



Music of the Sky: An Anthology of Spiritual Poetry

Organized into three universal dimensions of spiritual life, the awareness of suffering and death, the experience of the depth of compassion and love, and the knowledge of the unity of the transcendent and immanent Real, *Music of the Sky* collects short poems from Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Islamic, and Native American traditions. Meant neither as an historical survey of spiritual poetry, nor as a definitive collection of essential poems, the reader may open this book at any page, at any time, in virtually any situation, traveling or at rest. The truth and beauty of these poems are certain to provide a source of inspiration for countless generations.

The short poems in this book reflect the spiritual insights of some of the greatest poets, saints, and sages known to Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Islamic, and Native American traditions. Their voices rise above the outward limitations of sect and creed into a single chorus affirming the deeply human need for the Sacred. The words of these poets underline the great and universal challenge of facing suffering and death, the boundless compassion and love which touches all life, and the knowledge and unity of the transcendent and immanent Real. This book is an inexhaustible well of light to carry along the way.

What is being said about Music of the Sky

"There are books one hardly has to open to know they are of highest quality. This is one of those treasure troves. One has to sit down, stop hurrying for a while and allow the music of noble souls to replace the noises of our electrified lives."

Frederick Franck, editor, author, artist, and humanitarian

"Poetry is truly the language of the gods. The modern world has usurped and sentimentalized this spiritual media. It is wonderful to find in up to date collection that brings back the original purpose and meaning of this art form. One is grateful to those who have collected and presented to us this wonderful collection that draws its sources, not only from the great traditions, but also from individuals who spontaneously speak to us of truth and beauty."

- **Rama Coomaraswamy**, editor of *The Essential Ananda K. Coomaraswamy*

"The editors of this delightful and revealing volume have brought together a selection of religious poetry, rich in its variety. Drawing from many saints and sages from around the world, they enable us, at our leisure, to peer into the throbbing heart of the universal human spirit which yearns to know the source of its life and meaning."

- **Alfred Bloom**, author of *Shinran's Gospel of Pure Grace*,

"*Music of the Sky* edited by Laude & McDonald is a golden treasury of spiritual poems...It is a book that needs to be read, re-read, and read again and again."

- **Prof. Ishwar Harris**, the College of Wooster

World Wisdom



A Sample of the Poetry from *Music of the Sky*

Lord, I am like to Mistletoe,
Which has no root, and cannot grow,
Or prosper, but by that same tree
It clings about; so I by Thee.

—Robert Herrick

One in All,
All in One—
If only this is realized,
No more worry about your not being perfect!

—Seng-ts'an

Other Publication Information

- ❖ *Music of the Sky* contains nearly 150 poems from some of the best known spiritual poets of all time, and contains an introduction by noted scholar Patrick Laude.
- ❖ *Music of the Sky* is scheduled for publication in Fall 2004 and has an expected price of \$16.95.

About the Editors of *Music of the Sky*

Barry McDonald



Barry McDonald's approach to the world's religions has been formed by a combination of academic study and first-hand contact with various sacred traditions throughout the world. In 1973 he spent six months in the Middle East, which initiated an ongoing study of the world's great religions, followed by travels to Asia, North Africa, Europe, and the American West. He was closely associated with Frithjof Schuon for almost 20 years. Thomas Yellowtail, the venerable Crow medicine man and Sun Dance chief, adopted McDonald into the Crow tribe.

McDonald has edited *Every Branch in Me: Essays on the Meaning of Man* (2002), and *Seeing God Everywhere: Essays on Nature and the Sacred* (2003). His poetry has appeared in such journals as *CrossCurrents*, *Sacred Web*, and *Sufi*.

Patrick Laude



Patrick Laude was born on December 23, 1958 in Lannemezan, Hautes Pyrénées, France, of Gascon and Basque stock. He took an undergraduate degree in History and a graduate degree in Philosophy at Paris-Sorbonne while being a Fellow at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris (1979-1982). His academic career took him to the United States where he obtained a Ph.D. in French literature in 1985, specializing in poetry and mystical literature.

He is the author of numerous articles and several books dealing with the relationship between mysticism, symbolism, and literature, as well as important spiritual figures such as Jeanne Guyon, Simone Weil, Louis Massignon, and Frithjof Schuon. His works include *Approches du Quétisme* (Tübingen, 1992), *Massignon intérieur* (L'Age d'Homme, Paris-Lausanne, 2001), *The Way of Poetry* (Oneonta Philosophy Studies, New York, 2001) and, as co-editor, *Dossier H Frithjof Schuon* (L'Age d'Homme, Paris-Lausanne, 2001). He has been on the Faculty of Georgetown University, in Washington DC, since 1991.

