the trend for music to be used in healing saying: Years ago in Greece when I was Pythagoras, you were my pupil … You who desire to serve humanity shall be given greater power to serve. We would bring back some of the ancient ways of healing the sick … one of those is healing by musical sound.

The above passage includes a number of Theosophical notions influencing Scott’s thinking, among them the acceptance of the Masters, a belief in reincarnation and the acceptance of music as a healing modality.

**Composers as Agents of the Masters**

While there is very little – if any – evidence to support his hypothesis, Scott (via Nelsa Chaplin) describes the influence on society of a number of prominent composers from each cultural period. As Scott’s book is widely quoted and his ideas currently inform many of

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654 Scott, A Bone of Contention, p. 172.
the social and moral arguments relating to esoteric musical theory, a more detailed and critical discussion of the work needs to be undertaken. What follows is a brief discussion of Scott’s comments concerning the mission of some of the composers selected by the Masters to help in the moral evolution of the race.\textsuperscript{657}

**G.F. Handel (1685–1759)**

According to Scott, the influence of George Frederick Handel’s music – especially his Oratorios – define the characteristics of the Victorian age, even though that period lay in the future. Handel’s exalted mission was to revolutionise the state of English morals. Scott tells us that Handel’s music was responsible for the swing of the moral pendulum from the one extreme of laxity to the other of undue constraint.\textsuperscript{658} This, he claims, was due to the music awakening a sense of reverence and awe, the consequence of which inspired a love of convention.

Concerning the more technical aspects, Scott notes that Handel was fond of the repetition of single chords for phrases of two or more bars, as well as for sequences, a repetition of a phrase on a different degree of the scale. Scott maintains that this gave Handel’s music a sense of formality; therefore, as the music was formal in character, it was formal in effect. The glorification of repetition and imitativeness or sequence, if taken from the plane of music to that of human conduct, is claimed by Scott to engender “a love of outward ceremony and adherence to convention”.\textsuperscript{659}

Although the power inherent within the Oratorios of Handel was said to create among listeners a feeling of awe and reverence, Scott elaborates on the negative implications of Handel’s music and how those same qualities came to be degraded within Victorian society. He points out that the exaggerated idea of sacredness also gave rise to an exaggerated idea of its opposite, the profane. Scott argues that as pious Christians, Victorians saw worldly pleasures as sinful, an idea that found its main expression in anything to do with the body in particular, the naked body and sex.\textsuperscript{660}

Scott was particularly critical of the repressed Victorian attitude regarding sex. His criticisms may well be related to his own rebellious nature and unconventional views on the topic. In his autobiography, he writes of his admiration for a Mrs Stevenson, who

\textsuperscript{657} Not all of the composers in Scott’s book will be discussed due to the repetitive nature of his arguments. Those not examined are J.S. Bach, Felix Mendelssohn, Robert Schumann, Richard Strauss, Frederick Delius and Maurice Ravel.


\textsuperscript{659} Ibid., p.50.

\textsuperscript{660} *Music: Its Secret Influence*, p. 52.
“on matters of sex, displayed a tolerance towards it worthy of a psycho-analyst, long before the name of Freud had ever been heard”, and is said to have “fulminated against the frightful humbug and hypocrisy of the age in which she lived”. 661 This indicates more of Scott’s own views and value judgements then a state of affairs the Masters may have felt obliged to rectify by sending Handel to the Earth plane.

According to Scott, the topic of sex for the Victorians was not a subject to be spoken of in the presence of ladies, regardless of marital status, and he says this attitude manifested itself in classical statuary being fitted with fig-leaves. He points out that often the legs of furniture, such as chairs and grand pianos, were draped so as not to cause offence. 662 Likewise, he writes that synonyms were found and used for inappropriate words, and excursions into Latin became a feature of scientific books for the same reason. 663 Scott further explains that the Handelian influence encouraged manifestations of a sombre nature, such as black horsehair sofas and chairs, the wearing of exaggerated widow’s weeds and a love of the funereal. This rather negative assessment of Handel’s influence comes about “because in certain temperaments the awe and reverence his music engendered can give rise to the hyper-serious and a false idea of the spiritual”. 664

Two criticisms could be levelled at the above comments: first, it would appear that a time lapse occurs between the period when Handel is living and when his music, according to Scott, begins to have an effect upon society. Secondly, although the Masters sent him (Handel) down to inspire awe and reverence, it could be argued – assuming one accepts the central thrust of Scott’s theory – that indirectly he gave rise to many of the Victorian era’s more disagreeable characteristics, such as a sexually repressed society and an over-reliance on formality. A further point could be raised concerning the exclusive nature of Handel’s mission in that, while accepting that Scott’s writing is primarily Eurocentric, it seems aimed in particular at a British audience. Handel was German, and had lived in Italy before going to England; therefore, as Grout observes, Handel was a completely international composer. 665 It is thus fair to assume that the spiritual influence of his music should have been felt on the continent as well as the British Isles – indeed, throughout the world if the great evolutionary scheme the Masters were attempting was going to get the desired results.

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661 Scott, A Bone of Contention, p. 96.
663 Ibid.
664 Ibid.
Perhaps the answer to Scott’s British bias can be found in the growing nationalism that was rife in Europe during the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, which – although seemingly a contradiction to the concept of “the oneness of all being” – permeates the esoteric music literature during this time. It is true that a great deal of Indian and Asiatic philosophy had been incorporated into the esoteric tradition via Theosophy; however, in matters concerning music, all theory was Eurocentric. Even Holst, in his Sanskrit period, never tried to incorporate Indian scale forms or instrumentation into his works, Indian-ness simply being suggested by the title and libretto. Similarly, neither Blavatsky nor Besant in her tables of correspondences involving musical sounds steps outside the accepted Western tradition.666

A number of allusions to the British being a superior race can be found in Scott’s writing. Speaking of the soul’s evolution, he says that the soul “after many incarnations in lower race bodies, in which it will manifest a number of undesirable characteristics, will eventually reincarnate in a higher race body”.667 Although he does not explicitly say which race is lower or higher, the overall thrust of his writing makes it clear. A further example of Scott’s inherent racism is evident in his comment on the seventh Mosaic Commandment concerning adultery, in which he suggests that a more rational interpretation would be “Thou shalt not adulterate the race” – in other words, do not mate with those of other races.668 While this is at odds with Blavatsky’s writing, which advocates accepting the inevitability of intermarriage between sub-races in order to evolve into the next Root-Race, the notion of racism – in particular the superiority of the Aryan Race – is evident not only in the Secret Doctrine but throughout the work of many Theosophists.669 All of this may, in the present day, appear rather politically incorrect; however, pride in one’s race, heritage and culture was part of European thinking in the nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth centuries.

The eulogising of the British character finds expression in one of Scott’s contemporaries, Thomas Fielden. Writing on the linkage between music and character, Fielden observes that the folk songs of the Germans are naïve and cloying, and demonstrate their dreamy character; the croon of the Irish portrays the unsatisfied longing of the race; the hymns of the Welsh show an incurable sentimentalism; and the angular stirring songs of the Scotsman show the pent-up emotion of that stiff race. The English

668 Scott, A Bone of Contention, p. 185.
folk song, however, is described as melodious and healthy, “lying at the foundation of the reticent, healthy-minded, cheerful character of our own honest, straightforward, but cautious nation”.  

This digression is necessary in order to point out a fundamental contradiction that exists in much of the writing concerning Theosophical teachings. Although esoteric ideas dealing with the evolution of humanity should be all-inclusive of caste, class or race, seldom does the literature reflect that. As mentioned above, there is a latent racism within Blavatsky’s *The Secret Doctrine* that argues for the superiority of the Aryan race. It is not surprising, therefore, to find Theosophists such as Scott demonstrating elitist racist attitudes – especially living, as he did, during a time of empire and British nationalism that flourished from when Scott was young until the 1960s.

**Ludwig van Beethoven**

According to Scott, the mission of Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) was to “portray in sound every variety of human emotion”. He argues that Beethoven was a great musical psychologist, and it was therefore essential that his life be one of suffering in order that he be able to experience and thus express the entire gamut of human emotions through the cipher of music – for, according to Scott, the great advantage of music is that “it can express anything and everything in a cipher which the heart understands without the interference of the conscious mind”.

The influence of Beethoven’s music is claimed to be twofold. First, it induced sympathy on a scale hitherto unknown, alerting people to the problems of others’ grief, deprivation and sickness. Scott says that this made people look more closely at themselves and “the vast array of emotions, feelings and passions, of which men are too ashamed to speak”. Scott argues that before Beethoven’s time, people were too concerned with their feeling towards God to concern themselves with their fellow humans, but since his time a number of changes have taken place whose influence is still with us. He lists them as music education, books being allowed to the inmates of prisons, abhorrence towards capital punishment and a growing recognition that criminality is a

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667 Ibid. p. 64.
674 Ibid.
form of insanity.\(^{675}\) It is possible that Scott is attributing Beethoven’s influence to support his own personal views.

This sympathy-inducing element that Scott claims is inherent in Beethoven’s music, allowed people to feel \textit{with} rather than \textit{for} the victims. The reason for this, according to Scott, is due to Beethoven’s total lack of restrictiveness in the content of his music, which he claims has the ability to directly appeal to the intuition or subconscious.\(^{676}\)

Whether Beethoven would have agreed with any of the above is open to question. Scott tends to ignore the fact that Beethoven lived in a time of revolution and change, and that many of the above forces were current prior to Europe’s recognition of his genius – or indeed, his artistic and philosophical development. Beethoven was an idealist and, as Paul Henry Lang points out, “in this idealism he identified himself with the point of gravity of his period, which stood for friendly progress towards the realization of the dignity, freedom, and beauty of man, which it believed capable of achievement”.\(^{677}\)

Whilst Lang is in agreement with Scott when he says that “Beethoven is the universal man, the eternal man who lives the whole gamut of human experience”, he ignores the influence of Scott’s Masters by asserting that Beethoven was not “saved by any divine action but by his own humanity, which destroys Satan”.\(^{678}\) It must be assumed that Lang had little if any idea of Scott’s claims regarding Beethoven’s music or Scott’s overall theory of history.

The second effect of Beethoven’s music is linked to the first. Scott claims it made possible the writings of Havelock Ellis and other “self-sacrificing investigators of sexual psychology”.\(^{679}\) The implication is that without Beethoven there would have been no Freud. Therefore the influence of his music is claimed to have resulted in the introduction of psychoanalysis, in particular to treat the cause of sexual perversions. Beethoven is thus credited with being the forerunner of that science.\(^{680}\) Scott contends that early Victorian women often “dissolved into tears” or had the “vapours”, which he attributes to sexual repression; he states that Beethoven’s piano sonatas were the only emotional outlet available. He goes on to tell us that, as the Victorian age progressed, its women became less hysterical and less subject to fainting fits – which, he says, was the direct result of

\(^{675}\) Ibid., p. 65.  
\(^{676}\) Ibid.  
\(^{678}\) Ibid.  
\(^{680}\) Ibid., p. 67.
Beethoven’s music. Scott’s contention is therefore that Beethoven’s music helped to bring a greater unity between the heart and the mind, that his music not only “humanized humanity” but also released a degree of psychological tension.

The claims made on behalf of Beethoven would appear to be the product of a historical revisioning in order to support a theory of history more suitable to, and more in accord with, Scott’s own world-view. It should be noted that there is no evidence in Beethoven’s writings to support, or even suggest that, he was aware of the claims made on his behalf. Scott, however, would perhaps counter that Beethoven would not have been aware of his divine mission or of being used by the Masters. In Scott’s defence, it should be noted that he was of the firm belief that the information he wrote down, however radical or ‘out there’ it might seem to others, was genuine and coming direct from an Ascended Master, even if it was via Nelsa Chapman.

**Frederic Chopin**

Frederic Chopin (1809–1849) is said by Scott to be the “apostle of refinement”, inspiring the Pre-Raphaelites and being responsible for the emancipation of women. He was said to be a pale, delicate child with little stamina and a tendency – like Scott himself – to burst into tears whenever he heard music. He was said to be a true Romantic who, although his natural talent may have seemed like a gift from God, in reality – like many of his Romantic contemporaries – suffered ill-health and could not fulfil his potential; indeed, he has been called “a virtuoso of suffering.”

The compositions of Chopin are almost exclusively for the piano, many of them being of an introspective nature and having an improvisatory feel to them. Other than two piano concertos, Chopin did not produce any large-scale works, being instead a master of the miniature. He is recognised as a profound musical inventor, whose style and innovations influenced many great pianists and composers who followed him, including Scriabin, Rachmaninoff and Cyril Scott himself. It has been suggested that such was Chopin’s technical ability that the technique of Franz Liszt was based upon it.

