

# INTEGRA

*Explorations of the Mind*

The Journal of Intertel  
A Society of the Intellectually Gifted  
Vol. AT No. 9 October 2017

# Integra, The Journal of Intertel

*Integra* is the journal of Intertel, an international society of the intellectually gifted. Intertel is composed of people from a wide variety of geographical, economic, and cultural backgrounds. Intertel encourages the exchange of ideas on any and all subjects.

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## Participation and Excellence

Cover Photo: Centennial Valley Montana by Iloilo M. Jones

Proofreader, Carolyn Dane

## From Intertel's President

This has been a very busy month since we returned from viewing the total solar eclipse. Among the books I've devoured this month has been Ben Franklin's autobiography. Many of the sayings in Poor Richard's Almanac are appropriate today.

Among my September activities was a charity luncheon to assist St Anne's Thrift Shop. It's an annual event, with a fashion show, silent auction and lottery with lots of prizes. Attendees, following the Roaring 20s theme, dressed as flappers.

Your President also serves on a Foundation board, which awards annual prizes to the authors of young adult books deemed to be the best published in the past year. A medal and \$500 prize were awarded to the winning author, and three runners-up received certificates. My luncheon partner was the illustrator of one of the books, a very talented artist. As is the custom, the author doesn't see the illustrations until publication, which caused a grave problem for a friend of mine who translates Turkish folk tales. She was shocked to see her new book featured children with little brown faces, which is contrary to the look of the typical Turkish child.

Your President serves on a team for KiddieCorp, which furnishes a nanny service for convention attendees who must bring their children. We supervise infants up to 12 years old, with games, crafts and all kinds of age-appropriate activities for the children. It affords me another "job" to supplement my actor's income, together with frequent pet-sitting.

John Maxwell comes up with excellent venues for Region IV to meet. Our Oct. gathering at the Arboretum should be fun. As I write this the television show "Criminal Minds" is shooting in the street outside my apartment. The producer and his wife are friends of mine. His late mother-in-law was a long-time neighbor. Along with screenings of new movies and tv shows, every evening was full on the monthly calendar. A clever companion to the most popular television show, "The Big Bang Theory", is "Young Sheldon", which debuted this month to favorable reports.

Make your plans to attend the AGA in July so Intertel will grow.  
EACH ONE REACH ONE! LOU\*LOU (Lou Carter Keay), President

## From the Editor

Autumn is upon us. Here in Montana the mountains of the Continental Divide are capped with snow. I am below the snow line, just north of the Divide, so my view to the south is the Rocky Mountain Range of the Divide. I like that my home faces south, and that it is a passive solar home, with sunlight streaming in and warming me, even as I look out on snow-capped mountains and the valley below me, where Lake Helena sparkles brightly in the morning sun. As I look out from my office, I can see the smoke haze settling back into the valley below, but a much thinner haze than the last two months.

The valley and mountains are in their beautiful autumn wardrobe of autumn leaves—Hansa yellow leaves, golden leaves, green and red and orange leaves. And over it all, the blue, blue sky of Montana’s wide open spaces, punctuated by the soaring Continental Divide.

You will have noticed that I am still working on the structure and appearance of *Integra*. The printer and I are in an on-going discussion and exchange of emails and mailed samples about the proper ink for the blue for our *Integra* border, the exact dimensions of the publication, and the paper we will be using.

I am delighted with this month’s submissions. From Sydney R. Singer of Hawaii comes an insightful and heart-warming recounting of the challenges and the victories of being a genius in an average world, especially the academic world. From Craig Dupler is a fascinating recounting of the history of the phrase, “Music of the Spheres.” I am pleased to publish the elegant poetry of Richard Kovac and Marie Faverio. Benjamin Mark attended his first bullfight in Mexico, and came away inspired to “turn the tables” and offer another point of view for our perspective. Frank Tropea’s Ghost Story of revenge and balancing the scales of justice seems perfect for this All Saints Eve seasonal holiday. His blending of karma and the supernatural seems perfect for Halloween.

I will be moving up the publication dates to a date earlier in each month as I continue to refine and develop *Integra*. Your submissions, comments and suggestions are welcome. Thank you for the excellent contributions I am pleased to print in our Society’s Journal, *Integra*.

Iloilo Marguerite Jones, Editor, *Integra*

## Late Autumn

Richard Kovac c2017

The black doodle-branches  
of later autumn with snow,  
make a maze against

The white-blue over-clouded  
sky of soon it will be winter  
And darker days.

It is as if someone had  
cartooned day into night.

The green leaf is gone.

All is fallen.

## Watercolours

Marie Faverio

Orchard in the rain –  
you can't tell if it is a watercolour,  
just a whim of nature  
or the vision of a drunkard.

Colours escape  
like the arms of a galaxy,  
blending to challenge the mind  
and the brush.

When the raindrops hit the ground  
you turn around  
and see mud on your shoes.  
You walk home surrounded  
by grey.

# THE MAGIFICENT MATADOR

Benjamin Mark

There is a little town in Mexico, the name of which escapes me at the moment, which has, as a peculiarity to set it apart from all other towns of that country, bulls and cows as inhabitants.

Toro, a bull of magnificent proportions was, as is only fit, mayor of the town. It was he who had planned the great event.

