

ZEN NOTES



Photograph • Philippe Halsman 1979

TUDOR SMILES

Noted by Mary Farkas

These days Tudor, who has literally become a world-honored one, is smiling. At 78, looking back at 58 years in dance, Tudor sits confident that he is a recognized top of the world of ballet.

He and Martha Graham might be said to own this century of dance choreographic innovation. Tudor admits, grudgingly, "I don't like to repeat myself." Martha Graham's vote for Tudor was cast in 1940. It was when she caught sight of his *Lilac Garden* (created in 1936 for the Ballet Club of London and played for Ballet Theatre during its first season in 1940). She stood up and screamed. "That probably swayed a lot of people," Tudor confided to J. Dunning of the NYT April 28, 1986.

At the Juilliard School of Music (he taught there for twenty years as well as at the Metropolitan Opera Ballet School) Tudor was given the Capezio award for a life of achievement. It reads: "His uncompromising standards reflect the artist as a moral force, recognizing that dance can provide both pleasure and insight."

The audience of hundreds of dancers bravo'd and clapped at every speaker's acclaim. Each one, except Agnes DeMille, who had come in a wheel chair, stood beside him--including such celebrities as Paul Taylor, Baryshnikov, and Nora Kaye, as well as the Award Committee--as they praised him. The unmistakable affection lavished on him by each was the most moving part. Mayor Koch, witnessing a similar demonstration, said to Tudor, "They seem to like you." Since Tudor, as teacher, was once thought of as a terror, his present bodhisattvic mien has

not gone unnoted by the myriad of dancers he has trained. "Sheer idolatry," he noted.

A Swedish documentary has gone so far as to dub him a Zen master. "I didn't say it," he vowed. He did admit, to John Gruen, in 1975, after breaking a long creative silence with *The Leaves are Fading*, that this first major abstract work might be better described with the word "empty" which, as everyone knows, is quintessential Zen.

It is said of Tudor that he has changed the lives of the dancers he has worked with. He explained, "What you must do with dancers is to strip them of their superficialities...strip them of their own conception of themselves, until you find something underneath." I must say that is a pretty good description of what Zen masters do, isn't it? A popular metaphor is, "It's like peeling an onion."

On May 20, in front of the curtain at the Metropolitan Opera House, during an all-Tudor program, the Handel Medallion, New York City's highest cultural award, previously officially presented in the Mayor's office, was now publicly handed over for keeps. Anna Kisselgoff, of the NYT, reports: "Before 4,000 of Mr. Tudor's close friends...the citation was read by Bess Myerson, the city's Commissioner of Cultural Affairs, 'To Antony Tudor, whose art has created a rich geography of the soul.'"

The Leaves Are Fading was the first of four ballets presented on this occasion. The other three, each acclaimed as his best at some time, were: *Lilac Garden*, *Dim Lustre* and *Dark Elegies*, described by John Gruen as "Having brought a unique vocabulary to dance, one which subtly combines elements of classic and modern techniques as it lays bare the psychological underpinnings of his characters."

WOODLAWN 1986 Noted by John Storm

When you die, your thoughts still exist. Your physical body disappears, but your thought and vision exist everywhere forever. The seed that I sow will not die, though everyone forgets the monk who was here years ago. --Sokei-an

Around noon on Sunday, May 18, it was unseasonably warm, as if a July day had shown up in May by mistake and stayed on. Insects were humming, a chipmunk exploded through the grass from time to time, an occasional plane drifted over. Otherwise, the stillness under the shade trees was almost complete as people began to take up places around the graves of Sokei-an and Ruth Fuller Sasaki. Forty-one years and one day after Sokei-an's death, thirteen of his present-day students had made the annual journey to Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx to pay their respects to his memory and renew their commitment to his teachings.

With a single exception, no one there actually knew Sokei-an or studied with him face to face, which makes one wonder, in passing, how many Zen masters teaching today will be attracting new students nearly half a century after they've died. The vision, the particular style and power of this extraordinary man seem to have remained alive in his writings and in the record of his talks; they're clearly thriving in the minds of his followers, in Europe, now, as well as this country.

The memorial observance with Mary Farkas, who first encountered Sokei-an nearly fifty years ago, presiding was appropriately serious but far from solemn. She observed that Antony Tudor, at age 78 the senior participant in the proceedings, was being gushed about in magazine articles lately as something of a Zen master, to which Tudor, his expression that of someone who's just chomped down on an exposed nerve, shot back: "What is Zen?"

Still, everyone agreed it's high time Tudor, whose fame as a dance master has been growing steadily in recent years, got some recognition as a Man of the Way. He joined The First Zen Institute in the fifties and has been a pillar of the place ever since, serving for many years as the organization's president.