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681 Ibid., p. 67.
682 Ibid., p. 66.
684 Ibid., p.75.
685 Lang, *Music in Western Civilization*, p. 816.
687 Eaglefield Hull, *Cyril Scott*, p. 31.
Chopin’s influence on Scott is claimed to go further than for the other composers discussed above, for Scott contends that he and his wife Rose Allatini were the reincarnations of Chopin and his mistress George Sand, a claim that must be left unproven.\textsuperscript{689} The Chopin connection, however, is alluded to by Scott in his autobiography when discussing his reasons for entering into an occult marriage with Rose.\textsuperscript{690} This was a union he was apparently talked into by the Master Koot Hoomi, who pointed out that some karma from a previous lifetime needed to be worked out. Although too modest to give names, Scott informs us that Rose was an authoress and he was a composer who had only been out of incarnation for 30 years.\textsuperscript{691} As Chopin died in 1849 and Scott was born in 1879, and if one considers the delicate constitution of both men as children and their pianistic abilities, not to mention a similarity of style, it is fair to assume that Scott had little trouble identifying himself as the reincarnation of Chopin and Rose as Chopin’s lover Amantine Dupin, better known as George Sands.

Chopin’s influence, according to Scott, indirectly inspired the Pre-Raphaelites and can be recognised in the paintings of Rossetti and Burne-Jones, which have “the same refined languor, that same delicacy of outline found in Chopin’s melodies”.\textsuperscript{692} However, as with Handel, Scott describes a negative aspect when this refinement is taken too far, as it results in “passionless pallid maidens and bloodless knights”.\textsuperscript{693}

Chopin is also said to have influenced the emancipation of woman. Scott criticises women’s pursuits in the nineteenth century as serving only the purpose of making them “eligible young women” suitable for marriage, but with no aspiration towards the cultivation of mind or soul. The music of Chopin, with its refinement and inherent charm, is said to have awakened in women the desire for more culture; therefore, they began to break away from their husbands’ dominance and form or join societies in order to understand the fine arts better. This, Scott says, “was the beginning of the emancipation of women”\textsuperscript{694} – a subject in which Scott himself was interested, being a great admirer of Annie Besant whom he calls a “great orator” and humanitarian.\textsuperscript{695}


\textsuperscript{690} Scott, \textit{A Bone of Contention}, p. 177.

\textsuperscript{691} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{692} Scott, \textit{Music: Its Secret Influence}, p. 82.

\textsuperscript{693} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{694} Ibid., p. 86.

\textsuperscript{695} Scott, \textit{An Outline of Modern Occultism}, pp. 111–13
Chopin died from consumption when only 40 years old. Scott attributes this to the fact that inspiration or contact with the higher planes and the Devas inevitably produces a reaction upon the physical body. Scott argues here that this would account for why Chopin did not produce any large-scale works for, as Scott says, “they did not overstrain his frail physique fearing that he would have died earlier”. 696 The contradiction that arises here is that many who are supposedly in touch with Devas or the Masters have lived into old age with robust constitutions – including Scott himself, who lived a very active life before dying at the age of 91.

It could be argued that Scott’s view of the link between musical evolution and social change is both naive and rather quaint; he ignores other external factors such as political events and economics as contributing to the overall changes in society, therefore making the link between music and social changes a direct causal one. 697

**Richard Wagner**

As stated in connection with Rudolf Steiner, the Devas in Theosophical literature are a graded hierarchy of incorporeal beings, ranging from the smallest nature spirit to the loftiest archangel. Their influence, however, is not always seen to be benevolent – as is the case with Richard Wagner. 698

For Scott, the keynote to Wagner’s music dramas was “unity in diversity”. We are told that a profound spiritual principle underlies his entire constructional scheme, in which melodies and motives are woven together in such a way as to present a continuous whole. The many are blended into the one – or, as Scott says:

> As the waves of the ocean are each different, having a different form, yet are nevertheless one with it, so each melody, though individual, was one with the great art-work of which it formed a part … Wagner’s music was the prototype of the principle of cooperation … spiritually speaking, it symbolized the mystic truth that each individual soul is unified with the All-soul, the All-pervading consciousness. 699

697 This has also been suggested by Godwin in *Harmonies of Heaven and Earth*, p. 45.
699 Ibid., p. 97.
In his lifetime, Wagner had many critics, and often his work was not well received – as is evidenced by the negative reaction to *Tannhäuser* in Paris.\(^{700}\) According to Scott, this was due to the workings of the “Dark Powers” who, in order to prevent the spiritual evolution of the race, used every means at their disposal to thwart Wagner and his message.\(^{701}\)

Esotericists such as Scott and Corinne Heline see Wagner’s whole life as devoted to the regeneration of the human race through art, so it is a tragedy that his reputation has suffered because of the association of his music with Adolf Hitler. We cannot choose who will admire our work in the future, but for Scott, Wagner’s problems arose due to his not only being used by the Masters but by his constant overshadowing by Devas. Scott argues that Deva-inspired people often lose their sense of values, appearing to become selfish and egotistical – traits of which Wagner has often been accused. According to Scott’s thinking, the character Wagner showed to the world could be said to not be exclusively his own, but “in part, that of the National-Devas who dominated him”.\(^{702}\) The National-Devas, Scott says, used Wagner as they later did Adolf Hitler, who saw himself as a reincarnation of the Germanic hero Siegfried, the hero of Wagner’s *Ring of the Nibelung*. Scott suggests that at the time the German people, not being sufficiently evolved to respond to the lofty vibrations of Wagner’s music, consequently developed an uncritical hero-worship of Hitler.\(^{703}\) Scott, like Corinne Heline, argues that ultimately the evolution of the race will benefit from an understanding of Wagner’s music. However, Scott informs us that, “the full effects of Wagner’s music will not be operative for nearly two hundred years”.\(^{704}\)

**Composers inspired by the Devas**

Handel, Beethoven, Chopin and Wagner are among the primary agents of evolution listed by Scott. The following composers are minor by comparison; however, according to Scott, they are directly inspired by the Devas – indeed, he says the art of music was brought into service by the Masters to help humankind perceive the Devas. He writes:

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\(^{700}\) See Wagner, *Religion and Art*, p. 50 for his account of the problems facing the opera, the least of which was Wagner’s failure to include a ballet in the second act, common with operas in the French style.


\(^{703}\) Ibid., p. 100.

By inspiring composers to convey the vivid life and movements of the Devas, as also their atmosphere and even their music in terms of earthly sounds, the Masters are enabling man to “hear” what as yet he cannot “see”. This closer relationship between himself and them constitutes an important evolutionary development for the future.\textsuperscript{705}

According to Scott, César Frank (1822–1890) was the bridge between humans and Devas. He describes Frank as intrinsically naïve, trusting and childlike, and therefore a fit instrument to be moulded in the hands of the higher powers. As proof of his overshadowing by the Devas, Scott tells us that “he was a master of that form of musical improvisation which Initiates know to be the Devic type”.\textsuperscript{706} Unfortunately, Scott fails to elaborate on this – for, being both an initiate and a talented composer, he would have been better placed than most to note down the music of the Devas.

Scott informs us that Frank’s mission was to break down disease in the lives of others, as well as to “lift people out of themselves”. His music was therefore to reveal a sense of the divine and a glimpse of ones higher self.\textsuperscript{707} An aspect of Scott’s interpretation of Frank’s mission, which is similar to Steiner’s, is in his description of a person in the dream state hearing the music of Devachan; Scott claimed that one could bring back the memory of the Devas after super-conscious trance.\textsuperscript{708} The music heard reveals to the listener a “sense of the Divine”, and when heard on the earthly plane leads the listener back to heaven, giving them a sense of their higher self.\textsuperscript{709}

Scott says that Cesar Frank – unlike Scriabin – was an initiate, but unfortunately did not possess the gift of clairvoyance.\textsuperscript{710} However, he was overshadowed by Special Devas under the guidance of Koot Hoomi – who, according to Scott, directed inspiration through his subtle bodies creating a beautiful chord on the higher planes, with each Deva combining their individual note with those of the Master and Frank himself.\textsuperscript{711} The influence of the writing of Besant and Leadbeater shows through here when, describing the Devotional Service in the Temple, they write of a Deva striking a chord or arpeggio upon his instrument:

\textsuperscript{706} Ibid., p. 119.
\textsuperscript{707} Ibid., p. 122.
\textsuperscript{708} Ibid., p. 119.
\textsuperscript{709} Ibid., p. 122.
\textsuperscript{710} Ibid., p. 123.
\textsuperscript{711} Ibid.
As he strikes it, the chord seems to be taken up in the air around him as though it were repeated by a thousand invisible musicians, so that it resounds through the great dome of the Temple and pours in a great flood of harmony, a sea of rushing sound, over the entire congregation. Each member now touches his own instrument, and very softly at first, but gradually swelling out into a greater volume, until everyone is taking part in this wonderful symphony. Thus every member is brought into harmony with the principal idea which the Deva wishes to emphasis.  

The cosmic symphony described is also similar to the “symphony of all souls” described by Von Dalberg, demonstrating a consistency in the esoteric notion while reinterpreting the idea in a more Theosophical vein.

Edvard Grieg (1843–1907) was supposedly an intermediary between “the little nature-spirits and humanity”, as was Tchaikovsky (1840–93), although the latter is described by Scott as a composer who should be regarded by the “genuine and more pronounced nature-spirit exponents as a musical vulgarian” due to his “glaring unsubtleties”. Perhaps Scott’s disapproval is due to a touch of jealousy related to Tchaikovsky’s immense popularity. However, Scott claims that both Grieg and Tchaikovsky drew attention to the existence of nature-spirit music by portraying it the way “they thought it was like rather than what it is actually like”. The reason for this false portrayal is apparently due to the time not being ripe for knowledge of the Deva-evolution to be released into the world – which, it is claimed, must wait until Wagner’s influence has spread more widely.

Once again, we have this notion of spiritual superiority so common among occultists. Grieg and Tchaikovsky are considered inferior by Scott in the same way that he says Scriabin, due to his not being an initiate, failed to realise his full potential. Scott

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715 Ibid., p.125.
716 Ibid.
elaborates on this, commenting that “only the initiate is in a position to know the spiritual value of a given piece of music, non-initiates can only feel it”.

Claude Debussy was a friend of Cyril Scott, who said of him: “He (Debussy) was the first composer to turn entirely from the human and write nature-music pure and simple.” His mission was to start at the first rung of the Devic evolutionary ladder and echo the music of gnomes and fairies, as well as water and cloud spirits. Scott contends that Debussy’s music is very similar to the subtle music of nature, but that only those who possess clairaudience can appreciate just how similar. Debussy was also said to be among the first composers to introduce ancient Atlantean music into the present, and we are informed that “he was subconsciously used by the higher ones to carry over Fourth Race sound-vibrations into the Fifth”. We know that Debussy made a study of Javanese music – which, Scott says, is a modified remnant of the music of Atlantis. As previously noted Heline saw Chinese music as having its origins in Atlantis, as did Steiner – who then saw it progressing through China to Egypt.

Debussy’s own comments on his being used by the Devas and his links with Atlantean music – assuming he made any – are not recorded by either Scott or Debussy himself, which is a pity seeing that the two men were friends and admired each other’s work. Scott’s statements on Debussy show that he (Scott) had a very different view of the path of Atlantean music from those of Heline and Rudolf Steiner. No mention is made by Scott of the interval of the seventh or the characteristics of Atlantean music that form part of the musical mythology created by Besant, Steiner and Heline.