In all other aspects the town had the same lazy quality as any other Mexican village you or I might want to visit. In front of Juanita's Bar and Grill, Pepito, a small Black Angus, was taking a siesta, his eyes shaded from the sun by a large, floppy sombrero. Hardly a wind disturbed the banners strung across the street from store front to store front, announcing the gala event of the forthcoming evening.

Miguel Cordova, a Brahman, a great great Matador, was going to fight that very evening for the last time before going into retirement. It was in no other area but that one, in the southernmost part of Mexico, that Man-Fights were allowed.

Carlos, a young male bull, had been handing out leaflets to the touristos in the vicinity. As he gave each one of the brightly inked papers away, he would excitedly tell them that this would be Miguel's most magnificent fight.

"He is a great fighter, that Miguel Cordova, and tonight he will again prove himself by meeting that most dangerous animal, El Hombre-also known as The Man for those amongst the populace who prefer to practice their English rather than use their native tongue. You must all come to see him. It will be a spectacle."

"Oh my," said an attractive young heifer, patting Carlos on the head with her hoof. "We will most certainly make it our business to be at the Man-Fights tonight."

The advertisers had done their jobs well, and outside the arena, as the sun started to set, casting a pink glow across the sky, throngs of bulls and their pretty cows waited eagerly to buy their tickets to see the great Miguel Cordova. Rumors had been circulating that the man selected for tonight's first event was an evil-tempered creature with many deaths to his credit in other parts of the world. Here and there voices could be heard murmuring their concern for Miguel. There were many who were

afraid for him to fight El Hombre.

Before long, the stadium was filled with the sweating bodies of the spectators, their horns reflecting the rays of the setting sun. Vendors could be seen selling oat and alfalfa burgers to the hungry crowds.

Suddenly, blasting trumpets heralded the beginning of the evening's events. As the procession came into the arena, the crowds roared their approval. Miguel Cordova, dressed in a magnificent array of colors, came in surrounded by the Banderilleros and the Picadors, whose job it was to stab El Hombre with darts and lances to enrage him. After they had toured the arena amid shouts of encouragement, they stepped aside to let The Man in.

Pushed and stabbed by the sharp barbs of the Picadors, El Hombre came in stumbling wildly, blood oozing from a gash in his neck and trickling in skinny crimson rivulets down his chest. He stood there, in the middle of the arena, surrounded by the taunting screams of the now savagery-imbued animals in the stands. Naked, his red-rimmed eyes burning from tears of frustration, The Man looked at his opponent balefully. He knew he was going to die out there in the open, slaughtered without mercy for the enjoyment of the spectators.

Miguel Cordova sneered at him and turned to the crowd, brandishing his horns and sword in the air, promising them a slow cruel death for the victim. They roared their approval.

“Olé Miguel!” “Cut off one of his ears for me.”

Miguel Cordova bowed low, never for a moment showing any fear of The Man. Then silence descended into the arena. The fight was about to begin.

The Matador waved his cape in front of El Hombre while two Banderilleros worked their way around The Man unseen. In a moment, faster than the eye could follow, they had stabbed him in the neck with two hooked barbs. El Hombre turned around with a shrill scream of agony; the two bits of steel hanging limply from the wound. He felt weak, his vision was becoming blurred. He no longer heard the crowd's roars, for as death came beckoning at his door, he became oblivious to the happenings of life.

Stumbling insanely about, the pain in his neck becoming unbearable, he moaned and shrieked to the delight of the spectators. Blindly, he

passed close to the great Matador who, in one smooth motion, lopped off one of his ears with his sword. The blood gushed out of El Hombre's head as the crowds began to stand, applauding Miguel Cordova, who stood in the center of the ring with the human ear in his hoof.

Miraculously, The Man was still on his feet. Miguel, his chest proudly swollen, turned to face his opponent again. El Hombre stood still, his chest heaving with pain, gasping for a breath of air, hoping for a minute of respite.

Again the Banderilleros came around the rear. And again they stabbed The Man, this time leaving their barbs dangling painfully between his shoulder blades.

The wind began to blow slightly, causing the colored strips of paper on the barbs to flow festively out of the back and neck of The Man. The crowds were becoming impatient. They shouted to Miguel. "Kill El Hombre. Now. Give him the kill."

The Matador turned once more to The Man, his sword pointed at his throat. A Picador pricked him deeply in the back, causing him to shriek wildly and rush unseeing toward his slayer.

Miguel thrust his blade home, stifling The Man's cry in mid air. Blood spurted out of El Hombre's mouth for a distance of two feet, and he stood there, eyes glazed, momentarily suspended, before falling in a heap, dead, at the feet of the great fighter.

Attendants came in with a cart and some hooks attached to a rope. They sunk the hooks deep into the flesh of the neck of The Man and dragged the dead carcass off the sandy floor. Other attendants came in and swept the sand about, covering the now drying blood, making the arena clean for the next fight.

Bulls and heifers alike roared their approval of the fight. They were happy. Their thirst for cruelty was awakened. There would be six more great fights tonight. Six more Men would die at the hands of the great Matadors of Mexico. It was wonderful.

THE END

# THE GHOST SONATA

FRANK TROPEA

In the very early morning twilight, in the dimness right before dawn appears, the world is opaque, gray, indistinct. There was almost no making out the old man lurking by an old mausoleum in a large, neglected graveyard.