Others present at the memorial gathering were Fay Robison, whose association with the Institute goes back to its Village days. She has been adopted into it. Also, Bob Schaefer, Stanley Mulfeld and Michael Miciak, Institute residents, and Valeria Vasilevski, Jonathan Lorch, Spencer Jarrett, Bob Lopez, Keith Walker, Janet Storm and myself, all Institute members or near-members.

During an informal ceremony, each of us distributed flowers and sandalwood incense over the two graves. Valeria, following a Japanese custom, poured water over the rugged, asymmetrical rock that stands at the head of the graves to help it stay comfortable in the heat, of course. Then people spoke a few words of recollection or reflection about Sokei-an, the last word going to Spencer, the father of a newborn son, who promised that Sokei-an's teachings would be passed on to still another generation.

Finally, we chanted the Hannya and The Four Vows; and, with the sun still high in the sky, strolled back along tranquil avenues lined with the cool stone homes of the dead. At the front gate, we quietly said our good-byes and separated, each moved in his own way by contact with this monk who was here years ago, who, whatever he may have expected, has certainly not been forgotten.

CENTERFOLD

Scenes of three of the four dignities were photographed by Robert Lopez, far right. His photograph was taken by Spencer Jarrett, who appears standing at center. Others top left to right are: Bob Schaefer, Jonathan Lorch, Valeria Vasilevski, Fay Robison, Mary Farkas, Antony Tudor. John Storm is placing a flower.



If in all places--going, standing, sitting or lying down, your mind were not shifted from its simple and direct quality, the place where you are for your practice of Dharma would become a pure land. This is called the samadhi in which the appearance of all places becomes that of only one place. If a man continually practiced these two kinds of samadhi, such practice would be like the earth which ever possesses seeds within itself. If it nurses them long enough it will get fruits from them. The one place and the one deed in your samadhi are the same as the earth. The sermon which I am preaching now is like the spring rain that gives moisture all over the earth. Your Buddha-natures are like the seeds that receive the moisture and sprout at once.

SOKEI-AN SAYS The main point of this part of the Sixth Patriarch's record is "the one place and the one deed" in the practice of samadhi.

We are living in many different places and we do different work, but fundamentally those different places are one place and those many deeds are one deed. From such a view, we stay in just one place from beginning to end, and we do just one thing. This view will make your life very simple, and your mind will not be so busy. One deed, one work, will give your mind a rest. You can therefore enjoy your simple and single life though you are doing many different things and living in many different places. From ONE standpoint, you do many things and take many different roles.

The artist often takes this view. From one viewpoint, he makes a statue, or he paints, makes a poem, plays music, dances and sings--but his principle of beauty is only one, whether he is a musician, sculptor or dancer. From the Sixth Patriarch's own viewpoint, he can be all over--in the fire, the earth, the water, the air and in the ether--so he can perform many deeds from morning to evening. It is all the same.

The artist is like a mirror. Many figures, things, images, are reflected upon the mirror--but the mirror is not changed at all.

It is as when you go to the theatre and see a performance. Seeing the drama, your mind becomes good or bad, beautiful or ugly; in accordance with the performance, your mind changes. You sometimes doubt you are the same man in the theatre, but when you come out, you will find that you are the same Mr. So-and-so or Miss So-and-so. It is just the attitude of your mind and you can, in American slang, from that point of view "take it easy." In this busy, materialistic civilization, you need such a standpoint.

If in all places--going, sitting, standing or lying down. These are the "four attitudes of human life." In the sutras, these four attitudes are always repeated. It means whatever you do from morning to evening.

Your mind were not shifted from its simple and direct quality. The original nature of mind is simple, like pure water. It is not like whisky, rum or benedictine.

The Chinese say, "A gentleman's friendship is like water," but the mediocre make friendships like honey. The Chinese attitude is to keep a friendship with the other, clear, pure, clean, penetrating, simple and direct. There is not much taste to it, so you can enjoy that friendship for a long, long time. Mediocre friendship is like honey; the honey mind is sweet, but it soon gathers dust, gets sticky, draws flies. Those who have minds that are simple and direct can keep their friendships.

So your mind is your own temple in which you practice your own religion. Religion is not amusement; it is like the foundation of a house. If the foundation is simple, you don't need to change your face or think one thing in different ways.

It is very hard to find a man who is direct with himself, who does not lie to his own mind. One who is not direct with himself cannot really see himself; but if you are simple and direct with yourself, you can be so with others.

The place where you were for your practice of Dharma: means any place, any streetcorner, office or amusement center. "Your practice of Dharma" is this. It is not necessary to read the Bible or the sutras. It could be, from the Sixth Patriarch's standpoint, chopping trees, gathering wood, hammering nails, writing letters, cooking, washing--all is the practice of Dharma. But you must do it with your simple and direct mind. It will become religion, the single deed in one place.