The fact that Debussy was interested in Javanese music should not surprise us; he also showed an interest in plainsong, Russian church modes, the overtone series and Oriental pentatonic modes, and he had a particular fascination with Gregorian chant. Esoterically, as was noted in Chapter 4, he was influenced by the company he kept in Edmund Bailly’s bookshop – which, according to David Goldman, stimulated his interest in Rosicrucianism, Satanism, Eastern mysticism and Gnosticism. As the evidence linking him with any of the above from a truly committed point of view is sparse, one

\[717\] Ibid., p. 98.
\[718\] Ibid., p. 128.
\[719\] Ibid., p. 129.
\[720\] Ibid., p. 153.
\[721\] Ibid. Also in D.P. Goldman, “Esotericism as a Determinant of Debussy’s Harmonic Language”, The Musical Quarterly, Vol. 75, No. 2 (1991), pp. 130–47. For discussion of Atlantis, see Chapter 3; for Theosophy, see Chapter 5 on Steiner and Chapter 6 on Heline.
\[722\] C. Heline, Music, p. 44; Steiner, The Inner Nature of Music, p. 51.
\[723\] Goldman, “Esotericism”, p. 133.
\[724\] Ibid., p.131.
must assume that Debussy’s esoteric and eclectic interests were used simply in order to
develop his own musical language. \(^{725}\)

One factor that Scott fails to mention, which is prominent in the writing of those
dealing with Debussy’s occult links, is his supposed use of such mathematical formulae
as the Golden Section or the Fibonacci number series. The Golden Section is defined as a
geometric proportion in which a line is divided so that the ratio of the length of the longer
segment to the length of the entire line is equal to the ratio of the length of the shorter line
segment to the length of the longer line segment. The value is approximately 0.618. The
Fibonacci number series is a simple counting series in which each number is the sum of
the two previous ones – for example, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34 etc. Ellen Crystall asserts
that “much of Debussy’s music contains intricate proportional systems which account for
the precise nature of the music’s unorthodox forms”. She argues that the two systems –
the Golden Section and Fibonacci – make it difficult to define the works in more familiar
terms. \(^{726}\) Why this is difficult is not explained: the Golden Section has been employed by
artists since the ancient Greeks, and one would assume a system of analysis of form and
structure, in music as well as the visual arts, would have been well established by the time
of Debussy. To add to the intrigue, Crystall states that painters have often used the
Golden Section to carry hidden messages; therefore, she suggests, Debussy – being a
supposed Grand Master of the Priory of Sion – may have encoded messages in his music,
“in an attempt to communicate information to other secret members of an elite order”. \(^{727}\)

While it has been shown that Edmond Bailly’s Paris circle – which included
Debussy – was aware of Pythagorean numerology, including the Golden Section,
nowhere in his writing does Debussy explicitly mention it. \(^{728}\) Crystall’s claim must be
rejected as both lacking in evidence and sounding like part of an elaborate conspiracy
theory. While it is possible to find the occasional use of the Golden Section in Debussy’s
compositions, its use should be seen as structural and functional rather than as a secret
code. A composer with as large an output as Debussy is going to use a number of

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\(^{725}\) See Chapter 4 on Edmund Bailly.


structures and forms; as Goldman correctly points out, “there is no one compositional system” in Debussy’s work.\textsuperscript{729}

Mention has already been made of Alexander Scriabin who, in Scott’s view, was “the greatest exponent of Deva music so far born”. Scott goes on to explain why Scriabin died so young. It seems that, unlike César Frank, he was not a trained Initiate working under the supervision of a Master; therefore, in contacting the Devas, he subjected his delicate physical body to such strain that it laid him open to attack from Dark Forces.\textsuperscript{730} This is a very similar story to that of Chopin, who was a major influence on Scriabin’s work. Scott goes on to say that Scriabin, not being clairvoyant and not possessing the necessary knowledge, was therefore unable to keep the Dark Forces at bay, and his personal Devas, being restricted to their own planes, were unable to help him.\textsuperscript{731}

A brief mention should be made of Modeste Mussorgsky (1839–81) who, Scott says, was destined to turn the ugly into something poetic. His music is said to portray the sordid aspects of life; his mission was to find beauty in the ugly, “to go through hell to find heaven”.\textsuperscript{732} However, by making the Russian people realise the degree of squalor and misery in which they lived their lives, Scott claims that “he ultimately helped to arouse that hatred of bondage which resulted in the Revolution”.\textsuperscript{733} This is a large claim for one of whom it could be said was a minor figure in the history of music.

Scott believed in the notion that music had the power to heal the sick – especially those with nervous or mental illness. He recognised that those living in large towns and cities were constantly subjected to “nerve shattering noise”.\textsuperscript{734} In order to counter this, he prophesied that in the future certain composers would be used who would evolve a type of music that could heal what “discordant noise has destroyed”. They would be sensitive so as to create combinations of notes designed to have the most beneficial effect upon the “subtler vehicles of the listener”.\textsuperscript{735}

Scott had a keen interest in non-traditional medicine for the greater part of his life, writing a number of controversial books on the subject, claiming colour and sound could be a therapeutic medium in the treatment of diseases such as cancer. In this he could be said to have been a pioneer in what is now known as “music therapy”. His linkage of

\textsuperscript{729} Goldman, “Esotericism”, p. 130.
\textsuperscript{730} Scott, Music: Its Secret Influence, p. 133.
\textsuperscript{731} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{732} Ibid., p. 139.
\textsuperscript{733} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{734} Ibid., p. 200.
\textsuperscript{735} Ibid. Scott is referring to the Emotional, Etheric and Astral bodies.
music and colour stimulated his interest in the condition of synesthesia and the work undertaken in this field by Besant, Leadbeater and Rudolf Steiner.\textsuperscript{736}

**Color and Music**

The subject of synesthesia is raised when Scott makes mention of Besant and Leadbeater’s book *Thought Forms*, which purports to show how changes in mood and thoughts themselves create a range of colours in a person’s aura, and how this concept can be extended to musical works. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Besant and Leadbeater show three examples: a work each by Mendelssohn, Gounod and Wagner.\textsuperscript{737} Scott remarks on these in his *Philosophy of Modernism* (1917), saying that “the form produced by a composition of Mendelssohn cannot compare with the monumental grandeur and vastness that emanates from an Overture of Richard Wagner”.\textsuperscript{738}

**Table 7.1 Blavatsky’s system of correspondences as a C major Scale\textsuperscript{739}**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Note</th>
<th>Colour</th>
<th>Emotion</th>
<th>Day of week</th>
<th>planet</th>
<th>Metal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>C Do</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Mars</td>
<td>Iron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>D Re</td>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>Gold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>E Mi</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>Intellect</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Mercury</td>
<td>Mercury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>F Fa</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Sympathy</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>Saturn</td>
<td>Lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>G Sol</td>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>Devotion</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Jupiter</td>
<td>Tin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>A La</td>
<td>Indigo</td>
<td>Selfless love</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Venus</td>
<td>Copper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>B Si</td>
<td>Violet</td>
<td>Psychism</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Moon</td>
<td>Silver</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For Scott, every musical composition produces a thought and color-form, and it is claimed that from observation of the form and color the spiritual value of the work can be determined. In his system of Correspondences, including musical notes and colors, Scott does not differ from that of Blavatsky who presented her system of correspondences in the *Secret Doctrine*. This included emotions, numbers, notes, colors, days of the week, metals and Planets. In Blavatsky’s system the seven notes represent the seven hierarchies, each of which


\textsuperscript{737} Besant and Leadbeater, *Thought Forms*, pp. 69–76.

\textsuperscript{738} Scott, *The Philosophy of Modernism*, p. 117.

\textsuperscript{739} Ibid., p. 452. Also, Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*. p.432.
are subdivided into seven smaller parts. This could be interpreted as the merging of one color into another, however Scott does not subdivide his colors in this way, he uses the chromatic scale in order to allow one color to merge into another. The Chromatic scale is used in Table 7.2, and the correspondences include the signs of the zodiac. Included is a list of Scriabin’s color–note correspondences. His system differs from that of Blavatsky and Scott – according to Scott; this is due to Scriabin’s lack of clairvoyant ability.

Table 7.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zodiac sign</th>
<th>Note</th>
<th>Colour</th>
<th>Blavatsky Scott</th>
<th>Scriabin (used in Prometheus Opus 60)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aries</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taurus</td>
<td>C#</td>
<td>Red-orange</td>
<td>Pure violet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gemini</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cancer</td>
<td>D#</td>
<td>Amber</td>
<td>Bluish</td>
<td>Metallic steel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leo</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>Intellect</td>
<td>Sky blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virgo</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Sympathy</td>
<td>Deep red-purple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libra</td>
<td>F#</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Deep blue-violet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scorpio</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>Blue-green</td>
<td>Devotion</td>
<td>Orange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sagittarius</td>
<td>G#</td>
<td>Blue</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lilac-violet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capricorn</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Indigo</td>
<td>Selfless love</td>
<td>Dark green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aquarius</td>
<td>A#</td>
<td>Violet</td>
<td></td>
<td>Metallic grey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pisces</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Magenta</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>Blue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If a work changes key, the primary colour is said to continue to stand out, as the foreground never blots out the primary colour, and those with the ability to perceive such

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things will observe a multi-colored form showing richness according to the complexity of its conception.\textsuperscript{743}

Scott’s writing demonstrates that he believed absolutely in music’s power to create changes on all levels of existence. The Theosophical influence is evident throughout his work, no more so than when he is surveying the music of the early twentieth century. He contends that from the torture chambers of the Middle Ages through the French Revolution up to the present, Dark Forces have been creating negative thought forms to influence humanity. Claiming to be under the guidance of Koot Hoomi, he therefore gives the year 1906 as the point when music came to be used to counter these Powers of Evil. This, he claims, is the reason for the music of the Ultra-Discordants:

It is an occult musical fact that discord (used in the moral sense) can alone be destroyed by discord, the reason being that the vibrations of intrinsically beautiful music are too rarefied to touch the comparatively coarse vibrations of all that pertains to a much lower plane. Thus the work of destroying these noisome moral germs has been allotted to Stravinsky, Schoenberg, and other ultra-modernists, who by their dissonances may jar the nerves of music lovers, but they are needed esoterically speaking not only for the above reason but also to break down that conventionality which was one of the by-effects of Handel’s music.\textsuperscript{744}

Thus Scott provides two reasons for the rise of atonality and other modern systems of composition, while also providing a rationale for his own avant-garde innovations. Despite his dislike of much of the music being produced, Scott was optimistic for the future. He concludes the 1958 edition of his \textit{Music} with a new message from Koot Hoomi, which refers to the New Age. K.H. says: “We seek, primarily through the medium of inspired music, to diffuse the spirit of unification and brotherhood, and thus quicken the vibration of this planet.”\textsuperscript{745} It is a comment that is very much in sympathy with all of the authors in this study.

From the foregoing, it can be seen that Scott attempted to survey history by arguing that the influence of occult forces on musicians, through the medium of music,
was instrumental in bringing about social changes within the society in which they operated. How credibly this is argued is pointless to speculate upon. However, it is interesting to note who is left off his chosen list of composers rather than who is on it, which leads to a number of criticisms against Scott’s theory. First, starting, as he does, with the period of Bach and Handel, he loses all of the major composers of the late Middle Ages, Renaissance and early Baroque – all periods of great innovation and profound spiritual awareness. While it is true that in Part Four of *Music: Its Secret Influence Throughout the Ages*, he makes a brief survey of the history of music from ancient Egypt up until the eighteenth century, commenting on a number of influential composers, no mention is made of the influence of Devas or Masters on any composer during those periods.

Second, his Romantic and sympathetic view of his subjects’ personalities not only seems naïve, but gives the impression that Scott had a lack of understanding or recognition of the evidence and established facts concerning their lives within the discipline of the history of music. This is not to suggest that Scott was ignorant of music history or the lives of the composers, but what knowledge he had was adjusted to suit his theory of history – one that incorporated Theosophical notions such as the intervention by the Masters in human affairs. Scott would no doubt counter this by asserting that the academic version of the history of music is wrong, as the role of the Masters is not acknowledged. A third criticism is advanced by Godwin, who is correct in saying that Scott made the link between musical and social phenomena too much of a causal one, while R.J. Stewart argues that to take a historical-cultural framework and cite individual composers as examples of an evolving musical consciousness is inadequate, as “the illusion of social evolution and scientific progress is confused with an equally false notion of musical evolution”.

Despite the flaws in Scott’s ideas, there is no question about his influence on subsequent writers on musical esotericism. His ideas were treated with a degree of derision when first published; however, those same ideas have subsequently become popular in New Age and alternative spirituality circles, making Scott one of the most quoted authors in works on esoteric music published since the 1970s. This interest in his ideas has led to a re-evaluation of both his literary work and his music. Recently, a “Cyril Scott Society” was formed – although, according to his official homepage, it is no longer

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in existence.\textsuperscript{748} However, the number of CDs issued since 2003 confirms that his musical works are enjoying renewed interest.\textsuperscript{749} His work can be seen to be a culmination and synthesis of many of the speculative ideas on music that come from a tradition including d'Olivet through Blavatsky, Steiner and Scriabin. Unlike Scriabin, however, Scott never strays from Theosophical notions in his overall scheme, and although his ideas may be dismissed academically as the product of an over-active imagination and “over the top”, one must assume that he truly believed in what he wrote.

\textsuperscript{749} See ibid. for a list of recent recordings.
Chapter 8
The Continuing Influence of Theosophical Notions in Esoteric Music Theory, 1970 to the Present

This chapter examines a cross-section of works relating to music by authors published from 1970 to the present, showing evidence of the continuing influence of Theosophical teachings. Included are the Theosophical notions of the involution of the soul from spirit to matter and its subsequent evolution back to Spirit, the role of the Ascended Masters, the destruction of Atlantis and the septenary nature of the universe, which includes the seven Root-Races, the Seven Rays and the seven Chakras or energy centres. The chapter is structured by examining each concept – for example, Ascended Masters, Atlantis – rather than focusing on each author individually.

The works of the majority of these authors will be found listed within the general catalogue under so called “New Age” literature. While “New Age” has become an umbrella term for a number of alternative religious and spiritual movements originating in the 1960s and 1970s, the term is generally credited to have been introduced by the Theosophist Alice Bailey, and is often found in early Theosophical literature relating to the expected Age of Aquarius and the next evolutionary stage in human consciousness.750

The influence of Theosophical ideas on contemporary occultic and New Age thought has already been noted in the Introduction; further confirmation can be found within the work of Mary Farrell Bednarowski who says that modern New Age thought is both a continuation and an expansion of many religious concepts that “Theosophy pulled togrther”751 Kay Alexander, in her article Roots of the New Age, concurs with Bednarowski’s assessment of the link between Theosophy and the New Age, arguing that “Theosophy is one of the main roots of the New Age movement”.752

As previously stated, it is not my intention to analyse any specific work of music within this thesis; indeed, when dealing with the New Age movement, its eclectic nature would prevent any precise or meaningful definition of what constitutes New Age music. During its development from the 1960s to the present, the movement has incorporated a

750 W. Hanegraaff, New Age Religion and Western Culture, p. 95.
751 Cited in Kyle R. The New Age Movement in American Culture, p.35.
number of styles ranging from relaxation music, indigenous styles such as Celtic, Native American and Australian Aboriginal music through to mantras that are claimed to heal or activate the chakras and energy centres of the body. Despite this broad range of styles and functions, the three fundamental principles concerning music mentioned throughout this work (music as Divine emanation, moral determination and as a healing modality) form the foundation and general framework to which the authors presented in this chapter add their own philosophical and Theosophical notions.