Adding to the indistinctness were his flowing black robes. He seemed to be clothed in shadows. He looked old and haggard with gnarly skin and harsh features. But all this belied his real age. For he was almost immortal. He had walked proudly with the pharaohs and had heard the clarion calls of the Roman legions. But time had taught him this – to wait and bide his time and wait until the right moment, the very propitious moment when the distant stars aligned just right in the heavens—the time when the veil between the worlds was at its most porous and flimsy. The moment when he could finally unleash his rage fury and utter hatred toward the whole world and mankind in it.

He hastily glanced at the skies, smiled wickedly, and lit the tall, black candles placed in the black hexagon figure he'd just inscribed on the steps of this old, musty mausoleum. Then he began swaying, his left hand holding a dagger decorated with occult symbols on the hilt. He began a rhythmic chanting in a harsh sibilant voice—words both alien and utterly malignant in tone and intonation. He kept on circling the hexagon—swaying to the chants, their meaning only known to him in all the world while his tall, black candles burned.

Suddenly he stopped, looking directly at the moss-covered mausoleum and then around the graveyard. Loudly, in harsh, sharp tones, he cried out, “Let the dead arise – take their revenge! And swallow up the living! Now! Now! Now!” And it began.

What looked like gray misty fog was streaming out through the metal door of the mausoleum. His glance assured him the same fog was coming from the old graves around him. Then, as this preternatural fog gained momentum, the wicked magician himself was engulfed by the silvery phosphorescent fog. The fog swallowed him as he felt shredded and disintegrated. With a last insouciant grin on his face, the ancient necromancer met mortality: he was totally dismembered and absorbed by the fog. The fog turned a luminous

gray with black flecks in it and began rolling like a gray mist down upon the graveyard and then, in the sudden and intense wind, the fog began flowing from the graveyard out onto the nearby street. The shimmering silver fog, roiling and surging, engulfed everything in its path. It looked as if it was seeking something.

A blonde, middle-aged woman came down the road—an early morning jogger named Janice Wiggerman. Janice jogged religiously every morning to keep her figure trim more than for its other touted health benefits. Janice knew she was healthy as a horse. The only thing that at all concerned her was that a few wrinkles had appeared on her forehead and around her large, azure-blue eyes. Otherwise her complexion was almost as peaches and cream glamorous as the day she turned sixteen.

Didn't she still have more than her fair share of dates to while away her endless days and hours? Of course, as one of the richest women in town, she knew she could have virtually any man she wanted. She wasn't looking to fall in love with anyone, though—just to entertain herself. To be honest with herself, she knew she'd acquired her fortune by rather unsavory means.

When she was young, she had bedazzled a wealthy older man named Clyde Wiggerman. She married him almost immediately upon learning he had a serious heart condition. But for Clyde, his honeymoon with his beautiful blonde bride never ended. She was ravenous for his aged body and complimented him endlessly on his love-making skills.

He was so infatuated with her he had altered his will completely in her favor. With that accomplished, Janice devoured him day and night, even giving him herbal concoctions her late, Cajun-witch grandmother had taught her, concoctions designed to increase an older man's libidinous prowess.

By the third week of non-stop sex, Clyde had a quick and fatal heart attack in the hallway even as his young wife was crooning for him. And Janice was left a very rich widow. She'd wept big crocodile tears at his funeral and burial and that had been that. There was some talk in town that her grief was all a sham, but no one had suspected that she'd gotten away with the perfect murder. But she knew she had.

It didn't bother her. She amused herself with young, good-looking men. But as the years passed all of her amusements became trite and banal, ultimately leaving her feeling jaded and empty. She wondered late at night when alone in the darkness surrounding her empty bed—she had killed a man for his money as surely as she'd stabbed or shot or poisoned him. Was it really worth it? Would there someday be a reckoning, a balancing of accounts for what she'd done and her life since that time?

Most of the time she really didn't think about old Clyde or an eventual reckoning. And then as she was jogging down the road next to the cemetery in that early morning light, beginning to pant from her exertions, she saw the fog – and she stopped absolutely Medusa-still in shock. It was not a haze but a thick, glowing, silverish, smothering fog, the like of which she'd never before seen or even imagined! It loomed, it blossomed, and it moved toward her.

As if on little cat's feet the fog silently engulfed her. And to her astounded horror she found vaporish, translucent figures in the fog. The figures materialized before her eyes – they were men and women, wraiths, skeletons wearing decaying clothes and they all had outstretched, clutching, claw-like talons for hands and fingers. And then one was right before her and despite his eaten-away features and decaying funeral clothes she knew who it was – Clyde, her former old husband, suddenly animated and there before her.

She screamed “Clyde!” then his skeletal hands were around her throat. In that moment, Janice discovered there were some things even death could not kill – like hate and revenge. As she stumbled backwards on to the hard road, other malignant spirits gathered with Clyde and feasted on her vitality, her energy. All of Janice's life-force, her very soul and essence were consumed. In a matter of a few minutes, only empty jogging clothes were left. For Janice was totally consumed and dematerialized while the dead and the fog which contained them were the stronger with her consumed energy.

The fog enlarged and continued down the road. When, by seeming happenstance, a stray vaporish tendril of it touched an ancient cemetery nearer town which had been around since colonial times, white, roiling bits of glowing fog began emerging from those ancient, sunken-in graves. Soon, a separate fog came out of the ancient colonial graveyard and merged with the much bigger, stronger fog,

which now began to resemble monstrous thunder-clouds wandering up and down on the road. By 8 am, as people were beginning to start their work day, the fog touched the outer edge of the city of Dansville.

