


spiritualattunement



For many, music can serve as a vehicle to meditation. Rarely one experiences music so exquisite that it can act as a portal to deeper spiritual experience, perceiving the oneness of the universe. Renowned pianist and composer Peter Kater's music does just that.

Celestial Harmony

Claudia
Abbott

A philosopher, a spiritual seeker, and even a mystic, Kater follows an inner voice, turning away from conventional rhythms to record a celestial harmony of awareness and creativity. He released his first album of piano solos, *SPIRIT*, on his own label in 1983, becoming one of a small handful of instrumental artists spearheading an entirely new genre of music: New Age. Today he has achieved international fame and success as a pianist and composer, and is writing scores for films, television, and Broadway.

Kater's journey has always been improvisational, leading him through rebellion, poverty, and great loss as he expresses his truth through the keys of the piano.

His parents separated when he was young, his mother raised him alone, and he lost any relationship with his father. He was only seven when she

enrolled him in piano lessons. Even at a young age, he interacted with the music from a unique perspective with his own sense of melody, time, and structure. This was not understood or appreciated by his teachers. After seven years of classical training, Kater began to find his own voice playing in rock and roll and Top 40 bands.

In 1977, when Peter was only eighteen, his mother died. He could have chosen to move to Germany and live with his grandparents who would have supported him and provided a college education. Instead he chose to strike out on his own and moved to Boulder, Colorado, where he began playing in clubs throughout the Rocky Mountain region. Two years later, he accepted a scholarship to the California Institute of the Arts in Los Angeles, but quit after just two months, returning to what he saw as a less structured environment in Boulder. He stopped playing in the clubs and began giving concerts, finding an audience in New Thought churches, universities, and concert halls. His music was always improvisational and his style unique. "I didn't want to play anything the same way twice, being both in the moment and spontaneous was, and still is, very important to me," says Kater.

Intuitive Approach

The intention driving his music runs deeper than mere entertainment,

and is driven by intuition. "My success as an artist is *all* about my spirituality; there is no separation," he says. "My music leads me. I don't have an intellectual approach to my music. I approach it on an intuitive level and go by what feels right."

Kater's spiritual path parallels the evolution of his music, evolving in a very organic way when he moved to Boulder. He was influenced by his venture into Eastern-style meditation and chanting. In his late teens and early twenties he was often too broke to buy food, so he would fast. Sometimes he would do ten-day rice fasts; sometimes water fasts for three to eight days at a time. He recalls, "Once after a particularly long fast with lots of meditating and chanting, I was sitting quietly with my eyes closed and heard several sounds in my ears, my inner ears. As I listened, the sound got bigger and bigger, louder and louder. It was one of the most profound experiences of my life. The hugest symphony or sound in the most abstract, beautiful sense took me deeper into the inner expanse of the universe. I later found out it is called the 'Celestial Harmonies,' among other things. It's the sound of the Universe or God. I think it's what is referred to as the 'word.'"

About this same time, his involvement with the New Thought movement had an impact on his view of his spiritual practices. "I no longer have the feeling that I have to

strive to reach a 'spiritual' state. I realized that I had set up a pretty intense ritual for myself to be in a more 'spiritually centered' place. I thought that life shouldn't be so black and white with this huge separation between what's spiritual and what's mundane. If I truly believed in One Presence and One God, then ultimately all of life must be God. So I decided that I wanted to be walking with the same Presence and awareness whether I had been fasting for a week, shopping, paying bills, walking down the street or in the mountains. Sometimes I'm sitting outside, either meditating or just being and relaxing, and I'll feel the breeze or sometimes the strong wind brushing against me and I'll have this sense that this is the Earth's breath, the Earth is breathing, and I'll just 'be' with that awareness for awhile. It's really quite beautiful."

Evoking the Gift

The expression of that awareness of the Divine drives his success as a musician. "The music is a gift that comes through me. The more I respond, the more it gives. I believe that there are other artists who have more talent than I have, perhaps more artistic ability, but they don't take advantage of it. I have a lot of things going on, but I never practice or work on it too much. I use my talents to open the space to a bigger space—the piano is a tool to what I

want to create on a spiritual level. I can experience the perfection of the universe and embrace all of life in the music that comes through me. I try to make the music I have a real experience for others."

That real experience comes across in music that explores the pain, the joy, the depth and range of all human experience. Kater's spiritual

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path has given him a unique perspective of Oneness, of the energy in all things. He shares, "Everything is made up of the same energy. Sound is only a denser and slower vibration of light, and matter is a denser, slower vibration of sound. Everything is alive and moving, expanding and contracting. When you allow yourself to experience life on this essential level you can feel everything breathing—alive. Things that we take for granted in our lives are totally amazing. When you get in touch with that awareness, it's crazy (in a positive sense), like an explosion of reality. Those things that seem ordinary or common are so brilliantly alive. Life is out of the box. The box keeps us unconscious."