In order to demonstrate the ongoing Theosophical influence, eight contemporary texts have been chosen that identify various Theosophical notions. The authors and works to be discussed are The Secret Power of Music by David Tame; The Healing Forces of Music by Randall McClellan; Harmonics of Sound Color and Vibration by William David; two works by Jonathan Goldman – Shifting Frequencies and Healing Sounds; Patrick Bernhardt’s The Secret Music of the Soul; and Sacred Sounds by Ted Andrews. Dane Rudhyar, composer, astrologer and Theosophist, is included, as is George Gurdjieff, whose system using musical analogy, although dating from earlier in the century, was not generally popular until the 1960s and later, with the republication of P.D. Ouspensky’s 1949 work In Search of the Miraculous in 1977.

Music and Evolution

Two things are common to all the authors: a holistic view of the universe that “all is one”, and that “good” music – generally considered to be of a religious or classical persuasion – can function as an aid in the evolution of the soul. For many authors, this soul evolution is also linked to music being a moral determinate, as was argued in Chapter 7 by Cyril Scott. In his Secret Power of Music, David Tame presents this idea as a central theme, claiming that music is not only an entertainment but is also a literal power.753 Tame goes on to declare a basic philosophical axiom: “As in music, so in life”; this is not an original idea of Tame’s, as the saying occurs in Scott’s Music: Its Secret Influence Throughout the Ages and is the cornerstone of that author’s philosophy.754

If so-called “good music” can help the soul to evolve towards a state of a more refined vibration, it follows that “bad” music does the opposite. Within his book, Tame – following the example of Besant, Scott and Heline – joins in the denunciation of popular music styles such as rock and jazz. Jazz is claimed by Tame to have derived from Voodoo

754 Ibid., p.15; see also Scott, Music: Its Secret Influence, p. 43.
and native African music, and is given particular attention by him regarding its supposed harmful effects on the soul and civilisation in general. In this, Tame is also agreeing with his contemporary Patrick Bernhardt, as well as drawing on the ancient authority of Plato and Confucius – who, as was noted in Chapter 3, called for restrictions on what scales and instruments can be used as well as arguing that any change in music can undermine and change society.

As stated earlier, Besant and Leadbeater argued that the mental and emotional state of the composer permeates a musical work. Tame concurs, speaking of the ability of music to transform the inner feelings and outer behavior of a person. He argues that the composer’s emotional state when composing the work is the crucial factor: “it is the essence of this state which enters into us, tending to mould and shape our consciousness into conformity with itself”.755 From this, he concludes that “jazz became the symbol of crime, feeble-mindedness, insanity and sex”.756 Bernhardt, echoing a similar sentiment, concludes that: “We can no longer wonder at the frightening number of suicides, depressions, and drop-out behaviors rampant in the world, a world crippled by the mind-destroying rhythm of ‘Disco’ music.”757 While all the authors in this chapter subscribe to the view that music affects the evolution of the soul as well as our consciousness, not all address the thorny question of the specific effects – good or bad – of a particular genre on the consciousness or behaviour of any specific group of individuals, leaving it to personal taste.

**Continuing Belief in the Notion of the Ascended Masters**

As discussed in Chapter 3, the question of evolution through a series of lives gave rise to the Theosophical notion of the Ascended Masters, whose task it was to guide humanity on the journey. The traditional Theosophical Masters, while still important in the writings of some authors, have undergone a change in terms of the way they are depicted or referred to by others. David Tame is happy to acknowledge the influence of the Great White Brotherhood and some of the more prominent members, such as Morya, Koot Hoomi and D.K. while only tacit recognition is given by Ted Andrews, who raises the possibility of the sacred Mantra OM being a link to the Great White Brotherhood but gives no further information regarding specific Masters.758

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756 Ibid., p. 193.
The astrologer, Theosophist and composer Dane Rudhyar is another who, like Tame, adhered to the Blavatskian hierarchy. Douglas Kahn argues that while his musical and mystical ideas can be traced to a number of sources Rudhyar favoured the Theosophy of Blavatsky, especially over that of the later Theosophists such as Besant and Leadbeater.\(^759\) Rudhyar (1895–1985) had encountered Theosophy through his friend the conductor Leopold Stokowski, who introduced him to the prominent Theosophist and heiress Christine Stevenson.\(^760\) Rudhyar went on to become a productive modernist composer, belonging to a group called The New Music Society initiated by the composer Henry Cowell.\(^761\)

As an astrologer, Rudhyar is credited with the development of Transpersonal Astrology, which argues that astrology is not essentially predictive but rather produces intuitive insights on the subject’s personality. Rudhyar wrote 40 books, many of which make frequent reference to Blavatsky, the Brotherhood and the Master K.H. – who, as mentioned in the chapters on Theosophy and Cyril Scott, is said to oversee the development of the arts and music.\(^762\)

Only two of the authors in this chapter claim to act as a channel for a specific Master; William David claims his book was guided by the Master D.K. – the same Master who supposedly was behind the writings of Alice Bailey\(^763\) – while Jonathan Goldman, in his two books *Healing Sounds* and *Shifting Frequencies*, moves away from the traditional Theosophical Masters, claiming to be guided by one of the Masters of the “Sound Current”, whom he identifies as Shamael, Angel of Sacred Sound.\(^764\)

A reading of the literature suggests that the concept of the masters has undergone a number of changes since the 1950s. Currently, many within occult communities identify them either as Angels in the traditional Christian sense or associate them with alien beings, visiting Earth to warn or help humanity. It was the psychologist Carl Jung who suggested that the aliens piloting flying saucers could be classified as “technological angels”\(^765\).

Patrick Bernhardt, while not mentioning Masters as such, refers to “Space Cousins”, and

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\(^761\) Ibid. p.2.

\(^762\) For more on this topic, refer to D. Rudhyar, *Occult Preparations for a New Age*, Wheaton: Theosophical Publishing House, 1975, p. 29.


claims that future composers will compose music capable of uniting “suffering humanity with the Devas who preside over the affairs of the universe”.\footnote{Bernhardt, The Secret Music of the Soul, p. 186.}

Perhaps the most controversial of the selected authors of this chapter is George Gurdjieff (1874–1949), given that he was not a Theosophist in the conventional sense. However, a number of similarities exist between his teachings and those of Theosophy. These include his teachings on evolution, highly evolved Masters and the nature of the subtle bodies of man – all of which can be found within Blavatsky’s writings. As Gurdjieff was something of an amateur composer, he also used musical analogies to explain his ideas, which will be covered in more detail below. Gurdjieff’s inclusion in a list of those influenced by Theosophy can also be justified by observing that much of the transmission of his teaching comes to us via his pupils, P.D. Ouspensky and the Russian composer Thomas de Hartmann (1885–1956), both strongly influenced by Theosophy in their early years. One major difference between Gurdjieff and the Theosophists of his day is that he seems not so much to have been seeking a union of all religions but rather an “original revelation”, or primordial wisdom. His search of the occult literature is said to have led him to various publications of the Theosophical Society, which according to James Webb “acted as the central clearing house for all esoteric ideas”.\footnote{J. Webb, The Harmonious Circle, London: Thames and Hudson, 1980, p. 530.}

Having written critically of both Theosophy and Madame Blavatsky, it is clear that Gurdjieff was familiar with Theosophical literature and its teachings. He once claimed that it had taken him an “immense amount of labor to track down the erroneous statements in the Secret Doctrine”\footnote{Ibid., p. 36.}. Unfortunately, he did not elaborate on what he regarded as erroneous; however his statement does support the argument that he was familiar with Theosophical ideas, among them the Ascended Masters – whom he categorises as Archangels. In his work Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson, he places this hierarchy on the planet Mars, with each Master relocating to another planet as and when they are required to help in the evolution of its inhabitants.\footnote{G.I. Gurdjieff, Beelzebub’s Tales to his Grandson, Arkana: Penguin, 1999, p. 53.} Beelzebub, we are told, leaves Mars in a spaceship in order to make his first descent to Earth, followed by the departure of the other Archangels.\footnote{Ibid., p. 110.} In essence, this is not dissimilar to the notion within early Theosophical literature whereby the “Lord of the World”, with his three pupils the “Lords of the Flame”, came to Earth from Venus.\footnote{Ranson, A Short History of Theosophy, p. 47.} This mythological aspect of the alien colonisation of Earth
has been mostly ignored or dismissed as an allegory by modern Theosophists, Goldman being an exception. His channel Shamael informs us that one day, we on Earth will develop what he calls a “harmonic language”, consisting of tone and melody without words. This, according to Goldman, will allow us to communicate with other advanced civilisations in much the same way as was depicted in the movie Close Encounters of the Third Kind.\textsuperscript{772}

During the past century, the Masters have undergone a transformation that seems to have gone full circle. Originating as visitors from another planet, they have evolved through spirit guides, sources of channelled works, angels and back to aliens from other worlds again. The early Theosophical sources placed the Ascended Masters on planets such as Mars and Venus, which would explain why a number of alternative spiritualities and religious movements centred around UFOs – such as the I Am movement, Unarius, Aetherius Society and the Heavens Gate movement, all of which were Theosophically influenced – were so easily able to incorporate space beings and alien visitations into their doctrinal schemes.\textsuperscript{773} As Christopher Partridge points out, many of the founders of these movements were or had been Theosophists.\textsuperscript{774}

\textbf{Atlantis}

One Theosophical notion that seems not to have maintained its popularity into the twenty-first century is that of the Root-Races. Among the selected authors in this chapter, only Dane Rudhyar has written on the topic, claiming the concept is symbolic of the various evolutionary stages humanity has experienced.\textsuperscript{775} While none of the other writers mentions the idea of Root-Races, a past golden age is a prominent feature in the writing of most of them. This golden age is usually associated with the mythical Atlantis and is prominent among a number of New Age authors. As we have seen previously, d’Olivet mentions Atlantis in connection to being the original home of Adam and Eve, demonstrating that the concept – which goes back to Plato – still existed within the Western tradition prior to Blavatsky’s incorporation of it into Theosophy.

However, it would seem from the plurality of interpretations of the Atlantis story that Theosophists have reinterpreted the story to suit their own personal agendas or versions of history. Blavatsky refers to it often in The Secret Doctrine, but within

\textsuperscript{773} For a detailed analysis of Theosophy and UFOs, see C. Partridge, \textit{UFO Religions}, London: Routledge, 2003.
\textsuperscript{774} Ibid., pp. 7–21.
Theosophical literature it is Besant and Leadbeater who are among the first to make attempts to discuss the actual music of that continent, linking music to Atlantean temple rituals.\textsuperscript{776} Around this same period, Steiner – while claiming that Atlantean music was dominated by the interval of the seventh – was also making reference to the potency of Atlantean healing music.\textsuperscript{777} Heline likewise spoke of the healing effects of Atlantean music while claiming it was the source of Chinese music.\textsuperscript{778} Cyril Scott had earlier claimed that the music of Java had descended from Atlantis.\textsuperscript{779}

Four of the selected authors in this chapter make mention of Atlantis. Andrews, while admitting there is no evidence that Atlantis ever existed, nevertheless goes on to discuss the healing qualities of the music. He restates the idea encountered in Chapter 2 with Von Dalberg, arguing that each soul has its own individual keynote and that sickness is equated with disharmony. Andrews claims that in Atlantis this disharmony would be cured by the temple priests, “who by their chanting restore the correct frequencies”.\textsuperscript{780}

David only makes one reference to Atlantis, in relation to the ecological problems of the planet; he uses the destruction of that continent as a lesson that should be learned by the current inhabitants of Earth.\textsuperscript{781} Goldman mentions it when discussing quartz crystals, which he sees as tools for healing by inducing higher levels of consciousness and what he refers to as frequency shifting; he observes that “their use in Atlantis has been described by many writers”.\textsuperscript{782}

Bernhardt quotes from the work of Frank Alper, founder of the Arizona Metaphysical Society, who claims that the Hebrew language derived from vocal vibrations first used in early Atlantis. Alper claims to be the channel for various entities who have lived on Atlantis – which, he says, was originally another planet in our galaxy that was destroyed in a cosmic collision.\textsuperscript{783} This presumably makes the Atlanteans extra-terrestrials who, at some time in the distant past, migrated to Earth. Bernhardt informs us that during Alper’s research on vibratory medicine, he discovered within the Atlantean initiatory tradition 24 “Atlantean therapeutic songs”, which he has subsequently recorded.\textsuperscript{784} Unfortunately, neither Bernhardt nor Alper is able to provide any convincing

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{776} See Chapter 3.  \\
\textsuperscript{777} See Chapter 4  \\
\textsuperscript{778} Heline, Music, p. 44.  \\
\textsuperscript{779} Scott, Music: Its Secret Influence, p. 153.  \\
\textsuperscript{780} Andrews, Sacred Sounds, p. 26.  \\
\textsuperscript{781} David, The Harmonics of Sound, p. 7.  \\
\textsuperscript{782} Goldman, Shifting Frequencies, p. 96.  \\
\textsuperscript{783} http://www.answers.com/topic/frank-alper. Accessed 20 April 2012.  \\
\textsuperscript{784} Bernhardt, The Secret Music of the Soul, p. 126.  \\
\end{flushleft}
evidence to validate these claims with details of his research, other than claiming that these things were perceived clairvoyantly. While praising the healing ability of Atlantean priests, Bernhardt exhorts modern musicians “to avoid the mistakes of the priests of Atlantis”. By this, he seems to be agreeing with Besant, Scott, Heline and Tame in warning of the consequences of playing or listening to the wrong type of music.