The very first man the phosphorescent fog engulfed was a big, burly policeman, William Connor, who'd been on the force for the past twenty years. Realizing instantly this wasn't a normal fog, he'd rolled up his windows in his squad car fast against something he knew at some level was cold and greedy and ancient and very unnaturally evil. But it didn't work. The hungry fog had crept in through the miniscule chinks in the door frame.

As it engulfed him he felt himself immersed in something fetid and vile like grave-rot! Instinctively, he closed his eyes against a nightmare as his car smashed into a streetlight.

And then, uninjured, he felt he was not alone. He opened his eyes and in the silvery fog he saw that there were three creatures shrouded in translucent gray in the fog on the seat with him. Two of them were semi-skeletons with burning red eyes and decaying funeral suits. The third one, the one nearest him, he thought he knew.

Years ago, there was a squalid old drunk named Drake Fresno who'd caused him and his partners no end of trouble. Always a noisy, destructive drunk - always stealing up to giggling children and screaming women, receiving months-long prison sentences and always back to the same old game when he got drunk. Finally, Bill had had enough. One night when he'd again arrested Drake, he'd pulled his squad car over with Drake shackled in the back, and had beaten the hell out of him. Drake, oddly enough, had not resisted and had only groaned and looked at him with pleading, bloodshot eyes of a beaten dog that whines and just wants it to stop.

Fueled even more by his adrenaline and rage, he'd put a silencer on his revolver and plugged Drake in the head, right between his eyes. When questioned at headquarters about it, he'd just said the drunk was very combative and it had been self-defense. By that time, the whole force was sick of Drunken Drake and they lightly bought his word and Drake Fresno was unceremoniously buried in a nameless pauper's grave in the city's cemetery. The one nearest him with glowing hate-filled eyes was, of course, a withered, decayed Drunken Drake. The policeman backed against the squad car door and tried to open it but it was inextricably locked.

And then, mouth opened to reveal blackened stumps of fang-like, decayed teeth and talon-sharp claws of hands, Drake and the two other skeletal ghosts were upon him and devoured and drained his horrified life-force until there was nothing left at all except his empty cop's uniform and the policeman's badge which lay like a shining, fallen star upon the squad car's front seat.

The three ghosts, stronger now and still hungry, went out and joined in the general mayhem that was now Dansville. People were scurrying—lost, bewildered, horrified. They were chased around in futile circles by frenzied, ravenous ghosts who caught them, feasted on them and then, stronger, went up for more. Oddly enough, whenever they caught a child or infant or running, yowling dog or cat, the ghosts didn't even attempt to feast and drain. There wasn't enough dark energy to drain them of, so they just feasted on the adults who, generally, had done more than their fair share of predatory and destructive things in their own lives, and so were considered fair game. Feasting on the dark energy of evil continued all day as thousands of people were consumed by the ghosts. It continued until the full white moon glowed up in the sky and the fog glowed even more feverishly as it reflected back each drop of the light of the moon on the fearful faces of those who remained alive.

The spirits had enough of Dansville, and the fog moved in the strong night wind with its ravenous ghosts. Throughout history, mankind had always been wrong about the dead. Generally, he mourned and cried and brought beautiful flowers to lavish burials. Yet it appeared that the dead had always envied and hated the living who were predatory and evil. This was their chance to finally even the score as the fog relentlessly coasted along to somewhere else with its hungry, angry, ravenous dead.



## Still looking for

# COPIES OF OLD INTEGRAS

Please share your copies of back issues of *Integra*. They are urgently needed for the preparation of a history of the second twenty years of Intertel. If you have any of the following issues, and would be willing to donate or lend them for this project. please contact

Linda Woodhead at

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We need:

April or May 1994

January, March, November or December 1996

October 1999

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ANY ISSUES from 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007 or 2008

Thank you!

Linda Woodhead

Office Manager

## Wanted!

Authors for submissions to *Integra*

Artists and Graphic Artists for *Integra* and the new Web Site

Photographers and Poets for submissions

Reports from Regions and from the Field

Area Coordinators to promote Intertel gatherings

Adventurers, Explorers, and Travelers Reports

Web-savvy web workers

Other talents? Share yours with Intertel !

# It's Tough Being a Genius

## Reaching Out to Fellow Geniuses

Sydney Ross Singer

Hello fellow geniuses.

We are rare and wonderful, stuck in a world of stupidity and irrationality that causes us pain, sorrow, and loneliness. I am writing this brief biography to help you realize that you are not really alone, even though it often feels that way.

I have an IQ of 165, which is considered “high genius”. It is a blessing and a curse. I feel like a man without a culture or friends, often isolated from the rest of humanity. And yet, I would not trade my gift for anything. It is who I am, and the wisdom I have achieved thus far over my 60 years of life is precious to me, despite the fact that wisdom can bring sorrow. I prefer living with eyes and mind wide open, and reject the alleged bliss of ignorance.

Because of my intelligence, when I was in grade school I was placed with older students to keep me academically challenged. Unfortunately, while my mind was advanced, my emotional development was normal for my age. This made me socially inferior while still mentally superior. I could not fit in with fellow students and lacked a peer group. I also felt extreme pressure to perform academically, since my identity and self-esteem were tied to my intelligence. It was extremely stressful and gave me much anxiety.