Would become a pure land. This "pure land" (Jodo) is a Buddhistic term in the sutras. Ananda came to a queen who was in a dungeon, and preached to her, to make her dungeon a pure land. He gave her an analysis of the five different phases of mind, the five shadows, saying that in the final analysis of these, one will find the pure land wherever one is. This was the origin of the term "pure land." And the queen meditated in that dungeon, making it a pure land. We too can meditate and make a pure land.

In Christian terms, "The Kingdom of Heaven will appear on Earth." It is as the Zen student attains the omnipresent body sitting on his cushion. So, in your practice, while shovelling coal into the stove, washing dishes, you can in a moment change your kitchen into the pure land. This is a simple teaching--direct, pure mind--the pure land teaching.

This is called the samadhi in which the appearance of all places becomes that of only one place. "One place" (Dharma Kshetra) in Buddhist terms, is the dominion in which Dharmakaya dwells. You must realize it in Zen practice. Certainly you can build the kingdom of heaven on earth in your daily life, in your daily mind.

If a man continually practices these two kinds of samadhi. That is--to stay in one place, to perform one deed. At your office, though you go to this or to that room, at the end of the day when you look back--you were standing in one place because you were doing one work.

Samadhi means concentration. Concentrate on one thing and you will become it.

If a woman concentrates into a man, she will be

concentrated into him, and finally she will become the man himself. Or, as a man loves a woman, he will finally become that woman herself. It is a kind of samadhi.

If I meditate upon Dharmakaya, concentrating into it, finally I become Dharmakaya itself. When you concentrate into music every day, or into your voice, you become voice itself.

If a man continually practiced these two kinds of samadhi, such practices would be like the earth which ever possesses seeds within itself. Seeds are these two practices: 1. Make everywhere one place. 2. Make every deed one deed.

You see, hear, and so forth, everything through the 84,000 pores of your skin, and it will become a Buddha. In such a way, you must practice; it is the seed.

As the earth ever possesses seeds within itself. You see a friend. He is not different from yourself and soon his mind becomes your mind. There is only one mind in the universe--no You, He, They, I, in the one principle. There is only one man in the universe. To him you salute, with him you eat. You speak, you feel what they all feel. Your mind becomes the mind common to all sentient beings.

A young monk who was doing the cooking, was always asking his Master: "Does the soup taste salty or not?" Finally the Master lost his temper and said: "Haven't you got a tongue of your own?" Only when the young monk realized that the tongue is common to all sentient beings did he become a good cook. Then he also advanced in his Zen study.

If it nurses them long enough, it will get fruits from them. The one place and the one deed in your samadhi are the same as the earth. This is the end of the teaching.

The Master said: *The sermon I am preaching now is like the spring rain that gives moisture all over the earth. This metaphor I translate as "spring rain," but in Chinese, it is "autumn rain."* When you go to California and the autumn rain falls, all becomes green. In summer it is the most devastated place. Everything dies except a few plants or the

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little poppies in the sand. But when autumn comes, all is green. I saw it in California, and in China it is the same. The Sixth Patriarch was living in southern China, near Canton. There in summer everything dries up and dies in the tropical heat.

This "rain" metaphor is very famous in Buddhism, especially in the sutra called "Pundarika" (the Real Law of the Holy Lotus). The lotus is the symbol of the whole world, the whole universe. Pundarika is the white lotus (sambhogakaya--uniform consciousness). There is also the blue lotus, the red lotus and the yellow lotus. Each has its symbolic meaning. But the white lotus means "the unborn," Dharmakaya. Nirmanakaya means the seven different colors.

The Law is written on this one consciousness which spreads in one million consciousnesses. Rain falls upon the mountain, the river, the field, the sea and the rain will be transformed into willow trees, leaves, green vegetation of all kinds; it will come into the water jar of the house, get into your rouge or your ink--into many different things--but originally the shower which fell from heaven was just one shower, though it appears in many ways. The Sixth Patriarch uses this famous metaphor here.

The sermon I am preaching now is like the spring rain that gives moisture all over the earth. Your Buddha natures are like the seeds that receive the moisture and sprout at once. In summer, under the hot sun, the seeds are sleeping. A beautiful metaphor! But under the autumn rain-moistening, the seed will sprout.

If you have no seeds in your mind, nothing sprouts, even though it rains. The seed is this concentration, in one place, in one deed--to make all deeds in one deed.

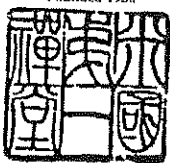
FIVE CHOREOGRAPHERS photographed by Philippe Halsman in 1951 are: Top Antony Tudor, in air Jerome Robbins, on ladder Ruthanna Boris, on floor Todd Bolender, reclining George Balanchine.

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113 East 30th St., New York, NY 10016

Vol. XXXIII, Nos. 5, 6
May, June 1986
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