From the above, it could be assumed that, except for the fringe of the esoteric community, the notion of Atlantis is diminishing in popularity, especially among those writing on music-related topics. As advances in science and archeology continue, it becomes increasingly likely that Plato’s concept of Atlantis could either be seen as a metaphor or perhaps a literary device demonstrating what could befall a state, as in his Republic, when the populace ignores the laws as laid down by tradition. Ellwood argues that it is not improbable that the Atlantean story is “a parable of the first few million years of protohumanity and humanity”. What is clear from the literature is that while reference is made to the moral lessons we can learn from Atlantis, no current writer on esoteric music is prepared to follow Steiner, Heline and Scott, and venture into a discussion concerning the theoretical aspects of its music.

**The Seven Rays**
The concept of the Seven Rays – while receiving mention in Blavatsky’s The Secret Doctrine – is, according to Ellwood, mostly a development of the second generation of Theosophists such as Besant and Leadbeater, but primarily Alice Bailey. The notion of the Seven Rays holds that all human temperaments and traits are manifestations of one or another of the Rays, which channel divine energy into the world. It is said that each Ray is associated with a particular Master – for example, the Masters Serapis and K.H. oversee the fourth ray, which is associated with the arts, harmony and music.

The genesis of the idea can be recognised in the fundamental proposition that all things emanate from a divine source or a primordial One. Blavatsky, espousing the idea of a septenary universe, wrote that the non-eternal universe arose from the eternal by means of “seven glorious principles”, or seven natures. She claimed that these natures were counted from “Mahat”, or universal intelligence, down to Earth. This suggests a

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785 Ibid., p. 178.
786 Ellwood, Theosophy, p. 92.
787 Ibid., p. 140.
788 Ibid., pp. 141–42.
790 Ibid.
ladder of descending stages or a hierarchical descent. Later Theosophists, such as Bailey and Rudhyar, as well as Gurdjieff, envisioned these seven stages or rays not just as a ladder – implying an evolutionary process – but also as a Pleroma, whereby each ray interacts and interpenetrates with the others, creating a multiplicity of relationships. Godwin explains it thus: “each note of the scale, while being qualitatively different from the others and either higher or lower in pitch, is not superior to its neighbour, having its own character and role to play”. 791

The idea of a septenary universe allows for an analogy to be made between the Seven Rays and the seven notes making up the musical scale, leading some of the subject authors to construct tables of correspondences that include musical notes. In the case of Rudhyar and Gurdjieff, these correspondences give rise to quite complex speculative theories concerning music. 792

David offers a table of correspondences relating to the Seven Rays in which he gives the ray its colour, vowel sound and musical note, along with the positive and negative qualities of the particular ray. 793 David’s correspondences between colour and pitch are, however, at variance with those of Blavatsky, Scott and Bernhardt. While these three authors are in agreement – the latter two probably being influenced by Blavatsky – David agrees only with three of the note-to-colour correspondences, these being C–red, E–yellow and A–indigo. 794 This lack of consensus within the data presents a problem for those advocating any idea that there is a link between various phenomena – for example, tone and color – and various human activities. It further suggests that the various tables of correspondences supplied by the authors, including Steiner, Heline and Scott, can only be viewed as subjective or products of a fertile imagination with no objective reality.

In defence of the variance in the tables, it could be argued by Theosophists that the Masters have not supplied their channels with enough information – a claim made previously by Steiner, Heline and Scott, who believe that humanity is not ready for some teachings. 795 However, David Tame has claimed that more recently the Great White Brotherhood has given out more information concerning what he calls “the seven frequencies of the ‘Word’ known as the seven rays”. 796 This information appears in a table of correspondences reproduced by Tame in 1984; these purportedly were channelled

791 Godwin, Harmonies, p. 183.
792 See section on Gurdjieff below.
793 David, The Harmonics of Sound, pp. 20–21.
794 For full details of David’s scheme, see ibid., pp. 20 and 66.
795 Heline, Music, p. 144. See also Scott, A Bone of Contention, p. 187.
to Mark and Elizabeth Prophet for their Summit Lighthouse organisation in 1972. Included with the specific ray is information on the chakra associated with its corresponding colour, God quality of the ray, possible perversion of the God quality, the Master of the ray and the location of that Master’s retreat. For example, the first ray activates the throat chakra, its colour is blue and its quality is Divine Will, incorporating omnipotence, perfection, protection and faith. The perversions of the God quality include human will, the absence of energy, imperfection, un-protection and doubt. The Lord of the Ray is El Morya – one of Blavatsky’s guides, who is said to reside in Darjeeling in India.  

As the original information claimed to have been received by The Summit Lighthouse was in 1972, and David’s book was published in 1980 with Tame’s following four years later, one would expect greater consistency in the data. As it is, Tame’s argument for a gradual release of knowledge by the Masters becomes chronologically problematic – or perhaps William David was not in the loop.

**The Seven Rays Within the Teaching of George Gurdjieff**

George Gurdjieff, while living earlier than the timeframe of this chapter, is included here as his teachings – including those on the Seven Rays – have become increasingly influential over the past 40 years. Ouspensky’s writing explaining the system, while originally published in 1949, did not seem to catch the public imagination until the 1970s.

In order to explain his cosmology, Gurdjieff incorporated into his teaching elements of music theory that included the seven-note diatonic scale and the overtone series, whereby a number of upper partials are generated by each note in the scale. He claimed that “the seven-tone scale is the formula of a cosmic law which was worked out by ancient schools and applied to music”. By adopting the seven-note scale, Gurdjieff illustrated what he maintained were the two primary laws governing the unfolding of the universe: the **law of three** and the **law of seven** or the octave – both numbers being prominent in Blavatsky’s *The Secret Doctrine*.

Theosophists hold to the idea of a septenary universe, whether in terms of the subtle bodies of an individual, seven Root-Races, seven spheres, Seven Rays or the seven energy points or chakras. In terms of the colour theory used by many Theosophists, such as Steiner and Scriabin, as any high school physics student knows when white light passes through a

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797 Ibid., p. 277.
prism it will divide into seven colours, and that this spectrum can be formed from the three primary colors. This formula can be applied to our musical language: seven notes within the scale give rise to harmony that is triadic or based on the interval of the third. It should be noted that this theoretical model is based only on our Western ideas of scales and chords; the musical analogy therefore fits neatly into the septenary universe theory of all our authors, from Blavatsky to Gurdjieff.

In the law of three, Gurdjieff claims that every action and phenomenon, without exception, is the result of the simultaneous action of three forces: the positive, the negative and the neutral of matter that constitutes the universe.”.799 However, he disagreed with contemporary wisdom, which held that a vibration should proceed uninterruptedly. He argues that vibrations – whether ascending or descending – do not develop uniformly but tend towards periodical accelerations and retardations, which he calls the principal of the discontinuity of vibration.800

This can be demonstrated by using the example of an ascending major scale. If we suppose that the octave starts with 1000 vibrations per minute (1000 Hz) and call our starting point do, in an ascending scale the vibrations increase, in line with frequency, until we reach 2000 vibrations per minute (2000Hz); this will also be do – that is, do of the octave below. The distance between the two dos is then divided into seven unequal parts because, as Gurdjieff points out, the frequency of vibrations does not increase uniformly and is illustrated within the major scale characterised by its internal organisation of two whole tones (C-D-E) and a semi-tone (E-F), followed by three whole tones (G-A-B) and, if moving to upper do, a further semi-tone (B-C).

According to Gurdjieff, all human and natural progress takes place not by an even progression but with two discontinuities in every phrase or cycle. Relating this to the scale, these occur as the two semi-tones, mi-fa (E-F) and si-do (B-C). Progress through the whole tones, he says, is straightforward, but when the semi-tones are reached, development can be retarded or even reversed unless extra energy is introduced. Leaving the musical analogy and applying the idea to human development, this energy or “additional shock” can be accessed from the developing person themselves, or may come deliberately or accidentally from outside.801

In an ascending octave, the first semi-tone comes between mi and fa (E-F); therefore, according to Ouspensky, if corresponding additional energy is introduced at this

799 Ibid.
800 Ibid., p. 123.
point, the octave will develop smoothly to \(si\); however, between \(si\) and upper \(do\) it needs a much stronger additional shock for its right development then between \(mi\) and \(fa\), because the vibrations at this point of the octave are of a considerably higher pitch – so more energy is needed to overcome any obstacle.\(^{802}\)

The descending octave develops much more easily because the first semi-tone occurs immediately, upper \(do\) to \(si\), the extra energy often coming from what Gurdjieff calls “lateral vibrations evoked by \(do\)”. The scale proceeds on to \(fa\) without hindrance, but then needs a further “shock” between \(fa\) and \(mi\) though “considerably less strong” than between \(do\) and \(si\).\(^{803}\)

In Gurdjieff’s system, therefore, the two semi-tones represent points at which the progression of any process may be inhibited or deflected unless new sources of energy are introduced.\(^{804}\) Within this system, by analogy the ascending scale represents a model for one’s own deliberate growth, whereby one watches for those points requiring an additional shock. In the opposite direction, we are told, it represents a model for the descending levels of God’s work, which it is assumed is not as difficult as our own.\(^{805}\)

The problem that arises with this system is the same one that occurs with Blavatsky and others who follow her correspondences in The Secret Doctrine: why start on “C” or \(do\)? If Gurdjieff was serious about the seven-note scale being a formula for a “cosmic law that had been worked out by the ancients”, why did he not use the Greek Phrygian mode utilised by Plato in his Timaeus, which later became the First Mode or Dorian Mode of the medieval church? The answer may be that most European music over the past few centuries has been predominantly major/minor, with the major being based on the Ionian mode, with its intervallic system of tone, tone, semi-tone, tone, tone, tone, semi-tone, starting on “C” or \(do\). As was argued in Chapter 3, if one starts on another note – “D” or \(re\), for example – the whole system of relationships becomes compromised; this is the case for both Blavatsky and Gurdjieff. Godwin has questioned whether Gurdjieff would have used or invented a different scheme had he lived in another culture or era that used a different scale form.\(^{806}\)

Overlooking such problems, and evoking the symbolism of the Seven Rays used by Blavatsky and Alice Bailey, Gurdjieff tells us that the “big cosmic octave that reaches us

\(^{802}\) Ibid., p. 131.

\(^{803}\) Ibid., p. 132.

\(^{804}\) In diatonic music, semi-tones have a similar significance, being weak points in the scale where the influence of surrounding notes may determine whether they rise or fall.

\(^{805}\) Godwin, Harmonies of Heaven and Earth, p. 180.

