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## The Silent Source

*John Marcus*

### Prelude to John Marcus

Johnny arrived on the Vancouver scene at some point in time, early on, and became a part of the Children's Spontaneous Music Workshops, along with Michael, Shelley, Nancy (also a contributor), Charles, Sandy, Thea, Clark, various others, and me. From the beginning, for me, John embodied the Muse. In the music he was free, and his facility with sound was enough to inspire and transport. In spirit, he was Pan. In the flesh, he was another tortured soul, just like the rest. And this aspect of his existence he expressed through quoting Blake, Shelley, Yeats, and the occasional Thoreau, Emerson, and various other naturalists and pantheists. He always wanted to play music in the forest, even at Laural House, when we worked with autistic children. And of course, the children responded well to the interplay of gentle wind, flutes, chimes, and bells, glimpses of sun beneath shady Douglas firs in the backyard of the treatment facility. And they responded well to John. His contact with the children was impressive, to say the least. He was not afraid.

Once when a famous Canadian film maker got a grant from the National Film Board of Canada to make a color film about our work, we all became enraptured with the new possibility of film commentary on the work. The images the filmmaker created were fantastic and we were allowed to view and approve them. However, when we read the script, we were appalled. It portrayed us as a band of dedicated young folk who took mercy on slobbering retarded or culturally deprived children and sacrificed ourselves to spend time with them. In our beings, the relationships with the kids were mutually inspired. It did not matter if they had 30 I.Q.s or were blind or dirty, or even if they had broken the law. In the sound there was a communication between souls that rose above human context, yet in some ways celebrated our human condition. John proposed that we write a letter to the Canadian Government attempting to ban the film, stating that it misrepresented our work. Michael applauded. It seemed a little bold to some of us in the group—but right. So we

did. And to this day, there is a beautiful film about the Children's Spontaneous Music Workshops which sits on a shelf somewhere, unviewed by the public eye.

At some point our community disbanded. John went to Chiapas and then France with Michael. They both continued the work with the sound, and added light in collaboration with John's Mexican/Mayan wife, Carmen. In the south of France they stayed close to the land, building a home from stone ruins in a remote rural setting. I figured they had left North America because, for them somehow, living on a constant creative edge, creativity had died here, or was at least in a hiatus. Then twenty years later I received a letter from John from Southern California. He had returned and had read my name in a music therapy journal article. He was studying music therapy at California State University, Northridge. What a reunion this was, if you can imagine. Subsequently John and Carmen and I began a new collaboration in the form of performance art which integrated sound, light, color, and poetry. This collaboration continues intermittently as permitted by the overriding chaotic tone of the Southern California lifestyle and the fundamental paradoxes of the human condition. For two summers, John came to New York and participated in the Phoenecia Music Therapy Community Retreat.

Of himself John says: "Music has been a major theme in my life, bringing me a wealth of inner experiences and a few outward accomplishments. I have worked creatively with Michael Fles and Carolyn Kenny with Spontaneous and Therapeutic Music and have searched for the Lost Chord in Mexico, Europe, and the Middle East. Currently, I am a school teacher for the L.A. School District and am listening to the harmonies and dissonances that are thereby being added to my inner hearing."

John lives with his wife, Carmen, and three children in Sylmar, California. They live on the edge of the world and in the center of it, and certainly in the center of the sound.

Music has always been a source of joy, of sharing, of renewal, and some form of music is part of almost everyone's life. Music seems to be a universal human need, although why this is so is seen as a mystery.

There is, however, a certain experience of music which seems to be occurring more and more frequently. It is a very personal experience, one difficult to put into words, and is experienced most often, on a conscious level at least, in a very individual way, and in the most private of moments. It is an experience which sheds some light on the mystery of music.

If one approaches a musical experience with a greater inner quietness and spontaneity—this would involve laying aside not only one's "work-a-day" concerns, but also any previous musical constructs one might have—and enters, with this particular attentiveness, deeply into the pure experience of tone (and indeed into the process of its genera-

tion), one may feel quite an extraordinary transformation occur. No longer is the musical tone a symbol or gesture—it becomes, in itself, full of meaning and palpable to some newly-emerging inner touch. No longer does the music speak through conventions, cultural, rhetorical, or mental constructs—it seems to speak a new language, as if one were hearing the inner voice of nature sing a new song. As multicolored rays of warmth and love, the tones of this transformed music shine within us, illuminating and blessing the invisible reaches of our being. Indeed, might it not happen that it may touch our very inner core, and whisper to us the Silent Source, so that we realize that we, too, are another chord in the Cosmic Harmony?