

# GLOBAL TEA HUT

國際茶亭

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE

*August 2020*

茶樂

TEA & MUSIC  
PART II



## MEADOW

This month, after many requests, we are returning to the topic of Music and Tea. There are so many similarities between the two that it is no surprise they have been used together for millennia. We decided to take a light-hearted and fun approach to the topic this time, so we needed a light, fragrant and delicious tea to fill our conversational cups.

*Love is  
changing the world  
bowl by bowl*

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風吹拂花田  
草地



recycled & recyclable



Soy ink

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# From the editor

**I**n August the weather is still very hot in Taiwan. We continue drinking lighter teas: lots of young sheng puerh, green teas, white teas and lightly-oxidized oolongs like our Tea of the Month. Aged Liu Bao works here as well, because it helps flush dampness and it is so humid in Taiwan. Our teas we ordered in the spring are also in. This year we were more experimental with some of our teas, like Mandala and Cosmos, so it was very fun to taste those and find out that they turned out well. We also have the return of some legends, which is nice.

This year has brought a lot of hardship to so many of us around the world. Adversity is a catalyst for change. Human beings often need challenge to stimulate transformation, both in our individual lives and as a society. We resist change and so often need to be invited to grow. We can rise to the difficult tests we face and awaken through them or re-entrench the egoic ways of living that got us here. A tea practice can help provide the space for introspection and contemplation, allowing us all to look deep within and ask ourselves what kind of world we would like to live in and then consider the ways we can participate in creating our vision of a new and brighter world for ourselves and for future generations. The change certainly begins with me, but I share it with you and you and you... Be the revolution of Love, bowl by bowl.

It is very challenging to segue from discussing the changes in our world... Along with big changes, we all can change the world with our smiles, positivity and through the work we do to make this a better world.

Here in Taiwan, we are beginning to focus our enthusiasm and energy towards the way that we know how to help make this world brighter: a free tea Center, hosting courses for people around the world. We are continuing to look at properties for Light Meets Life, and have found one with some great promise. There are many ways you can help raise awareness and help us take the next step, including: spreading the word about Global Tea Hut, signing up for our online courses (the July one was a great success) and purchasing tea or teaware from our site to help us raise the money we need. If you have any awareness of fundraiser ideas, please contact us and we can work together to build your Center!

We also have a beautiful fundraiser this month. One of our members and an amazing artist, Andrew McKenzie, has donated ten gorgeous paintings. They are all painted using tea liquor and say "Tea is the Supreme Teacher" in Tibetan calligraphy. We will be selling them this month on our website under the "teaware" section to raise money for Light Meets Life! They are very special paintings, and would make a wonderful addition to any tea space, reminding us that Nature, truth and Dao are always the real teachers guiding us through life and tea.

And speaking of teaware, we have some new affordable sets of tea together with teaware for those who are "new to tea," listed under a section of the website dedicated to that. You don't need much to start a tea practice. Many people here started with three bowls a day in their kitchens, using a rice bowl and some leaves to start the introspection that can lead to the transformation we need as individuals and as a society. This is something many of you have been asking us about for a long time. We hope it is the catalyst to many new tea journeys around the world.

Music and Tea are powerful allies. Of course, it is also nice to drink tea in silence. Still, many of the best tea sessions that have happened in the world happened with music. Even in ancient times, tea lovers often took an instrument with them out into Nature to enjoy some tea. Tea can also inspire artists in their creative process, thereby influencing the invention of music as well. In that way, Tea can enhance the creation and reception of music. We sometimes have events where improvisational music is created after the artists drink some tea, allowing the tea to also speak through their instruments which we then all receive differently, having drunk the same tea ourselves.

There is a tremendous amount to talk about when it comes to music and tea: the best of both strive to uplift us, carry us to our heart-center, beyond the sense of separation that is at the root of our suffering to the love that binds us to Nature and to each other. Both speak beyond words, to the nonconceptual space that comes before understanding—the ancient wisdom of being. At their best, Tea and music both come from and lead into stillness, creativity and love. Let's have fun this month exploring their relationship!