Essential Darkness

To Kater, consciousness involves seeing the wholeness of life, both the light and the dark. Dealing with the pain of life helps one recognize that the darkness can be creative soil: “In New Thought, so often we are light chasers, so concerned with creating our lives and moving into light, that we often overlook the importance of the dark. What we don’t know and cannot see becomes disturbing. But it is so obvious to biologists and physicists that the darkness is essential. Light and dark can’t exist without each other. We have to have both to create. We have to learn how to integrate darkness and be curious about what is hidden inside. When we imagine a world that works for everyone, we need to explore the pain and integrate it. You cannot sustain a light, bright experience 24/7. Darkness becomes dysfunctional only when it is denied. Looking at our pain, understanding the shadow, integrates the darkness into wholeness. We have to see the value of all life’s experiences. We have emotions for a reason.”

His ability to express both the light and the dark through his music has resulted in amazing success. Kater has earned a distinct place among the most talented artists of our time. In 1990 he introduced Native American music to the masses in groundbreaking collabora-

tions with Carlos Nakai titled *Natives* and *Migration*. He has been nominated for five Grammy Awards, and in 1995 earned the prestigious Environmental Leadership Award from the United Nations for his commitment to humanitarian and environmental causes. His scoring credits include: the award-winning *10 Questions for the Dalai Lama*; a thirteen-hour critically acclaimed Discovery Channel series *How The West Was Lost*; a seven-hour PBS series about Joseph Campbell titled *Mythos*; scores for Wild America and Greenpeace, and an upcoming animated feature film *The Legend Of Secret Pass*. He recently worked with Dominic Miller, known as Sting’s lead guitarist, to produce a stunning collaboration with Kenny Loggins and Jaques Morelenbaum titled *In A Dream*.

The depth of Kater’s spiritual awareness underlies his *Healing Series*, popular in the healing arts and therapy communities. When asked about this body of work, Kater comments, “I never get tired of doing healing music. And it seems that more and more, all of my music is leaning towards that direction, where it’s just so connected, genuine, and directly inspired.”

Positive Impact

Many in New Thought communities see that, in spite of apparent conditions, a shift in the collective consciousness is reaching a “critical

mass” with the potential to positively impact the course of humanity and our planet. Kater agrees, reflecting on the possibility that his path has been in preparation for it. “I think it’s plain to see we’re heading for a major shift. Even though it’s all God and we’re all part of God, the energy and presence that *is* God needs to express and be manifest in a way that achieves balance once again. Those of us that are open to it are receiving more energy than we ever have before. It’s like the pressure is building and needs to be released somewhere, through us. The more we can channel the balancing energy, the less it will have to be thrust upon the world, which

often causes chaos.” Concerned with the environment, he sees the earth as out of balance, but is aware that a greater Presence works to evolve life forward. “Essentially, the Earth, humanity, and God *will* come into a greater balance regardless of what we do, but we have some ability to effect how the transition is made. We contribute to this life and existence by our moment-to-moment experience and expression. All we need is already here. It’s our job and opportunity to be *present*.”

Kater will continue to be a conduit for this transformational energy as he expands his poetic expression from instrumental music to include the spoken word. “I have only

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recently had more to say. I would love for my music to include lyrics, and I have always wanted to write a piece to be sung by a well-known singer.”

Regardless of the direction his music takes, his work will continue to transcend words. Soul reaching

out to soul, evoking the Divine, Kater’s music inspires one to a higher level of awareness and urges one to stay present, appreciating all that is here now. His music is ever-evolving; perhaps it is the vehicle to sound the call to the evolution of consciousness for each of us. •

PETER Kater’s extraordinary music seems to reach deeper into the soul with every new recording. His soundtrack *10 Questions for the Dalai Lama* offers sonic nourishment and beauty—intimate, spacious, healing, and deeply connecting to a sense of the sacred.

Kater has had decades to fine-tune his craft, pun intended, and, more than ever, he is delivering an absolute vibration of the Divine. His piano shadings, like black and white keys on a piano, are inclusive of dark and light, the essential musical alchemy of soul. His spacious compositions, delicate instrumentation, and understated use of repeating patterns, make his music especially powerful for body work of any type.

Kater’s award-winning *Healing Series*, comprised of five discs, is beautifully packaged in environment-friendly digipaks with stunning floral photography on each cover. The intention for each disc is unique, ranging from topics of intimacy, love, and self-remembering, to balance, integrity, grace, right action and right relations. Listened to as an entire work, the healing series provides a sublime soundtrack for well being and conscious communing with the inner “I AM.”

In an age of multi-tasking, busyness, e-mails, text messages, and a barrage of sensory stimulus which can often cause an emotional disconnect and sometimes even lead to disease, Peter Kater’s music anchors the body, mind, and soul into a transcendent state of beingness. His music is a welcome friend to the deep soul—a sublime voice of artistry, stillness, and peace. Peter is an intuitive musician, yes, but he is more a musical shaman offering an essential healing modality for our time.

Kent Rautenstrauss