\(^{806}\) Ibid., p. 181.
in the form of the ray of creation begins with the Absolute”, and that this is the first complete example of the law of octaves. He continues his explanation of a creation cosmology that is here given by Ouspensky:

The Absolute is the All. The All possessing full unity, full will and full consciousness, creates worlds within itself. The ray of creation begins with the Absolute. The consciousness creates worlds within itself, in this way beginning the descending world octave. The Absolute is the Do of this octave. The “interval” between Do and Si in this case is filled by the will of the Absolute. The process of creation is developed further by the force of the original impulse and an “additional shock”. Si passes into La, which for us is our star world, the Milky Way. La passes into sol, our sun, the solar system. Sol passes into Fa the Planetary world. And here between the planetary world as a whole and our earth occurs an “interval”. This means that the planetary radiations carrying various influences to the earth are not able to reach it, the earth reflects them. In order to fill the “interval” at this point of the ray of creation a special apparatus is created for receiving and transmitting the influences coming from the planets. This apparatus is organic life on earth. Organic life transmits to the earth all the influences intended for it and makes possible the further development and growth of the earth, Mi of the cosmic octave, and then of the moon or Re, after which follows another Do, Nothing. Between All and Nothing passes the ray of creation. 807

In using the symbolism of the Seven Rays, Gurdjieff is indicating that although the octave space can be conceived of as a ladder, it also works as a Pleroma or a spreading out in which all the differentiations of God’s power can manifest on all or different levels while emanating from the one source. In this way, regardless of one pitch being higher or lower then another, none can be regarded as superior to the other, for each has its own character and part to play in the unfolding of the musical universe. 808

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807 Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous*, p. 132.
Dane Rudhyar and the Rays

The idea of a Pleroma of sound is also important within the writings of Dane Rudhyar. The notion of the Seven Rays is explained with reference to the harmonic series, an ascending series of overtones emanating from a fundamental tone. He writes of tone being the fullness of vibratory space – what he calls “holistic resonance”. Rudhyar explains resonance as the impact of creative power, released either by divine or human will or emotions.\(^809\) However, this resonance is related across its range – similar to harmonics or overtones. Giving the example of a piano with all its keys struck together, Rudhyar says that this would be a symbol of cosmic chaos; however, a holistic resonance “implies ordered differentiation, and harmonization through interaction and interpenetration”.\(^810\) Therefore, if we transpose Rudhyar’s Pleroma of sound to the concept of the seven rays, we can see that both constitute an all-encompassing organisation of sounds or divine attributes, which through their interaction create a multiplicity of relationships on all levels of being. He argues that each relationship is characterised by its own tone, which actualises diverse aspects of the tone or fundamental of the whole Pleroma.\(^811\) This is a similar notion to that encountered with Von Dalberg in Chapter 2, in which each soul has its own tone, and with other souls creates a harmony. All, however, are said to emanate from the primordial “One”, with Rudhyar explaining that “in the beginning is the One, or the tonic in musical terms, in the conclusion is the Whole, the Pleroma whose soul quality is Tone”.\(^812\) He speculates that the Pythagorean experience of the Music of the Spheres could refer to the simultaneous hearing of the seven cosmic levels of Tone, to an immense septenary cosmic chord.\(^813\) Rudhyar’s writing, like Gurdjieff’s, is mystical, complicated and at times difficult to understand; however, it is full of references to the main tenets of Theosophy, including the musical analogy describing the Seven Rays.

The Chakras

The term “chakras” comes from the Sanskrit language, and means “wheels”. Chakras are said to be a series of energy centres or vortexes of psycho-spiritual energy, seven in number, that are located at points along the spinal column between the base of the spine.

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\(^{810}\) Ibid., p. 2.

\(^{811}\) Meyer, *Dane Rudhyar*, p. 2.

\(^{812}\) Ibid.

\(^{813}\) Ibid., p. 3.
and the top of the head. The concept is not new to the esoteric tradition, having been an
important part of Tantric yoga, but was adapted and modified by Theosophists such as
Leadbeater, who saw them as vortices in the etheric double as well as the astral and
mental levels. Being seven in number, they have been incorporated within various
tables of correspondences offered by our subject authors. Included would be the particular
chakra and its associated quality, colour, meaning, physical organ and gland, a note
within the major scale and a mantra, which when intoned is claimed to balance and
energise the chakra.

Rudhyar has the least to say on the chakras, stating only that they correlate to
“the much publicized seven rays”. This is not surprising, as his emphasis is primarily
on astrology and cosmic influence rather than the subtle influences within the physical
and mental bodies spoken of by Leadbeater. David Tame likewise limits his comments
first to the tables of correspondences, attributed to the Summit Lighthouse Organization,
that link the Chakras to the various qualities of the Seven Rays, and second to a table
showing a correlation between the rays and chakras to musical forms and families of
instruments. Ray 1, for example, is linked to the throat chakra, which is intended to focus
on Divine Will or Power, while the instruments said to be influencing this chakra are
from the brass family and music that energises this chakra is listed as marches – in
particular, Elgar’s Pomp and Circumstance numbers 1 and 4. The perverting of this
chakra is claimed to be activated by rock vocals and folk-rock vocals. Ray 2 is associated
with the crown chakra, focusing on Divine Wisdom; its instruments are the string family
and it is energised by symphonies while being perverted by jazz.

These correspondences would appear to represent the personal views of the
compiler and should be seen as highly subjective opinions. The source of the writings
derive from Elizabeth Clare Prophet’s Summit Lighthouse, which Tame accepts without
argument and, as with much of this type of material, is assessed in one of two ways:
either channelled, in a similar fashion to Blavatsky and Scott, or obtained clairvoyantly,
as with Leadbeater and Steiner. No empirical evidence can be presented in order to
confirm the claims and no objective assessment of what is being claimed can ever be
undertaken. Tame’s acceptance of the notion presented within these tables of

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815 Ibid.
816 For more on these relationships, see, McClellan, The Healing Forces of Music, pp. 65–68.
817 Rudhyar, Occult Preparations for a New Age, p. 63.
819 Ibid., p. 277.
correspondences, which argues that certain genres are harmful to the individual and society, remains consistent with the general view of all our subjects throughout this thesis, which is that popular styles of music – particularly those that have their origin in “inferior cultures” – possess the capacity to undermine and pervert the spiritual evolution and development of the listener.

William David refers to chakras in the context of Tantric Yoga. Showing his Theosophical credentials, he asserts that Tantra evolved from Lemuria, Atlantis and then moved to Tibet. While not going into detail on each individual chakra, he notes that through using sex and experiencing orgasms, we awaken the kundalini, the bass chakra, which in turn uses that primal energy to open the other chakras.  

Ted Andrews uses the chakras extensively in his Sacred Sounds. He regards them as the “primary mediators of all energy already in the body and coming into the body.” According to Andrews, the life-force energy flows through the subtle bodies into the chakras and is distributed to the nervous system and the endocrine system, which in turn sends the energy to the blood and organs of the physical body. The chakras, for Andrews, are therefore of vital importance to maintaining the health and well-being of the individual.

Within his system, which includes crystals and stones, Andrews designates a particular musical note, starting on “C” for the bass chakra. Each chakra is in turn linked to a part of the body – for example, the note “D” is said to oversee the spleen, affects the adrenal glands, stimulates creativity and can release past life information. Andrews advises the tuning of the body, a process in which various tuning forks are used. One is told to sound the fork then hold it in the area of the Chakra – for example, the throat – to create vibrational balance; as there are seven chakras in Andrews’s system, they are made to correspond to a given note from the major scale. Further Theosophical notions appear in Andrew’s work too, in his reference to the Astral Plane and the Devas in Devachan.

Randall McClellan writes extensively on the chakras, focusing on the healing properties of sound. His approach is more objective than those of other writers, and he is not afraid to question some of the general assumptions that are made concerning note–

820 David, The Harmonics of Sound, p. 22.
821 Andrews, Sacred Sound, p. 34.
822 Ibid., p.35.
823 Ibid., p. 207.
824 Ibid., p.186.
chakra correspondences, offering various examples of other writers that demonstrate they are in complete disagreement with each other.\(^{825}\)

Bernhardt also uses a system that includes the notes of the major scale, linking them to a specific chakra. Like Andrews, he begins with the note C, which he says is linked to the lower body; he places its exact position somewhere between the anus and the genitals.\(^{826}\) The correspondences on notes and colour used by Bernhardt are the same as those suggested by Blavatsky, Scott and Heline, and it is a fair assumption that he is using the same source, *The Secret Doctrine*. Bernhardt adds to his list an accompanying mantra, which he claims affects one’s consciousness and emotional state – for example, with the bass chakra the mantra LAM intoned as *Lammmm* on the note C is said to transform “fear into cosmic dust”.\(^{827}\)

Jonathan Goldman’s work contains many references to the chakra system, which he claims is crucial in balancing and healing the body. While acknowledging the note-to-chakra correlation of the other authors he puts more emphasis upon vowel sounds being intoned in order to activate each chakra. He presents a list of chakras and associated vowel sounds, along with the colour to be experienced.\(^{828}\) The colour table is at variance with the Blavatsky system, which is the most commonly used one. Goldman goes on to give examples of systems by two other authors, Randall McClellan and Kay Gardner, whose vowel–chakra correlations differ from his as well as each other.\(^{829}\) This, as has been raised earlier, raises the question of the validity of any of the correlations presented.

Goldman’s second book, *Shifting Frequencies*, reiterates much of the content of the first except that its emphasis is on changing consciousness and spiritual development. Although the book is claimed to be channelled from the Angel Shamael, it reads as if Shamael himself is writing, as he speaks of himself in the first person, with Goldman becoming relegated to a third-person participant. This leads to some questionable moments. For example, when discussing chakras, Shamael, speaking as an observer, recounts the story of one of Goldman’s experiences:

Jonathan remembers a time when a student came up to him and told him that his root Chakra resonated to the note C. Jonathan nodded his

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\(^{827}\) Ibid.
\(^{829}\) Ibid. pp. 122-123.
head and then asked, “Is this before or after meditation? Before or after food, and what food would you be eating? Before or after you have sex or run around the block?” It is Jonathan’s belief that all these factors and many more are able to affect our resonances, and we tend to agree.830

Because Jonathon “believes”, of course, does not make it true; however, one would hope that the Masters and Angels passing on knowledge from some Divine source could do better than “tend to agree”. As has been commented on before within this work, there seems to be a remarkable vagueness about many of the comments that come from these supposed all-knowing sources, putting the whole system in doubt. There are continuing epistemological questions that can be raised concerning the validity of any statement received clairvoyantly, some of which have been noted in previous chapters.

Despite most esotericists accepting the notion of chakras, the question must be asked as to why no chakra has ever been located, isolated or analysed by the medical or scientific community. They are not abstract spiritual things like the Rays, but are claimed to be energy centres operating within the body, and should therefore be locatable. Even assuming such things exist, the idea that we all resonate at the same pitch is unlikely. Assuming we resonate at different pitches, and this personal frequency could be proven, some frequencies may lie outside or between our Western tonal systems. The theory becomes even more problematic if one takes into account our scale being of European origin, probably starting as a four-note tetrachord or pentatonic scale. As the origin of the chakras is Indian, being first encountered in Hindu and Buddhist texts, their tone–chakra relationship would be from a different scale form completely. It could be argued that the idea of the seven chakras linked to the seven tones of the major scale and the seven colours of the spectrum fits the idea of a septenary universe a little too conveniently – why not a minor scale or chromatic, whole-tone or one of the modes?

It is surprising that none of the authors follows through with the idea that the note–chakra correlation might better be served by using the harmonic series, even though most make mention of it. The use of the harmonic series, which consists of the overtones generated by any one note, would make irrelevant what the fundamental pitch of an individual was, as the other six chakras would be activated by overtones related to that particular fundamental,

830 Goldman, Shifting Frequencies, p. 11.
thereby resolving the intervallic problems related to the use of the major scale with its fourth and seventh strongly requiring resolution.

While areas such as karma and reincarnation are accepted by all of the authors presented in this chapter, being part of the general esoteric paradigm, it should be remembered that they are concepts that developed within the Eastern tradition and go back millennia. As Blavatsky orientated the esoteric tradition towards the East, Theosophy accepted karma and reincarnation, incorporating them into its general philosophy while adding little that was original. Although some, such as Steiner and Heline, have in the past argued in favour of musical geniuses being the reincarnation of musical souls, this concept of karma and reincarnation is not widely discussed within present-day literature on esoteric and speculative theories of music.

The authors discussed in this chapter are only a few of many who in their writings explore fully, or make passing comment on, speculative and esoteric ideas about music – often including one or more Theosophical concepts. Another example is Steven Halpern, whose *Sound Health* explores spirituality and music therapy, giving examples of music to alleviate the symptoms of various illnesses or conditions. R.J. Stewart has written a popular work entitled *Music and the Elemental Psyche*, which claims to be a practical guide to music and changing consciousness. While being in the esoteric mainstream and accepting the three fundamental propositions outlined in the Introduction, these books show no links to Theosophy whatsoever. Yet a study of the literature shows that a majority of authors concerned with speculative musical ideas acknowledge some form of Theosophical influence. Depending on the primary focus of the work, certain aspects of Theosophical teaching can more readily be identified than others. Some claim the Masters have supplied the information for the work, while others focus more on music as a healing modality – in which case, the Rays and chakras predominate. However, the concept of spiritual evolution and a holistic universe seems to be accepted by all.

While it is true that the beliefs of all of the authors discussed would contain influences stemming from a variety of sources throughout their lives, the influence of Theosophy and its teachings can be recognised in various degrees within their work. This could also be argued for the alternative spirituality community in general, with Theosophical notions running like an underground current through all aspects of esoteric philosophy, including those speculative ideas concerning the metaphysics of vibration, tone and music.
This dissertation has drawn together those strands of speculative and esoteric thought concerning the art of music that can be shown to have at their core the influence of the teachings of Madame Blavatsky and the Theosophical Society. Three research questions were asked:

- What influence did the teachings of the Theosophical Society have upon esoteric and speculative theories of music during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries?
- How is this influence recognised in the work of those creative artists who accepted Theosophical precepts?
- Considering the claim that the Theosophical Society and its teachings were a major influence on the so-called New Age movement during the latter part of the twentieth century, is this influence still identifiable within the philosophical framework and writing of New Age authors from the late 1960s and early 1970s up to and including the present?