## —Further Reading—

This month, we recommend reading through the August 2016 issue, which is all about tea and music. It is a great issue with some amazing insight and history to provide context for this Part II. In particular, we recommend reading or re-reading the article by Michelle Huang.

# TEA OF THE MONTH



ver the course of this month we will be drinking a stunning Baozhong oolong we call “Meadow,” because it smells, tastes and feels just like that mid-summer moment when you break out into a gorgeous green meadow after a long hike through a deep and dark forest. It smells of flowers and fecundity, and energetically allows in the light, refreshing and uplifting you. There are a thousand harmonious floral fragrances in this lovely tea!

Back in the day, Baozhong tea (包種) was called “Pouchong” in English. The term literally means “wrapped” or “packaged” tea, since all Baozhong in the early days was wrapped up in paper squares. Such packaging was common for many types of oolong tea, including Cliff Tea, which, like most all tea in Taiwan, is the forebear of Baozhong. (The oolongs we sell on our website are all packaged in this traditional way.) It is a special treat to see an old master package the 150-gram squares, going through the complex folds at lightning speed. Since the tea was often stored in these packets by ordinary tea drinkers, most tea lovers back in the day also knew how to fold and refold their packets.

The trees, farming methods and processing of Baozhong all came to Taiwan in the latter part of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911). This striped oolong took root primarily in the Nankang (南港) and Wenshan (文山) regions of Taiwan. Originally, Baozhong was processed in the way all oolong was: with heavier oxidation and/or roast. It was made like a Cliff Tea, in other words. After all, even the trees were from Wuyi (original varietal: Qing Shin, 青心). In the late nineteenth century, a demand for greener teas split Baozhong production into what the market called “red water oolong (紅水烏龍)” and “green water oolong (青水烏龍).” Throughout the twentieth century, traditionally-processed Baozhong decreased in popularity, possibly due to central Taiwanese ball oolongs like those from Dong Ding. By the 1990s, Baozhong was more famous as a green oolong than as a traditionally-processed striped oolong like Yancha.

Baozhong is one of the most lightly-oxidized oolongs on Earth—so much so that it hovers on the border of being a slightly-withered green tea. Most Baozhong is only withered 8-12%, while some farmers occasionally wither up to 20% depending on the harvest and weather. The tea is processed like most oolongs, with outdoor and indoor withering, shaking, firing/de-enzyming, rolling and roasting.

Due to the rolling, Baozhong is a striped tea. When shaken and rolled well, the edges of the leaves will be bruised red, which is gorgeous if you brew Meadow leaves in a bowl. The light withering lends the tea a beautiful bouquet of floral and citrus aromas that are invigorating. Our Tea of the Month is made from Qing Shin trees, though some farmers are experimenting with making Baozhong from two of the “Three Daughters” of Taiwan: Si Ji Chuan and Jin Xuan. Coming from Qing Shin lends our Tea of the Month its hints of orchid, its delicateness and clean, cool fresh minty sensation in the mouth (*hui gan*, 回甘).

Spring Baozhong tea is a tea that can really connect us to tea through the flavors and aromas of spring—of a meadow we lay in for a morning or lazy summer afternoon. We find this tea very Yin and cooling, which perfectly suits the weather at this time of year. Meadow is not deep energetically; it is soft and graceful. But this is a power in its own way—a song you have to listen to more intently, because it is quiet. This isn’t an overwhelming tea; it is a tender and sensitive poet that has so much to offer if you give it some time and space, and approach it with a quiet mind. Sometimes the simplest teas are the most rewarding. There is a lot here by way of aroma, but the depth of this tea really lies softly flowing beneath the fragrances—if we but allow ourselves to toss the rope aside and drift down those aroma rivers. For this reason, it really is worth brewing this month’s tea leaves in a bowl for at least one session (though it does respond well to gongfu brewing as well). And be sure to take the time to enjoy the wondrous fragrance of this tea!