My interests as a child were also unusual. I began reading philosophy at age 13. I would question everything, and found myself looking for errors in the things I was being told. Other students were trying to keep up with the teacher, while I would listen and absorb what was said and try to figure out a question that would stump the teacher. I attended a public school in New York City for gifted children, called Stuyvesant High School, where I was with other smart kids. But my age was still a problem for me socially, and I still was the object of ridicule and the butt of jokes by less intelligent students.

My parents were no help to me. They had a only a high school education and were of normal intelligence. To them, my gift was a threat and handicap. “You’re too smart for your own good.” My mother was authoritarian and insisted I do things her way, which I resisted. My

ability to argue a point became sharpened by years of trying to convince my mother to change her mind. Often, I would get a belt-beating from my father for my insubordination. It could have killed my spirit; instead it galvanized my resolve.

I left home at age 16 to go to college at the University of Maryland. I lived alone for the first time at this tender age, looking for someone to befriend me. I remember sitting alone at the student center playing chess with myself, hoping someone would come and play with me. It never happened. Instead, I became friendly with my professors, coming to their offices after classes to share my philosophy on life or to ask questions that were beyond the course content. While I first came to college to become a veterinarian, I was steered by my professors to the field of research, which they felt better suited my mind. I then became a biochemistry major.

My college education was unchallenging, especially after my math and science-oriented high school education. I would take classes in my sophomore year that were for juniors and seniors. I was once called into the Dean's office and told how special I was, and how difficult life may be for me. I now realize how right he was.

I never told people I was a genius. They somehow knew, and that baffled me. For me, I was normal. I am not smart all the time. I make mistakes. I can even be stupid about some things. But somehow, people knew. It could be the way I speak, or the things I speak about. Probably, it's both.

While I was physically fit and athletic, I spent leisure time doing math and logic puzzles and writing my own philosophy. Whenever I was in a social gathering I would discuss deep subjects that unfortunately seemed to alienate others. I have always had a hard time with trivial and useless conversation. Instead, I would discuss my latest criticism of something that others take for granted or didn't care about. Not surprisingly, I was rarely invited to social gatherings, and actually preferred not going, anyway.

I always had difficulty staying at one thing for very long, and after three years at the University of Maryland I transferred to the University of Utah to complete my BS degree, which was in biology. I then went to Duke university to get a PhD in biochemistry. Given my penchant for analytical thinking and problem-solving games, biochemistry seemed

like a good match. However, after two years in that program I realized that this was not a mind game, but a career. I had never imagined myself doing any one thing for a career. For me, my education was an end in itself. As soon as it became necessary to seriously commit to a career, I found myself rejecting the field.

We live in a culture where people need or want a box to fit in. Each box has its limits, and those inside those boxes rarely see anything outside. But specialization is not what I wanted. I am an out-of-the-box person. My mind looks to synthesize and integrate. I rejected the artificial boundaries between academic fields. I wanted to understand the whole picture, not just examine the fine details of just one part of the picture.

I also began questioning the black and white world of the hard sciences. While still in the biochemistry program I began to read cultural anthropology, which I had never taken in undergraduate school, and discovered that there are many ways to see the world. This attracted me, and I was offered admission to the PhD program in cultural anthropology at Duke, leaving the biochemistry program. I had gone from an academic climate of logic and proof to a world where almost anything goes, where there were numerous paradigms for understanding the world.

However, after a couple of years in that department I realized that anthropology was not for me as a career, either. While I had now become aware of the problems in the world from various perspectives, I found it frustrating that anthropologists were only supposed to study the world and describe what they saw. When I saw a problem I did not want to just study it and write about it. I felt the need to solve it.

I left that program with a M.A. degree from Duke, better educated, but still without a clear career direction. It was 1982, and I was 25 years old. I decided to make some money, and became a life, health and disability insurance salesman for the Paul Revere Company. I soon became the #2 salesman for the company, making six-figures in my second year. It could have been a comfortable career, except for the lack of intellectual stimulation. Most of my clients were doctors, lawyers, and accountants who respected my intelligence. However, I was socially their inferior as a salesman, despite being intellectually their superior. This depressed me, despite the money, and made me feel I was wasting my life. I then decided to go back into academics and attend medical school.

It had been years since I was in college by the late 1980's, and I feared that I would not perform well on the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT). However, I scored in the top 1% on the test, and was soon offered to enter the MD/PhD program at the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston. The PhD would be in medical humanities, which was a new program at UTMB, and I was to be the first medical student in that program. It seemed like a good fit, given my eclectic background, so I accepted. I was given a full scholarship and stipend.

I had been accepted early at UTMB, and instead of waiting a year to start the medical school program I was allowed to spend a year in the medical humanities program. By the end of that year, however, I faced a new challenge that ultimately derailed my training.

It had to do with animal labs. At that time (1989), some schools still used live dogs to demonstrate certain physiological principles. My school was one of them, using dogs from the local pound. At the end of the lab, the dog is killed and dissected. Today, if medical schools still do these labs, students are allowed to opt out if they feel it disturbs them. At UTMB that was not an option.