A further research objective was to evaluate and question some of the claims made by the chosen subjects within the context of orthodox music theory and the current academic position relating to the history of music.

I have argued that, while Blavatsky did not write a large amount or undertake any detailed theoretical discussion on the actual topic of music, the influence of her overall teachings on occultists within the music community was significant. I have also shown that those authors and musicians who accepted the notions of the Theosophical Society, while maintaining the core components of the earlier esoteric music tradition dating back to the ancient Greeks, reinterpreted earlier concepts as well as adding new ideas that had their genesis in Blavatsky’s teachings and cosmology, which she outlined in *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*.

Blavatsky’s cosmology posited the evolution of the soul over many eons, and necessitated the adoption of Eastern concepts, including karma and reincarnation. This
evolution was said to take place through a series of lives spanning seven specific stages or Root-Races that were overseen and guided by advanced beings known in Theosophy as Adepts or Masters. Further ideas that were shown to be prominent within Theosophical literature, while not original, included the notion of a “Golden Age” — such as existed in Atlantis; the universal memory bank known as the Akashic Record, which Theosophists argue can be accessed by clairvoyants; the notion of the chakra system involving energy centres within the body; and a system of correspondences linking tone, colour, parts of the body and astrological symbols.

While differences in emphasis on certain notions are evident within the writings of various Theosophists, all the authors examined in this thesis were shown to accept the idea that “All is One” — a holistic approach suggesting that everything is an emanation from one source or Divine Mind. This concept of emanation from one source giving rise to the idea of a holistic universe helped to make Theosophy one of the primary influences within the counter-culture and other various alternative spiritualities that arose during the 1960s, now known collectively under the umbrella term of the “New Age” movement.

It was shown that while some of the above ideas were not new to the West, having been introduced earlier by a growing general interest in Eastern thought and movements such as Transcendentalism, Theosophy developed a systematic doctrine that included concepts from both the Western occultic tradition and Eastern mysticism. Blavatsky’s writings incorporated them into a wider synthesis of religion, science and philosophy, a point made clear in the subtitle of *The Secret Doctrine*. The general nineteenth-century fascination with all things Eastern therefore helped to generate a degree of popularity for the Theosophical Society and its teachings when it was formed in 1875. Other earlier Western influences on Blavatsky’s thought have also been noted, such as the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg, Franz Mesmer and the Spiritualist movement.

I have argued that within the works of our subject authors, a broad range of interpretation can be seen to have been applied to the various Theosophical notions; however, some concepts — such as the Root-Races — seem to have lost their importance and are seldom mentioned by later authors. However, regardless of the differences in their emphasis and interpretation, all the authors can be said to exhibit a family likeness in their overall thinking, and all fit within the framework of Faivre’s definition of “esoteric”, with his suggested components of identification discussed in the Introduction. In other
words, they all display a common “form of thought”\textsuperscript{831}. In the pages that follow, a brief summary of the findings and conclusions of major Theosophical themes will be undertaken.

**Evolution**

I have argued that an important aspect of Blavatsky’s Theosophical teaching concerns the concept of evolution; this is not Darwinian evolution, but it does incorporate a physical aspect. Physical evolution in Theosophical teaching takes place over eons within the progression of Root-Races, but ultimately the primary purpose of evolution is spiritual. This evolution of the spirit is said to be preceded by a period of involution whereby spirit descends into matter and the physical world before starting its journey back to spirit. This concept was shown to be recognisable within Scriabin’s cosmological scheme, to be incorporated in his *Mysterium*, and is also prominent in Edmond Bailly’s work.

Steiner maintained that human evolution and the perfectibility of the soul were based on the individual’s experience of tone, including various musical intervals that changed as the soul descended further into matter before making its ascent back to spirit, the intervals thereby showing the level of development of the individual soul. Heline, demonstrating a degree of musical elitism, argued that the degree of spiritual evolution of any person or race could be discerned by the music listened to or produced. Cyril Scott likewise saw the human soul evolving with the help of “good” music, and wrote at length about the guidance given by the Masters in this endeavour. Most of the authors in Chapter 8 made specific mention of the soul’s evolution and the role played by music in that process. David Tame, writing in the same vein as Scott and Heline, makes a clear linkage between music and behaviour, as does Patrick Bernhardt. All the authors in Chapter 8 place music as important to spiritual growth although not all are prepared to argue the merits of any particular style or genre.

The role of music in spiritual evolution can be seen as related to the fundamental propositions that claimed music acts as a moral determinate. Within the Western tradition, this notion was shown to have its origin in the speculations of Pythagoras and Plato, and was later articulated by d’Olivet, who argued that “to change morals you must change the music”\textsuperscript{832}. Scriabin saw art in general as a sacrament that had a positive


\textsuperscript{832} Quoted from d’Olivet, *Music Explained*, p. 5.
influence on the soul, while Bailly suggested strife and evil had been introduced into the
world, to the detriment of evolution, by the dissonance between B and B♭ that occurs
within his cosmic scale.

Most of the discussion on the merits of music being a moral determinate are found
within the works of twentieth-century authors such as Cyril Scott, Corinne Heline and
David Tame, who in their lifetime witnessed the development of popular genres such as
jazz and rock. The issue was only of philosophical interest to earlier Theosophists, such
as Blavatsky, Steiner, Besant and Leadbeater, whose thought processes seem to embrace
only music of the Western classical tradition when discussing the topic. The most strident
criticism of popular idioms such as jazz or rock comes from Scott, Heline and Tame, all
of who equated jazz and rock with “inferior” races. Tame argues that the origins of rock
and jazz are Voodoo and African music and, due to the “primitive” nature of such musical
styles, they encourage immorality and crime. Scott saw jazz as being the work of spiritual
“dark forces”, resembling the music of “primitive savages”. Heline managed, through her
clairvoyance, to link jazz with Lemurian fire ceremonies, while Bernhardt wrote of the
“mind-destroying” rhythm of “disco music”.833

It is possible to recognise within Theosophical writing, from Blavatsky to Cyril
Scott, the existence of an inherently elitist and racist attitude, which seems more
pronounced when the topics of music or the arts in general are discussed. While their
comments must be considered purely subjective, the views of those authors must be seen
in the context of both the social attitudes of the period and the personal preferences of the
authors rather than the inherent spiritual qualities of any musical or artistic genre. On a
number of occasions during this thesis, it has been shown that Theosophists, by the nature
of the spiritual quest undertaken, considered themselves to be among the elite and
intellectual classes, and any reference to music and its positive role in spiritual evolution
was therefore almost always with reference to music of the Western classical tradition.

It could be argued that all of the subjects discussed in this study – in particular
the Theosophists up to and including Scott – have in common (apart from what appears
to be various degrees of mental instability) a need to belong to an exclusive group that
not only attractsthe attention of the Gods or Masters, but compels them to impart great
wisdom or hidden knowledge. This, of course, sets our occultists apart from the
masses, feeding the grandiose opinion of their own self-importance as highly evolved

individuals whose purpose on this planet is to save humanity by being a conduit between the Gods and humans.

The bias against popular genres is not shown in the writings of the majority of New Age authors, probably due to their having grown up with the music; however, while attitudes have been modified considerably with present-day authors, due to the general changes in societal attitudes, a bias can still be observed against some rock styles such as the more extreme styles of heavy metal. While any criticism of a genre is of a personal and subjective nature, it could be argued that certain forms of music – perhaps due to volume or lyrical content – would not be conducive to spiritual growth or overall health. However, without any definitive scientific proof as to the merits or otherwise – other than information received clairvoyantly – the criticisms made of supposedly inferior music, racially or culturally, by writers including Scott, Heline and Tame, rather than demonstrate a degree of spiritual awareness, could be said to show the opposite.

The Masters

Within this research, the concept of the Masters, Mahatmas or Adepts has been prominent; they are claimed to be the guides to humanity in the journey back to spirit, and they play a pivotal role in the cosmological system of Blavatsky and Theosophy in general, Blavatsky herself claimed to be inspired by the Masters, as did the later Theosophist Alice Bailey, who wrote a number of books channelled by a Master she called D.K., or The Tibetan. In this thesis, it has been argued that the Masters can be seen in the tradition of the Judaic/Christian concept of Angels, Swedenborg’s spirit guides, the spirits of the Spiritualist movement and, in the present day, the pilots of UFOs. All come from somewhere “out there”, and act as guides with messages from the Gods or, in Theosophy, the Great White Brotherhood. It was noted that in early Theosophical literature, the Masters – or Lords of the Flame, as they were sometimes referred to – came from Mars and Venus. Likewise, Gurdjieff – although attempting to distance himself from the main Theosophical stream – also placed his Masters on Mars and Venus prior to their descent to Earth.

The extra-terrestrial origin of the Masters had conveniently been dropped by the mid-twentieth century, being replaced by remote locations on Earth such as the mountains of Tibet or, for one ardent Brisbane (Australia) Theosophist, Springbrook Mountain in south-east Queensland. However, a number of present-day Theosophically inspired writers have them back as extra-terrestrials from space; Bernhardt, for example, refers to
space cousins and adds another dimension to the extra-terrestrial connection by claiming
that the Atlanteans came to Earth from another planet – a claim that would present
problems for Blavatsky’s scheme of Root-Race evolution. The image of the Ascended
Master remains the inspiration behind many of the extra-terrestrial visitors that are
prominent in UFO religions, prompting the psychologist Carl Jung to refer to extra-
terrestrials as “technological angels”. 834

While the reference to the Masters is limited with Scriabin – all things supposedly
being created by himself – there is secondary reference to him being “consecrated by
Mahatmas”, which indicates that as the influence of Theosophy on his cosmological
scheme grew, he abandoned the idea of himself being God and seems to have grudgingly
accepted the idea of great initiates operating outside of himself. However, there is no
evidence to show he was a firm believer in the idea.

Steiner, as a prominent Theosophist, accepted the idea but does not mention
specific Masters; he writes much more on the Devas and Devachan, the spiritual home of
the Devas. Steiner claimed that music was the product of the Devas, and composers
brought to the physical plane copies of the music they heard in Devachan. Devas in
Blavatsky’s hierarchy are lesser nature spirits working under the guidance of the Masters,
so it must be assumed Steiner was not in complete agreement with Blavatsky on the
question of Masters or with Cyril Scott who placed Devas down the order in his
cosmological hierarchy.

Of the primary authors in this thesis, it is Heline and Scott who most fully
embrace the concept of Masters. Both claimed to be channels for a specific Master.
Heline channelled the Madonna who, while not being in the forefront of Theosophical
Masters (or Mistresses), operated in the same way by being a channel for Divine
knowledge to aid humanity in its journey of spiritual evolution. Scott claimed he was the
channel for Koot Hoomi, who earlier had used Nelsa Chapman as his channel. Unless we
are to accept the notion of Masters as fact and not a figment of the imagination, I have
suggested that Chapman should be seen as the true author of Scott’s Music: Its Secret
Influence Throughout the Ages, for if Scott’s claims are correct and he wrote down
verbatim that which was dictated, his role was merely as a secretary, and his own claim to
authorship therefore becomes dubious – as does the validity of his entire theory of history
and music. It was noted that it was not until after Chapman’s death that Scott developed
his own personal relationship with the Master K.H.

834 Jung, Flying Saucers, p. 10.
Most of the subjects of Chapter 8 accept the notion of Masters, especially where clairvoyance is involved. Tame and Rudhyar make frequent reference to Masters and the Brotherhood – but only when referring to general Theosophical teaching; there is no evidence or claim of personal communication on their part. Ted Andrews makes only one reference in relation to the Masters by claiming the syllable “OM” is a link to the Great White Brotherhood. William David claimed direct communication with the master known as The Tibetan, or D.K., who is claimed to be both one of Blavatsky’s authorities and the channel for Alice Bailey, while Jonathon Goldman stepped outside the traditional hierarchy, having the Archangel Shamael as his guide; indeed, it is Shamael himself who claims to be the author of the works, commenting on Goldman in the third person.

This thesis has argued that the concept of the Master or Adept, while still popular with Theosophists, has mutated within the New Age movement from the original Blavatskian idea. The Masters have gone full circle from the original visitors from space to dwellers in remote places to spirit guides, and now for many Theosophists and New Age individuals back to visitors from space or, for many current New Agers, angels. The communication with these beings is claimed to be either direct visitation or clairvoyant, therefore making any form of verification from the scientific or academic standpoint impossible. As so much of Theosophical literature is claimed to be channelled or received clairvoyantly, the veracity of any of its assertions must therefore be open to question. While the experiences of communication of the contactees demonstrate a similarity of style or “form of thought”, no convincing evidence for the existence of the Masters has been produced. Therefore, until a Master, Angel or space cousin is subjected to an open debate or press conference, it must be assumed that the messages received from Blavatsky and her numerous followers, including Besant, Leadbeater, Steiner, Heline, Scott and Goldman, are no more than figments of the imagination supporting the subjective notions of the individual authors. It could be argued that all religious or spiritual philosophies are ultimately “figments of the imagination” however, through the influence of certain strong personalities or accidents of history some become more accepted and mainstream and therefore more widely accepted than others.