Meadow



Zhu Shan, Taiwan



Baozhong Oolong



Taiwanese



~600-800 Meters



草  
地



# *Taiwanese Oolong Quick Reference Guide*

## 台湾烏龍指南

## TEA GENRES

**A**long with brewing guides, we thought we would devote some of these Tea of the Month sections over the next year to creating “Quick Guides” to various types of tea. Over the years, we have explored the genres of tea in great depth in the “Deeper Session” section of many Tea of the Month articles. But tea is complicated, and so we thought it would be helpful to boil down this information in a cauldron and serve up a single bowl that can be used as a basic review, a reference chart and an aid to study.

When settlers came to Taiwan from Fujian, they brought with them tea trees and processing methods. From Wuyi, varietals and production techniques migrated to the north of Taiwan where Baozhong is produced; and from the south of Fujian, Tieguanyin production of ball-shaped oolong made its way first to Muzha in the north of the island, and then on to central Taiwan where the “high mountain oolong” flourished and adapted to suit the terroir and a unique Taiwanese tea.

Taiwan tea production and appreciation has influenced the whole world, changing the way that many people throughout the mainland and around the world prepare and appreciate tea, as well as the variety and types of oolong produced in other regions. There are several reasons why Taiwan is so important to the tea world. First, it had strong maritime connections to the rest of the world. History often ignores the indigenous people and focuses on “when Taiwan was settled,” but it was actually already inhabited by aboriginal tribes when the Dutch first opened a port in the seventeenth century. In 1662, Ming loyalist who were fleeing the end of their dynasty in 1644 to the Manchu Qing Dynasty expelled the Dutch and established a Chinese foothold on the island. It was then that settlers started coming to the island.

The second reason that Taiwanese tea has been so influential on the tea world is, of course, terroir. Tea is its environment. This is why the categorization of tea based exclusively on processing methods can be misleading. You can process a striped tea in northern Taiwan like a Wuyi Cliff Tea, but it won't ever be a Cliff Tea if it wasn't grown in Wuyi. (The same is true of “Cliff Tea” grown on lowland hills outside the park that made tea from Wuyi famous.) Taiwan is a lush, mountainous volcanic island that is incredibly fertile. The weather, soil and geothermal activity all make the tea that grows here special.

From 1895 until the end of World War II, Taiwan was occupied by the Japanese, who also encouraged and developed the tea trade throughout the island to fund their empire. After the war, Taiwan steadily grew, passing through the so-called “Taiwan Miracle” of economic prosperity, which boomed in the 1970s and 1980s. This success fueled a tremendous amount of culture, especially in regard to tea. Tea study exploded, as did many areas of art, learning and culture. Soon there were tea shops and tea houses throughout the island, filled with a vibrant and active community of tea lovers who began writing books, exploring traditional tea practices and promoting all aspects of tea culture. This, of course, resulted in a tremendous boom in tea production as well. Therefore, Taiwan boasts a plethora of tea. Even within the genre of oolong, Taiwan produces a tremendous variety of tea—from lightly-oxidized Baozhong to roasted Dong Ding and from Tieguanyin in Muzha to Eastern Beauty in Hsinchu and Miaoli.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the Taiwanese people themselves are kind, smart, innovative and hardworking. They are also very artistic and creative. All of this has contributed to the success of Taiwanese tea and influenced the rest of the tea world in doing so.

# Oolong Regions in Taiwan

Wen Shan 文山 / Pinglin 坪林

Baozhong (包種)

GABA (佳龍)

Muzha 木柵

Tieguanyin (鐵觀音)

Beipu\* 北埔

Eastern Beauty (東方美人)

\*also found in Miaoli (苗栗)

Taichung 台中

Li Shan (梨山)

Da Yu Ling (大禹嶺)

Nantou 南投

Mingjian (名間)

Dong Ding (凍頂)

Shan Lin Xi (衫林溪)

Yu Shan (玉山)

Chiayi 嘉義

Ali Shan (阿里山)