I must explain that, while I have always felt some alienation from people, I always felt connected to animals. That is why I had once wanted to become a veterinarian. It's ironic that a genius can relate better to animals than to people. I had been exposed to animal research, also called vivisection, as an undergraduate student in biology and a graduate student in biochemistry. I had seen atrocities done to animals in the name of science that have haunted me my entire life. This was one reason why I left biochemistry. Every experiment I did needed blood or livers from some poor, caged animal. I could not accept that the search for knowledge required cruelty to animals.

I was anxious about the animal labs in medical school. I asked to be given an exemption from the labs on moral/religious grounds and be offered an alternative. The faculty refused. The head of the lab, to whom I had to appeal, was a burn researcher who worked on dogs. He had no empathy for my position. He told me that, "you need to smell and feel the blood on your hands to become a good doctor." I could not disagree more.

I appealed for help to the medical ethicists in my medical humanities

department, where I was still a graduate student. To me, it seemed unethical to force a medical student to kill animals for a lab, especially when there are humane, non-animal alternatives. Privately, the Dean of the medical humanities department agreed with me. But publicly he stepped aside and did not help, explaining that he wanted to keep his job.

I don't know if this is an issue of being a genius or of being a fighter, but I did not give up. I appealed to the Dean of Student Affairs, and told him that I would sue the school if they did not give me an alternative. I reached out to organizations that protected animals, looking for support. Finally, the Dean let me out of the lab. However, I was now blacklisted. Students were afraid to be seen with me. Faculty both admired and feared me. Behind a locked glass case where the class of 1993 photos of students was displayed, underneath my picture someone in the faculty had crossed out "Sydney Singer" and substituted "Shit Slinger". I had that removed, and should have sued for harassment, but didn't.

The medical faculty, many of whom were animal researchers, told me that they feared that allowing me out of the dog lab was a slippery slope that could lead to challenges against vivisection. I had no interest at that time in challenging anything other than the lab. I was a believer in western medicine and was eager to learn all I could. But the faculty feared I was a spy for animal liberation activists. Students could not make sense out of my motives, either, since most students do what they are told without question. Students also thought I was already a doctor because my grades were so high. I always messed up the grading curve, as when I got 100% on biochemistry tests.

Once again, my genius had resulted in alienation from others. In a world where people don't question authority, a genius who does question authority is anathema. For those who don't understand the compelling need to follow one's own sense of truth, my motives were unfathomable. I seemed more a troublemaker than a visionary.

I have written about my experiences in medical school elsewhere. Ultimately, I decided to leave medicine and start a new field of applied medical anthropology, integrating my knowledge of the fields of biochemistry, anthropology, and medicine. It was a hard decision to leave medical school without a degree. But my respect for the degree was gone as a result of my medical education. I felt medicine is a dogmatic field based on cruel animal research. I could not imagine being proud to be an MD. And I wanted people to respect me and my ideas because

they were true and made sense, not because I have an MD degree.

I also wanted to develop non-animal alternatives for research. Given that most human diseases are caused by lifestyles, according to the World Health Organization, it seemed best to study disease causation by examining the ways the culture conditions people to have unhealthy attitudes and behaviors. I coined the term “culturogenic disease” and began to develop a new field of study.

Throughout the years I have made numerous medical discoveries based on cultural causes. My best known discovery is the link between breast cancer and wearing tight bras for long hours daily. I wrote about this in the book *Dressed to Kill: The Link Between Breast Cancer and Bras*, which has inspired numerous other studies that now confirm the bra-cancer link. However, this issue has created intense controversy in the medical world, since it implicitly discredits past breast cancer research that had ignored this issue. The same thing happened when the smoking-cancer link was discovered. Studying breast cancer while ignoring bras is like studying lung cancer while ignoring smoking. Instead of breakthroughs being met with praise and follow-up, experts typically become defensive and obstructionist.

The public is also challenged when you expose commonly held practices and beliefs. People do not use their minds to be rational, but instead use their minds to rationalize what they already want to believe. And most people want to belong more than to be correct. They find comfort in copying others. Unsure of their own abilities to judge the statements of experts, most people believe what they are told, and crucify those who challenge the status quo. They fear uncertainty and hold tight to dogma.

That is the fate of a genius. Truth is not what normal people want. Most people want to believe in Santa Claus. Geniuses are grinch who steal Christmas.

Being a genius will not get you accolades. Nobody likes the smartest person in the room. Intelligence is power, and people feel threatened by it. They feel you can see through their charades and lies, making them naked and exposed. This means the best intentions of a genius will likely be misconstrued and maligned. There is a reason why authoritarian regimes kill intellectuals.

Over the years, the rejection I have felt for being a genius has taken a toll. Alienation is stressful. I have no real friends, since most people find me “too intense”. Some people mistake my intensity for aggression. Fortunately, I have a few people in my life who understand and love me. It’s hard to go through life thinking and feeling differently from others, and having some support is essential to keeping you sane.

I respond to issues with greater intensity than most people, and see deeper meaning and implications that others cannot yet see. When people are all in agreement about something, I create discord by pointing out something they did not consider. I see numerous sides to an issue, and try to depolarize peoples’ positions. Unfortunately, most people feel that sticking to a position is a sign of strength. They root for their ideas and dogmas like people root for a football team. It becomes one side versus another, a black and white proposition where the nuances of reality are not just ignored, but are deliberately suppressed.