Root-Races and Atlantis

The idea of human evolution through a series of developmental stages known as Root-Races, overseen by the Ascended Masters, was discussed in Chapter 3. The concept was an important part of early Theosophical teaching, having a prominent place in the
writings of Blavatsky, Besant and Leadbeater, with the latter claiming to have clairvoyantly observed the use of music in the rituals of the third Root-Race Lemurians and the Atlanteans, who constituted the fourth Root-Race. Scriabin accepted the notion of Root-Races, conceiving his *Mysterium* with the purpose of accelerating the rate of human spiritual evolution from its current fifth-race position to the ultimate seventh within the period of the performance of the work.

Rudolf Steiner was shown to incorporate the idea of Root-Races into his cosmological scheme, claiming the music of the various epochs was dominated by specific intervals – Atlantis, for example, by the seventh. Steiner explained human evolution as the descent of the individual soul into matter, and through a process of purification made the journey back again to spirit. He saw the cosmos as inherently musical, arguing that we are created out of the cosmos according to musical laws. While this is in accordance with the ancient Greek idea of a musical universe that was said to be provable mathematically, the intervals of the Pythagoreans and Plato were essentially based on concords, of the perfect intervals of the fourth, fifth and octave.

I argued that Steiner’s ideas encounter problems when he allocates the interval of the seventh as the primary interval to Atlantean music without designating the type of seventh, major, minor or diminished – all of which are discords requiring resolution. Perhaps the Atlanteans didn’t hear them as discords; however, a further problem is one of tuning. I have shown that Pythagorean or equal temperament tuning was never addressed either by Steiner or any of our subject authors in their tables of correspondences. The period itself in which Steiner was living could also be seen to present a fundamental problem to his evolutionary theories involving intervals. Presumably writing for his own time and the next hundred years or so, he claimed that we are currently living in the experience of the Third, Major and Minor, and that as we evolve we will experience the interval of the second, the assumption being that we reach perfection with the octave. It has been argued that Steiner seems to have missed the Viennese avant-garde movement that was taking place all around him, in which intervals of the second as well as tone clusters were already an integral part of the harmonic language. He also seems not to have been aware of music of the East, with its microtonal emphasis.

Corrine Heline accepted the notion of Root-Races and, like Steiner, linked the development of the soul to music. She used her supposed clairvoyance in order to gain insight into the past, claiming that the rhythms of jazz were similar to Lemurian fire rituals, which it could be argued is a reinterpretation of Besant and Leadbeater’s
comments on Lemurian music. Cyril Scott also embraced the idea of Root-Races as well as the bias against popular music and jazz, which he claimed to be decadent, having been “put through by the Dark Forces”.\textsuperscript{835} Scott claimed it created sexual excess among young people, which is why we live in a “vulgar and blatant age”.\textsuperscript{836} Scott’s acceptance of music as a moral determinate for good or ill begins with his mention of its use in Atlantis. The characteristics of Atlantean music, according to Scott, were later absorbed by Javanese music, which is contrary to Helene, Steiner and earlier d’Olivet, who claimed Atlantean music was the forerunner to Chinese music. It is interesting to note that a great deal of Eastern music is pentatonic and uses the interval of the fifth frequently. Therefore, Steiner’s Atlantean interval of the seventh does not seem to have been continued in either Java or China, which is another piece of evidence – if evidence were needed – undermining Steiner’s claim.

It has been shown that unless they are directly quoting each other, no two Theosophical authors give the same description of Atlantis, its music or which country benefited from its musical influence. While Steiner writes of the Seventh dominating Atlantean music, Scott and Heline ignore the subject completely, concentrating on the function of music within that society, which in their view was ritualistic and therapeutic. The question therefore remains – as it does for all of the Theosophical notions discussed – if there is an objective reality and all clairvoyants are assessing the same information, from the Akashic records or otherwise, should all accounts not be the same?

Dane Rudhyar is the only author in Chapter 8 who makes definite reference to the Root-Races; all of the other authors discussed in that chapter mention Atlantis, not in relation to Root-Races but rather as a metaphor for either a Golden Age or as an example of the destruction that awaits humanity if we do not seek a more spiritual path. It would therefore appear that the original notion of Root-Races put forward by Blavatsky has not survived into the twenty-first century, and that other models of spiritual evolution such as a coming New Age or Age of Aquarius have been adopted. These models are less reliant upon physical evidence for proof, and place less emphasis on any racial characteristics. From a musical perspective, they are more eclectic and embracing of all genres – including music of various ethnicities – resolving the argument of what constitutes good or bad music. Music is considered by most contemporary authors as a personal choice that can be utilized for a multitude of purposes, including therapeutic, ritualistic and

\textsuperscript{835} Scott, \textit{Music}, p. 142.
\textsuperscript{836} Ibid., p. 143.
spiritual growth. This new approach is in keeping with much of contemporary Theosophical teaching, which has shown a willingness to adapt as scientific and technological progress makes old ideas untenable.

All of the subjects of this thesis accepted the Eastern notions introduced into Theosophy by Blavatsky, such as karma and reincarnation. These remain central to the notion of the evolution of the soul, which it is said can only take place over great periods of time. The idea of reincarnation was shown to be important to Steiner’s concept of genius, in which musical souls were born into specific families with the appropriate physical characteristics, an idea that was rejected in Chapter 5 of this thesis. Steiner’s ideas concerning genius had earlier been articulated by Besant and Leadbeater, who thought that this process was necessary for that soul’s ability to develop. Heline was shown to embrace the idea of reincarnation, but goes on to suggest that composers have extra-terrestrial origins while Cyril Scott personalised the notion, claiming to be the reincarnation of Chopin and his first wife the reincarnation of Chopin’s lover, George Sands.

Another Eastern borrowing that has survived into the present is the notion of the Akashic Record, in which all things past, present and future can be accessed. Scriabin, Bailly and Steiner noted that they did not compose anything original, but merely read or heard what was already out there. While this is not articulated explicitly by later authors, there are hints to suggest that their creativity stems from a common source that is “out there”, and then often explained using modern scientific thinking such as quantum theory, leading back to the notion of a holistic universe where all is one.

**Astrology in Theosophy**

Astrology is an ancient discipline with a prominent place in most religious and spiritual systems. It plays a prominent part in the ideas of all the subjects of this thesis, except for Scriabin, who does not appear to include any reference to astrology in his work. Most of the authors created complex tables of correspondences, including astrological signs, planets, tones, colours, day of the week, and so on. The seven-note diatonic scale was linked to the seven heavenly bodies of the ancients while the twelve signs of the zodiac were each designated a note from the chromatic scale.

Heline’s tables of correspondences are centred more on the correlation between star sign and health, advising which tone to use for specific ailments, while Steiner was shown to be more concerned with the correlation between tone and colour. The problem
found with Heline’s tables of correspondences related to the number of inconsistencies between her various books. It was noted that different star signs were designated for the same disease, likewise enharmonic notes used in the same scale presented problems – for example, A# and Bb were shown to represent or cure completely different ailments. Overall, a lack of theoretical musical understanding seemed to be evident in all of Heline’s work, a problem found in Steiner’s work too. While many Theosophists used Blavatsky’s table of correspondences as a reference point, some – like Scriabin – were shown to differ from her in their correlation of tone and colour.

It was noted in Chapter 8 that due to the disparate nature of the New Age Movement, there is very little agreement between the authors within their tables of correspondences; as most are claimed to be from clairvoyant experience or direct communication with some outside entity, this makes all of them unreliable. It was also evident that while some care was given to the vibrational rate of colour, the same care did not exist within the musical scale, especially in relation to tuning; while Pythagoras was often mentioned, his mathematical calculations in relation to the perfect intervals were ignored, with equal temperament being the accepted system.

Astrology was identified as being important to Gustav Holst, even if he did regard it as a hobby. The Planet Suite demonstrated this interest, and I suggested that, as the work was septenary in form and was described by Holst himself as dealing with the “seven influences of destiny and constituents of our spirit”, it was more suggestive of an astrological inspiration than astronomical.\textsuperscript{837} Holst’s Theosophical connections were noted as coming from his stepmother; however, while he did not join the Society or openly profess to be a Theosophist, he did have a great interest in Buddhist and Hindu thought. He was also a contributor to the Theosophical magazine, \textit{Contact}, and many of his close friends were Theosophists. While Holst could be said to be non-committal, he demonstrates in his thought processes a “family resemblance” with Theosophy, and esoterically could be said to embrace Faivre’s “form of thought”.

\textbf{The Septenary Universe}

It was noted in Chapter 3 that the number 7 was prominent in Blavatsky’s writings, as it had been earlier with Fabre d’Olivet. The number 7 in Theosophy equated to the layers of the body and its surrounding auric field, the number of Root-Races, colours of the

spectrum and the notes of the diatonic scale. It was also the number of the Seven Rays or attributes, the seven Chakras or energy centres in the body, and was applied to the seven planets – assuming one did not count the Earth and Pluto, the latter having not been discovered when the main teachings of Theosophy were being formulated.

The teachings concerning the Seven Rays were developed primarily by Alice Bailey, but formed an important part of all later Theosophists’ thinking, including the system of George Gurdjieff. They were shown to be important in the writing of Heline and Rudhyar, and form part of the table of correspondences of all the authors of Chapter 8. The seven notes of the musical scale made music an obvious subject to include within tables of correspondences, and the importance of the note/colour/ray/chakra combination still has resonance in the present within occultic, New Age and various other movements advocating alternative spiritualties.

**Thought Forms**

Blavatsky’s assertion that “thought is matter” still informs the view of many contemporary Theosophists. The notion of thought taking form or impacting on matter has survived to the present, due to there being some demonstrable scientific evidence to support the idea – even if it is controversial. In Chapter 3 it was shown that researchers such as Hans Jenny had undertaken much work using photography to demonstrate the effect of vibration or sound on different physical mediums. More recently, Masaru Emoto has produced a collection of photographs that demonstrate the effect of human thought on ice crystals. Emoto was shown to use the medium of music in many of his experiments to create crystals of various geometric shapes – in much the same way as the experiments of Ernest Chaldni in the eighteenth century. This concept was applied to music by Besant and Leadbeater, who argued that sound was always associated with colour and created form, which they demonstrated using paintings representing the clairvoyant visions of Leadbeater. The notion appeared in Scott’s writing when he claimed that “according to its form and colour can be gauged the spiritual value of the composition”. Likewise, Geoffrey Hodgson continued the work of Besant and Leadbeater in producing paintings of his clairvoyant impressions of a range of musical compositions.

The validity of music creating thought forms or energy patterns is not accepted as a proven fact by the scientific community at present, due in part to the unreliability of the claims of clairvoyants. Besant herself had some reservations concerning the assertions of

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clairvoyants, at one point casting doubt on whether *music forms* can technically be classified as thought-forms at all.\(^{839}\) Despite the non-acceptance by orthodox science, the concept of thought-forms applied to music is still popular within Theosophical and New Age thinking.

**Summary**

As mentioned above, Theosophy became a major influence upon the New Age movement, and it is this movement – with its disparate parts – that has absorbed Theosophical ideas. Music is an important part of the festivals and rituals of New Agers, also being used as a primary aid for meditation, healing and spiritual growth. While a survey of new literary works by Theosophists and New Agers will show many references relating to all the topics listed above, some ideas – like Scott’s theory of history, the intervention of Masters or Adepts and the evolutionary ideas using music claimed by Rudolf Steiner – have become less popular, and for many authors are almost completely ignored. However, it should be noted that Steiner’s ideas involving music and movement as an aid to health are still current, and form an important and valuable part of the curriculum of the Waldorf Schools.

While the speculative theories of music have had little impact or influence on the great majority of “orthodox” musicians and musicologists today, within the world of those musicians who subscribe to alternative spiritualities and esotericism in general, the influence of Theosophical ideas can still be recognised. I have also argued that an important component of this world-view is Faivre’s definition of the term “esoterie”, which he argues is a “form of thought”; this definition has been used throughout this thesis. His definition includes the use of correspondences – symbolic or actual; the idea of “Living Nature”; imagination and mediation, which when linked to correspondences imply the possibility of mediation between the higher and lower worlds; and the path of regeneration and purification.\(^{840}\) All of Faivre’s points fit easily into the general Theosophical paradigm.

This thesis concludes by arguing that in the present one must look beyond the lodges of the Theosophical Society and its members to recognise and appreciate the influences that have permeated speculative and metaphysical ideas about music, and look to the wider more disparate New Age movement and the various alternative spiritualties

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\(^{839}\) Besant and Leadbeater, *Thought Forms*, p. 67.

that emerged during the last third of the twentieth century. As has been shown, it is within the broader paradigm of the New Age movement that those esoteric ideas concerning music – from Blavatsky to Scott and beyond – have taken root and flourished. They are not always in the same form, and often have different emphasis and are sometimes hardly recognisable; however, under the surface of many present-day esoteric theories concerning the metaphysics of music, the ideas can be shown to have at their core the influence of Theosophy.
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