## *Varietals*

---

**Baozhong:** *Qing Shin* (青心)

**Eastern Beauty:** *Qing Shin Da Mo* (青心大有)

**Dong Ding:** *traditionally Qing Shin Da Mo* (青心大有),  
but nowadays can be *Qing Shin* (青心)

**High-mountain oolong:** *Qing Shin* (青心)

**Muzha:** *Tieguanyin varietal* (鐵觀音品種)

**Three Daughters:** *Jing Xuan* (金萱), *Tsui Yu* (翠玉)

or *Si ji Chun* (四季春)

**Others:** *Huang Gan* (黃柑) and *Da Ye* (大葉)

品種

# TRADITIONAL VS. MODERN PROCESSING

## 傳統與現代製程

Thankfully, there is a growing trend of traditionally-processed oolong, which in some ways follows the organic trend—in that it also began as a way for lower-elevation regions like Dong Ding to compete in a market that was leaving them behind, as well as in response to more organic farming. This is because organic tea responds much, much better to traditional processing since the leaves are often bug-bitten and therefore oxidize differently than whole leaves that were protected by pesticides.

Oolong is a semi-oxidized tea. The range of semi-oxidation is much greater nowadays, so saying an oolong is “traditionally-processed” means it falls into that narrower, higher range of oxidation, as oolong was processed for hundreds of years until the 1970s–80s. Simply put, traditionally-processed oolong means higher oxidation and roast.

In the 1970s, everything was “Made in Taiwan” the way it is all from China today. This industrialization brought prosperity to Taiwan. There was a boom in tea culture, as demand went through the roof. Small, aboriginal tea farms slowly started shifting to large plantations, owned by the families themselves or sold to larger corporations. This demand for greater quantities of tea drove oolong production into previously uncharted territory, creating new obstacles and challenges along the way.

Traditional oolong processing is the most complicated and skilled of all tea production. This is not to say that it takes little skill to make a fine green tea, for example; it takes a great deal of skill, in fact. But traditional oolong is more complicated and delicate, and there’s a narrower margin of error—misprocessed leaves are rigorously down-sorted (even more so in less-profitable yesteryears). It takes decades to master. Generations are spent perfecting the mastery of oolong tea production.

To meet growing demand, farmers needed tea production that was mechanized and easy to master, allowing employees to be trained in a matter of weeks; they needed a wide margin of error so that slightly misprocessed leaves would go unnoticed; and they needed the tea to be easy to prepare so that consumers could put it in a thermos, a tea bag, a mug or a pot, and it would turn out fine. They needed lightly-oxidized oolong.

Light oxidation and little-to-no roasting produces a greener kind of oolong that is easier to make, has a wider margin of error and can be brewed any way you like, maintaining a bright, flowery fragrance that appeals to the mainstream. This shift in tea production later moved to the mainland as well. This changed the tea world, including teaware, tea brewing and even puerh production and scholarship. (As a result of these changes, many Taiwanese tea lovers began switching to puerh because they didn’t like the domestic transition to lighter oolong.)

Baozhong is perhaps the exception to this, as it already trended towards lighter oxidation at the end of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911). Though closer to a green tea (as they were traditionally produced when processing was slower and leaves therefore withered while waiting), it also was an adaptation driven by the market of the time. But so were many great inventions, and the tea world is richer for the variations.

Due to marketing, mainstream consumers started to mistakenly regard altitude as equivalent to quality, and lower-altitude farms lost a lot of patronage. Some of these farms switched to organic and/or traditional processing to make themselves stand out from greener high-mountain oolong tea. As a result, traditional processing has once again become popular in Taiwan, which is a great thing for those of us who appreciate it.



## 從淺入深

# THE BASIC PROCESSING OF OOLONG

烏龍的基本製程

**Plucking**

**Withering**  
(indoors and outdoors)

**Shaking**  
(lang qing, 浪青)

**Withering/Shaking**  
in 90-minute cycles

**Firing**  
(Chao qing, 炒青)



**Rolling/Shaping**  
(rou nian, 揉捻)

**Roasting**  
(hong pei, 烘培)

**Sorting**  
(fen ji, 分級)

**Packaging**

**Cloud-Soaring**  
(yun teng, 雲騰)

100

## OXIDATION CHART



氧



## Processing Taiwanese Oolong

From the ethereally fragrant Baozhong to the caramel Dong Ding, from the intoxicatingly fruity Eastern Beauty to the teas grown at heights of thousands of meters, the Taiwanese oolong family presents an enchanting and unique tea experience for all tea lovers. But its diversity can at times be confusing and daunting. Oolong tea is an art, requiring the most skill to make and brew, and should therefore be appreciated with an artistic mind.