Different people express their genius in different ways. My personal gift is to be able to take complex issues and examine them from numerous sides, and then distill the issues down to a kernel of truth. Most people get lost in the details; I look for the greater meaning. I sometimes even challenge those who agree with me. People tend to get polarized and dogmatic in their positions. I try to find the truth in different perspectives, and share that truth with opposing sides. And I have found that people don’t want to see the truth in the opposition. To them, you are either right or wrong.

I welcome new ideas that can modify the way I see things. I love to have epiphanies that change my world view. Most people, however, fight to defend their world view rather than expand it.

Of course, geniuses need and want love and appreciation like everyone else. When we don’t get it we experience rejection, loneliness, and depression. I want to be a force for improving the world, sharing my gift with others. But when my gift is to open the eyes of those who do not want to see, I become maligned and misunderstood. I am perceived as a threat to experts who adhere to the dogmas that I challenge. I unsettle the confident. I create chaos in a world that wants order more than truth.

Despite the pitfalls of being a genius, I couldn’t be any other way. Being a genius is more than an ability. It’s a way of being. It defines me

and compels me. I am fortunate to be a fighter as well. I would rather stand alone and be true to myself than stand in a crowd and think as I am told. I have written this short biography to help other geniuses know that you are part of an exclusive club of people others cannot understand. We are both a part of the system and apart from it. We are the visionaries who are shunned for challenging ideas, yet help keep the world from collapsing under the weight of its own stupidity.

I invite other geniuses to reach out to me if you would like to share your stories. Mine may be unique in detail, but is most likely similar in essence. Be proud of who and what you are. Be true to your gift and use it. There have been geniuses before who have experienced the same things we are, as will geniuses to come. I hope my story will help you understand yourself, keep a positive attitude, and know that you are not alone.

We are kindred souls who see a light others cannot see. Follow the light and continue to shun the darkness.

Your friend,

Sydney Ross Singer

## **Branches** Richard Kovac

the doodle-like  
branches  
of the winter trees,  
brown not green,  
amuse and amaze me.  
I know that all these branches  
make a tree.  
And I would  
riddle it  
into shape  
but the random doodle  
won't let me  
escapr.

# The Origins and Survival of “The Music of the Spheres”

Craig Dupler

The amazingly upgraded Integra for September 2017 (Vol AT No. 8) included the following quote from C.S. Lewis on page 21:

*The Music of the Spheres* “The music of the spheres is the only sound which has never for one split second ceased in any part of the universe. With this positive we have no negative to contrast. Presumably if it ever did stop, then with terror and dismay, with a dislocation of our whole auditory life, we should feel that the bottom had dropped out of our lives. But it never does stop. The music, which is too familiar to be heard, enfolds us day and night and in all ages.”  
*Imagination and Thought in the Middle Ages* –C. S. Lewis

So exactly what is this business of “the music of the spheres” anyway? Well, it has its roots in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE in ancient Greece. It was nullified by Kepler in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century ce, and resurrected by a Presbyterian minister and his friend in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Let’s look at the story.

Pythagoras of Samos was, by all accounts, a very brilliant guy. There is a possibility that he was a student of Thales of Miletus, who was renowned as an engineer, mathematician, and philosopher. It is not clear if the Greeks had yet developed their famous structure of knowledge which became known as the seven liberal arts, but certainly the ideas that led to that structure were already being developed.

Our knowledge of the seven liberal arts comes down to us from a truly strange book written by Marianus Capella, who lived in Roman north Africa in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century AD. His rambling book was written in the form of a conversation between two people and titled *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* (On the Marriage of Philology and Mercury). Capella’s book surely would have been lost had it not been for efforts of four people: two Romans, one early Christian, and an early medieval emperor.

A fascinating book could be written on this accident of history, but suffice it to say that as the Roman empire was collapsing, a wealthy Roman named Gaius Sollius Apollinaris Sidonius became an abbot of his own monastery and had his monks start copying every scroll they

could get their hands on as a way of preserving the knowledge of the classical world. Then another Roman (a senator no less) named Flavius Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus Senator copied him, and set himself up at Monte Cassino, where he talked with his friend Benedict (the one who became THE Saint Benedict) to include two hours each day doing copy work in the scriptoria as a part of his *Regula* (rules of the monastic discipline for his new order, named for himself of course – the Benedictines).

One of the books that Cassiodorus got the Benedictines to copy and send multiple copies of to their new monasteries as they were founded was Capella's ramble. In it is the description of the trivium and quadrivium, which was traced to the Athenian School and possibly earlier. It would have still been lost, because instead of using papyrus, which was no longer available after the collapse of Rome's Mediterranean trade economy, they were using parchment (i.e. the skins of young calves and sheep, and so on).

Well, there were more monks working in the scriptoria than there were animals being slaughtered to keep them supplied with fresh parchment, so they developed a system of reusing it. They would take the precious books that Sidonius and Cassiodorus had sought to preserve, use some sort of solution to remove as much of the ink as possible, recut them thus making folios into quartos, and quartos into octavos, and start over. The books made from reused materials were called palimpsests.

The books selected for reuse were often the least religious texts available, so that pretty much whacked most of the books on engineering, mathematics, and non-religious philosophy. It's a wonder that Capella's weird ramble survived at all. But it did, and when in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century Charlemagne ordered a system of schools to be set up throughout his empire, the only book they could find describing how to organize one was Capella's – go figure. Anyway, that's how we know that Greeks classified grammar, logic, and rhetoric as the three foundational subjects or trivium, and music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy (which included astrology) as the more advanced quadrivium.

