



Music is the mediator between the spiritual and the sensual — Beethoven

ANIMAL TALE



Polar Peril

The king of Norway sends a polar bear as a gift to the king of Denmark. The bear and its escort have just landed in Denmark when night overtakes them and they hasten to a house by the roadside. The Norseman explains to the farmer that the bear is not a dangerous monster and asks for quarters for the night. The farmer would have gladly granted this request, but he confesses that he has no power over his homestead after nightfall, for a malicious kobold drives him, his family and his cattle away each evening. The stranger declares his reliance on God, and repeats his request, which the host eventually accepts unwillingly. Well supplied with food, man and bear prepare to spend the night in the bakery.



While both are asleep, a red-capped kobold scarcely three-spans long comes to the fire and begins to roast some meat on an iron spit. Jealously, it eyes the interlopers, particularly the bear, until passion so overcomes it that it strikes the bear on the back of the head. The bear snarls but makes no move. When the meat drips fat, the kobold deals another blow and the bear turns the other cheek. Finally, when the chop sizzles with the heat, the little fellow raises the spit high above his head and brings it down on the bear's mouth. The bear does not prove to be so lazy after all, and a scuffle begins in earnest. For some time, neither side has an advantage, but ultimately, the kobold is obliged to give in. All the



while, the bear's master has been watching the melee from a safe retreat in the oven, and even when the disturber of the peace has fled, he does not venture forth. Next day, the householder inquires somewhat anxiously about the health of his visitors, and before they go on, learns about the events of the night. Later that morning, when the farmer has gone out into the field to plough, the dishevelled kobold comes running up to him with the query: "Is your big cat still alive?" With ready wit, the farmer grasps the situation, and assures the kobold that the "old cat" in addition to being alive is now the mother of five young ones. Thereupon the kobold flees forever, and since then, the farmer and his family have lived happily in the farmhouse. — Archer Taylor

Cello player DAVID EBY found himself in a Hollywood film, 'Finding Happiness.' He plays 'himself', chaperoning the protagonist, a cynical journalist around Ananda Village, a community of Yogananda followers in California. He also co-scored the film's music with David Shannon. He tells NARAYANI GANESH that he distinctly sensed a divine presence throughout the making of the movie



Divine Presence

David Eby started off as Presbyterian with a Presbyterian father who was pastor and an upbringing that was definitely Christian. He began learning to play the cello from the age of six, and along with music, his interest in religion grew. "I always wondered what it was like to be a true Christian. The only role model I had was my father and he was always so busy, doing outreach work all the time. So I followed suit, and worked in so many committees that I exhausted myself and became stressed out." And then, he says, he had what he calls a 'spiritual breakdown'.

While most Davids in the Ananda community — that he joined later — retain their Christian name, many others have switched to Indian names as has his wife, he informs.)

David continues, "I had heard about meditation and I walked into a bookstore and looked for a book and I found one and immediately on reading it, I decided to meditate. My spiritual breakdown was because of me going to outward service and now, I was going inside to find that deep space of peace. And it was just like, wow! I was studying lessons from Yogananda's Self-realisation Fellowship. Then I moved to Portland and found the Ananda community there and my wife and I moved there. Fortunately, she too was interested. She is serving on Ananda's website, and social networks like FB and Twitter. I teach music and consciousness at Ananda College. The college is experimenting with Gap Year programmes in permaculture and new ways of looking at arts to uplift consciousness."

Why music and consciousness? David thinks music has a profound effect on our consciousness. "The movie, Finding Happiness, tries to show how

inspiration is captured in melody. Even Indian ragas have incredible power over mood, and over forces of nature as well," says David and adds that though trained in classical western music, he got out of that world and became a school teacher at Ananda's Living Wisdom School, where he saw a "wonderful opportunity for me to grow as a spiritual person." The problem with classical music, he points out, is that it is very structured and you are not allowed to make mistakes; you can only feel as good or bad as you play.

"My passion is to bring what I have learnt of the secrets of meditation through intuition," and he adds that in college he was greatly inspired by Pandit Ravi Shankar and Zakir Husain's music. "Indian music conveyed the depths of spirituality that I yearned to access," says David. According to him, music can take you places and studies show how the

brain responds to music. The front lobes just light up — as they do when you meditate. "Music and meditation are a great combo," declares the cello

player who says as director of the school choir, he saw children as open books, free of baggage. They are full of feeling, he says, and bring so much enthusiasm to devotional songs, energising themselves and the audience.

Despite zero experience in films, not only did David co-write the musical score but also starred in it, as tribute to the teachings of Yogananda and Kriyananda, his gurus. "I decided to do a bit of research on the director, Ted Nicolson, and was taken aback to discover that his experience was mainly in making vampire movies!" exclaims David with a chuckle. "But I realised that these are all different genres and that film making was very different indeed from other vocations."

David claims he has an invisible co-star who was present throughout the film-making process and in the movie, silent and strong, but there, nevertheless. "One day during filming, all of a sudden this expansive energy just filled the room and I deeply felt it. It was almost as if it said, 'Hi, I'm God and I'm going to star in this movie called Finding Happiness.' People are always looking for God but few realise that goal. Imagine, here, the 'presence' continued throughout the film — a truly celestial experience. I would try to tune into that vibration." ■

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SACRED MUSIC

Turn Your Life Around

The Way To Happiness Producer: The Way To Happiness Foundation Duration: 2 hours 9 mins

REENA SINGH

It was one of those DVDs that I had acquired some time ago, but hadn't got around to watching yet. Just last week, I pulled it out and popped it into the DVD player, thinking it to be one of those usual goody-goody films which would soon have me yawning — and impatient to hit the fast-forward button.

This one woke me up, instead. It was good. The Way To Happiness is what it promises on the DVD cover — "a film about hope and redemption in a chaotic world." It describes American guru L Ron Hubbard's 21 main precepts — and several sub-precepts — that will take you on the road to happiness through a series of interwoven scenarios, complete and separate by themselves, yet connected through the characters that act in them. Each scenario features different characters — none of them

spectacularly good-looking — who could just as well be you or me, caught up in the business of living.

The film is slickly edited and you follow the protagonists, including several children, through their ups and downs in life, their wrong turns, small addictions and lies, dilemmas, and traumas — until each person finally arrives on the way to happiness. The characters reflect American life including Afro-Americans and immigrants. There is an Indian couple too.

The movie takes us through real life — affairs, everyday scenes at school and at work, promises that are made and broken — between families, couples, friends and lovers to drive home the movie's purpose: To present a common-sense guide to better living. The powerful images — of corrupt politicians, unorganised and careless teammates, children waiting for parents who routinely turn up late to pick them up from school and of couples getting through the daily hassles of living — tells us what the story says



in the end: That joy and pleasure arise only in honest hearts. That the immortal lead unbelievably tragic lives filled with suffering and pain.

But The Way To Happiness contains a strong message — that with integrity, morality and trust, you can get out of most sticky situations; that with a little persistence of the human spirit, you can turn your life around.

The DVD includes a small 82-page booklet on the 21 precepts necessary for happiness (See Learning Tree, Page 6) that provide L Ron Hubbard's practical solutions to our most pressing problems. The precepts in the movie and accompanying booklet are really the edges of the road, says Hubbard. "Violating them, one is like the motorist who plunges off onto the verge — the result can be wreckage of the moment, the relationship, a life."

The change has to come through you, Hubbard says: "It's in your power to point the way to a less dangerous and happier life." He adds, "People can fall down, but it doesn't mean that they can't get up again and keep going." And that's really the point of the movie. ■



MOVIE REVIEW

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