Contributors of poems in Music of the Sky

Some of the notable contributors of the poems contained in *Music of the Sky* are:

HAN SHAN (COLD MOUNTAIN): a 7th century Chinese Buddhist layman of the T'ang period who wrote many poems about his solitary hermit life on Mount Han-shan and became a celebrated figure in the Ch'an/Zen tradition. He and his friend Shih-te are renowned for their eccentric wisdom and their search for enlightenment.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE (1861–1941): the renowned Bengali poet received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913, primarily for his work *Gitanjali* (Song Offerings), from which the poems in this collection are chosen. Each poem of Tagore's is a clear and lyrical expression of the metaphysical insight of a great soul, whose best work many in India view as a kind of holy book.

YUNUS EMRE: popular Turkish bard of the 13th century whose poetry is prized for its ability to express highly intellectual concepts in the simple diction of everyday spoken Turkish. For centuries his poetry has been recited by both learned scholars and illiterate peasants. He is especially revered by members of the Kizilbash Dervish brotherhoods, who fomented a revolt against feudal tyranny, and by many of the village bards who delight in showing several "tombs" of the legendary bard to tourists.

RUMI (1207–1273): a revered Sufi Master and founder of the Turkish-based Mevlavi order of "whirling dervishes." He is one of the greatest spiritual poets of the Persian language — and certainly one of the greatest in any language. His vast body of poetry includes the lengthy epic, the *Mathnawi*, which for some takes on an importance second only to the Koran itself. He also wrote more than three thousand lyrics and odes, many of which came to him while he was in a state of mystical ecstasy.

ANGELUS SILESIUS (1624–1677): Johann Scheffler was born to Protestant parents in the Silesian capital of Breslau, seven years after the Thirty Years' War began unsettling Europe. At the age of 29, after graduating from the University of Padua, he converted to Catholicism and took the name Angelus Silesius. His poetic work, *The Cherubic Wanderer*, prolongs the line of Christian gnosis represented by Meister Eckhart and also incorporates ideas from the German Protestant "theosophist" Jacob Böhme.

JOHN DONNE (1572–1631): Anglican minister and the foremost member of the "metaphysical" school of poets, which included George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, Andrew Marvell, and Henry Vaughan, all of whom were influenced by Donne.

EMILY DICKINSON (1830–1886): living most of her life as a recluse in her family home in Amherst, Massachusetts, and dressing only in white, her poems were almost completely unknown during her lifetime. She is now widely considered to be one of the greatest of all American poets.

World Wisdom



FRITHJOF SCHUON (1907–1998): best known as the 20th century's foremost expositor of the Perennial Philosophy, Schuon wrote more than 3,000 short poems during the last three years of his life. Although the vast majority of these poems were composed in his native German tongue, almost all of the selections in this volume are taken from around 100 poems he wrote in English.

MECHTHILD OF MAGDEBURG (1210–1297): a German visionary and mystical poet who saw “all things in God and God in all things.” The Latin translation of her book *The Flowing Light of the Godhead* is said to have influenced Dante. As a member of the Beguine order of lay sisters, she lived a life of charity, nursing, and strict religious observance.

DANTE ALIGHIERI (1265–1321): one of the greatest poets in the history of the world. The sonnets chosen here are from his book *The New Life*, where the beloved lady Beatrice becomes the poet's guide to God. Allegorically, she assumes this role once more in Dante's masterwork *The Divine Comedy*.

WILLIAM BLAKE (1757–1827): thought to be all but mad during his lifetime, Blake is now considered as one of England's greatest Romantic poets and artists, as well as one of the earliest and most vociferous critics of the Industrial Revolution. Asked about the Divinity of Jesus Christ, Blake responded: “He is the only God, and so am I, and so are you.”

MEISTER ECKHART (1260–1327): a German Dominican theologian, and foremost of the Rhenish contemplatives renowned for Christian gnosis. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy said of Eckhart that he resumes and concentrates “in one consistent demonstration the spiritual being of Europe at its highest tension.”

SHABISTARI (b.c. 1250–1320): Sa'd ud-Din Mahmud Shabistari was one of the greatest Persian Sufi poets whose work *The Secret Rose Garden* is considered amongst the world's classics of mystical literature.

DOGEN (1200–1253): a Zen Master and founder of the Soto sect. According to Tanabe Hajime, one of the leading modern philosophers in Japan associated with the Kyoto School, “Dogen's *Shobogenzo* is matchless in its command of Japanese language and logic with the power to realize the ineffable in and through speech and discussion.”

MUSO SOSEKI (1275–1351): a Zen Master and founder of what is now called the rock garden. Muso's use of poetry and his simple, attractive teachings were designed to appeal to an unlettered audience. Although suspicious of any involvement with literature, he realized that it was through his poetry that he could communicate Zen for the benefit of all people.

MIRABAI (1498–1547): a princess-poet and saint-singer who was born into a royal family in Mewar, Rajasthan. From childhood she was a devotee of Krishna. Married young, and following the death of her husband, she began to live a God-oriented life of prayer and contemplation. Seeing herself as the bride of Krishna, she poured forth streams of ecstatic poetry which are still sung today throughout India.