But alas, the Greek concept of music was not what we would call music. Yes, it was about sound, but they saw it as a branch of mathematics, not unlike geometry. Music to them was a way of

understanding the structure of the universe. And, in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE the Pythagoreans went crazy with this idea. They believed that there just had to be a simple geometric structure to everything, and that music would be a part of that structure. The Greeks had some early stringed instruments, so they probably made this leap by discovering the thing we call an octave, which is the compatible tone generated when a plucked string is reduced by exactly half its length and plucked again.

Anyway, they postulated and then stated as a fact that the “heavens” were organized on nested geometric solids. The idea is that there is a sequence of nested regular shapes with the innermost being the perfect sphere, which was the earth. Then at the next level up, where the moon resided, was another sphere which was spaced from the earth by a pyramid of three sides plus its base, all composed of equilateral triangles. At the tips was the next sphere. Then around this sphere was a regular cube composed of six square sides, whose six corners just touched the inner surface of another sphere. That’s where the Sun resided. Then around that was a regular octahedron with its eight equilateral triangular sides, and whose tips just touched the inner surface of another sphere, and that’s where at least some of the planets resided. Next was a regular dodecahedron with its twelve pentagon shaped faces and so on. Then, the Pythagoreans insisted that there just had to be a natural tone associated with each of these nested spheres, hence “the music of the spheres.”

Now setting aside that unlike light, sound waves require a relatively dense medium through which to propagate, and that the ultra-thin matter dispersal in space isn’t even close to being dense enough for sound waves, the Pythagoreans hadn’t been up or out there, so they really can’t be faulted too much for their inference, except of course that they were just making it up. But hey, it sounded good so it must be – right? And besides, a whole lot of current political logic rests on equally well-founded inferences, with peer reviews and repeatable testing not being required, so why not?

Well, all of this was great until of course some brilliant mathematician and observer decided to test it all. It only took two thousand years for someone to get around to it. What people will believe, and how long they will cling to it in the absence of a little testing, can be amazing. Anyway, finally Johannes Kepler was both smart enough and rich

enough to have enough time on his hands to do the work, and stubborn enough to stick with such a thorny problem. He was also interested enough (no, make that super OCD) to slog through the observations and the math to see if this nesting spheres thing actually predicted the movement of the moon, sun, planets, and stars. Well it didn't, even though he spent something like thirty years trying to make it work. But, he assumed that the problem in his method was bad data, because his observational technique was not the greatest, and he knew it. But, he did know someone who had a lifetime compendium of really good data, that being his non-friend Tycho Brahe.

Let's face it, Kepler was not a fun guy to be around. Plus, the times they were a-changing and people were starting to become famous for doing this new thing called science. So people who were doing it wanted to get credit for making this or that fantastic breakthrough. Tycho knew he had better observational skills than anyone, anywhere, so he wanted credit for any discoveries that could be had from his data. That said, he also knew that he didn't have the math smarts to figure out what all of his data meant, and that pain in the keister Kepler did.

But, Tycho held out to the end and didn't let Kepler, his assistant in his view, have his data until he died. Then, Kepler started trying every math trick he could think of in a kind of brute force approach to the problem and finally figured out that if you put the sun at the focus of an ellipse, that would account for the motion of all of the planets, and if you did the same thing with the earth, you had the motion of the moon. Goodbye nested spheres and Pythagorean music in space.

Rationally, the whole notion of the music of the spheres should have died then and there, over 400 years ago. But no, it was just too good a story. Plus, there was this small problem of the Catholic Church and Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas liked Aristotle, and in one of Aristotle's surviving works he wrote about *musica universalis*, which is how the whole Pythagorean notion got passed down to us. And the Catholics got into this habit of deferring to Aquinas anytime a disagreement over dogma came up.

Then in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Pope Benedict XVI (yes, another Benedict) basically said that anything Aquinas said is just the way it is, so there. So even after Tycho and Kepler had killed off the possibility of there being any spheres for some sort of celestial music to somehow hang

onto (ignoring the whole sound wave problem which was discovered based on an inference by Pascal that space must basically be empty). But even then, the notion of there being something called the music of the spheres was really just a bit of advanced theological trivia that almost no one ever heard about, until ...

Maltbie Davenport Babcock, a Presbyterian minister, decided to dabble in poetry. The date of Maltbie's poem (who calls their kid Maltbie?) is unknown, but it was published after he died in 1901. Then a friend of his, one Franklin Lawrence Sheppard, set it to music. The story is that the tune was something he learned from his mother, and which probably has its roots in England. Anyway, Sheppard's hymn was picked up by the Presbyterians and spread like wildfire to the other protestant hymnals, and suddenly a couple times each year on Sunday mornings you had hundreds of congregations singing about the music of the spheres. I guess you just can't keep a good story down, no matter how fanciful it might be. It's a catchy little tune, and I'm sure you know it just by seeing the lines to the first stanza of Maltbie's poem:

*This is my Father's world,  
And to my listening ears  
All nature sings, and round me rings  
The music of the spheres.  
This is my Father's world:  
I rest me in the thought  
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas;  
His hand the wonders wrought.*

It's a beautiful hymn and a truly romantic concept. But alas, there is no such thing as the music of the spheres. That said, I don't think it should be abandoned. Many fantasies are sources of great human delight and comfort.

Craig Dupler

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