Early Autumnal Festival

Ceremonial Preface to Pomona

(by L. Svetlana of Feraferia)

Introductory Music: 'Les Choéphores', by Darius Milhaud.(*)

Musical recordings, usually symphonic, appear in the course of these ceremonies to establish a specific quality of mood in keeping with the unique inner spiritual atmosphere of the present seasonal phase. As in this case, the marvelous atmospheric 'Choéphores' of Milhaud, the recorded music is initially presented at a robust volume. Then, after a suitable length of time for meditative absorption, a celebrant gradually reduces the volume so the music may serve as a background for the recitations. After further reductions of volume, the celebrant zeros-out the recorded sound.

It seems reasonable to assign the element of Earth and Her Gnomic Spirits to the Fall Quadrant when petioles drop from trees and fall to the ground so that the bare structure of plant life is revealed against a dark-brown soil cluttered with yellowing, sometimes orange, purple and even reddening leaves, turning later to beige. In latitudes and longitudes like Coastal Alta California and inwards, where the air is relatively free of toxins, a briskness, a stir, a bustle touched with poignancy permeates the atmosphere, as it always did in pre-technological times.

This exhilaration of breeze-blazed nature, at a point when the blossoming, fruiting, exogenic urge of Life culminates and starts to wane, where it meets the waxing cross-current of an inward rush to grasp revelations of the psyche, couples with a primeval melancholia; cognizes its inevitable end, and erupts voraciously one more time – the scream of flying geese before the swan song. Such is the tempered raison d’être that elicits the epiphany and epi-phenomena of Dyonisos Bromios (the Roarer) and Artemis Keladeine (Lady of Clamours).

Let us remember, however, that it was Dionysos in the Cretan and Greek myths who was rendered apart, cut asunder, torn to pieces; not Artemis, who as Huntress, was always in control, whether of the wilder creatures entrusted to Her care or in charge of Her Nymphic Entourage. His noise-making serves to draw out the indication of imminent death and then to fall silent as if to be struck dumb from horror at the impending doom – so gruesome and terrible in execution.

Yet, he is Lord of Indestructible Life – the Zoe – as the Greeks termed the generalized energy of being that sheds innumerable appearances but cannot be ultimately annihilated, for it always returns anew and produces more forms – ever variable and ever thirsting to imbibe the sacred fluids – the inextinguishable moisture of creation; while Her clamorous nature calls forth the realm of Her divine sister Persephone, Queen of the Dead, in a demeanor indicating at-oneness with a sense of immortality whose doors swing open to reveal death, then spring back to unfold another life!

Artemis as Prothyraea safe-keeps a ‘to and fro’ Gate, when Her Quiet insures, it assumes a Stillness of Peace and rest. The great Lady of Wild Things is Guardian of 'Bios', the individual life of a being; as such She is summoned by women in pains of child birth or in the throes of Thanatos.

In Greece Artemis Keladeine – Britomartis Dyktina, had few cults for Her worship and concentrated more on specific situations, most commonly in the life of a woman dealing with hardships related to passages from one realm of being to another. She is the Goddess who shares with Aphrodite and Persephone the title of Hagne – Most Holy, Most Pure – in the sense of untouched and untouchable in her core. Only Goddesses bore this epithet in the ancient Mediterranean world for they alone were and are providers of immortality and retainers of soul. However, in some instances, the early Artemis had sacred fires on mountain tops to signal great festival events.

The God – the male principle - in far distant antiquity exemplified the never-ending procession of alternating between living and dying, which was tragic for the individual whose ‘Zoe’ was suddenly snatched from her of him. The Dionysian Mysteries unearthed this imminent destruction in myths where Death was the ‘sine qua non’ of Existence. Thus the Cretans and Greeks, as well as most other people of those times dealt paradigmatically with the cessation of the pulsing breath, which is always felt as sudden and abrupt. But in the course of the Mysteries, the Divine Feminine restored the God and brought Him back to the realm of the living. The ‘Zoe’ either has to return to the Great Mother to be reborn again on Earth, as was practiced in Asia Minor; or it is entrusted to women who preserve and care for humanity in the

Goddess' Name as 'Her Embodiments' such as was the case in Greece on certain occasions.

In Feraferia we feel that the principles involved in Greek ritual and manifested in 'dromena' (things done), 'legomena' (things said) and 'dyknomena' (things revealed) can be solemnized in ways that transform the acting out, even if only through animal surrogates of immolation of the God of Time and His subsequent resurrection by the Goddess of Eternity - in the Dyonisian Mysteries - by Rhea, Mother of the Gods, and subsequently by the Theades, who represented the Goddess through the multifarious forms of Her Nurses!

The passing of a life and all sad and tragic feelings of loss with their implied hope of the Eternal Return through the sense of indestructibility of the Life Force, can be mytho-poeticized and ritualized without dwelling on truncating or dissolution. Even Diana, the Huntress, is a misnomer for the earlier and future Artemis, whose arrows we must consider as quick means of termination to a life racked with pain or in the grips of agony. Thus the Goddess is merciful in her desire to assuage the suffering of those terminally ill and ready to transmit to the dimension beyond.

Altogether the Feraferian vision emphasizes the need for newly evolved visions of mythic ceremony, theurgy and liturgy from the root stock of mytho-poetic elements of an archaic sacred cosmic mystique. Many of these elements are inappropriate and undesirable in view of certain currently acquired awareness; e.g. animal sacrifice, symbolic re-enactments of death through violence, the attribution of negative and quarrelsome traits to the Gods etc. Other qualities, not yet evolved in the ancient world (as known to us), should be incorporated into metaphysical, analogical and ritual structures of our Fey Religion – e.g. the basic benevolence of the Queendoms of Divinities; correlations between particular ecosystems and specific spheres of particular Deities; an interweaving of many surreal elements into our rites and festivities, etc.

In these ways a new religious organism develops within the womb of Holy Earth – one sired by visionary ideals of the new precessional 'Month' of Aquarius, fostered through expanded consciousness of Wilderness and wrought in the image of a delicate nymph-like yet wild and winsome humanity under the Aegis of the Magic Maiden. Long may She play, Kore Voluptuous, Never Entirely Serious, Long Live the Queen.

Hail Artemis! Hail Dionysos!

Evoe Kore Kai Kouros!

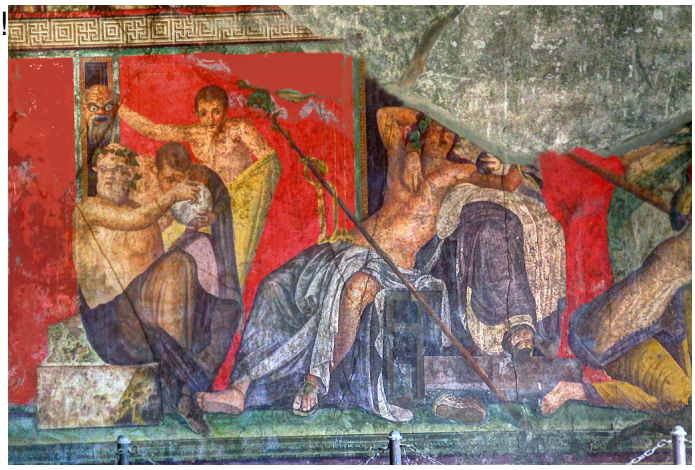
Aweeya! 

Image: Dionysus in the Lap of Ariadne at the Villa of Mysteries, Pompeii

(*) *'Les Choéphores', by Darius Milhaud; text of Paul Claudel.*

The Leonard Bernstein recording is especially appropriate because of the magnificent incantations by Vera Zorina.