To fully understand the diversity of oolong tea, one must understand the interplay of three factors that characterize each oolong: degree of oxidation, roasting and age. Of course, the cultivar of the tea plant also plays a decisive role in the overall aroma and taste.

Oxidation is one of the defining elements of all tea. In general, people categorize oolong tea as partially-oxidized during processing. On the oxidation spectrum, oolong tea traditionally spanned from 30/40% to 70%. However, nowadays the high-mountain oolong may have an oxidation degree below thirty percent. Baozhong certainly does.

Once you enter the oolong world through the oxidation window, you immediately face another two important factors: degree of roasting and age. Roasting and aging the tea can both be thought of as post-production influences. Though they are different in many ways, you can think of them as commensurate, so that aging a tea throughout the years is like roasting it for longer periods.

## Roasting of Oolong (hong pei, 烘焙)

Taiwanese oolong tea masters have inherited the roasting skills so essential to Wuyi Cliff Tea and Anxi Tieguanyin. Proper roasting of an oolong should achieve the following goals: (1) stabilize the tea quality; (2) correct the aroma and taste; and (3) increase the mellowness and complexity. Traditional oolong roasting can be a very time-consuming and labor-intensive process, especially for oolong such as Dong Ding and Tieguanyin. Roasting was often done by hand over hardwood charcoal fire, and the tea had to be monitored constantly by sight, smell and feel. Even today, when modern machinery has mostly replaced roasting over charcoal fires, experience and patience still play vital roles in the success of oolong roasting. It is common for oolong such as Dong Ding to undergo several days of roasting, and Tieguanyin to take weeks.

Looking at the full range of oolong, the roasting degree usually aligns with oxidation, e.g. a highly-oxidized oolong is often roasted more heavily. However, within the 30-70% oxidation of traditional oolong, the lower oxidation often gets a longer, heavier roast and vice versa. There are some few exceptions to this rule.

As we have discussed earlier, roasting decisions are also largely affected by the consumer market's preference, including the creation of lightly-oxidized Baozhong in the late nineteenth century. Lighter teas are easier to brew and consume and therefore suitable for the mainstream.

# AGING OOLONG

陳年烏龍

*Enjoying aged oolong is an unfamiliar experience for most tea drinkers. Puerh, we know, generally gets better as it ages, but fewer of us know that something similar happens to oolong. While lightly-oxidized oolong tea is generally understood to be best when drunk fresh, it can also be stored for years and improve with time—even though they are not the ideal candidates for aging. We all have limited space to store teas, so it is often better to choose a more heavily-oxidized/roasted oolong, such as Dong Ding, Eastern Beauty or Tieguanyin for aging.*

*We must distinguish between intentionally-aged oolong and oolong that has exceeded its shelf life but is still left around. Both can be great, but intentionally-aged oolong is much better, especially since the quality of leftover tea is suspect and storage/humidity may detrimentally affect the tea.*

*Aging an oolong can significantly improve its mellowness and develop more complexity in the aroma and flavor. Aging oolong is not like aging puerh, where biological activity plays an important role in the transformation of the tea. Puerh requires a certain degree of humidity and air circulation, but aging oolong, on the other hand, is best in an environment low in humidity and oxygen. This means that many of us in this community, who live in places that are less than ideal for puerh aging, can still age oolong. Generally, a more robust oolong is selected and placed in a glazed earthenware jar. It helps to completely fill the jar so that there is less oxygen inside. The jar is then sealed, often with wax, and stored in a cool place without sunlight or humidity. More oxidized or roasted tea is usually drier and therefore ages better. Aging your own oolong is very rewarding!*

# Brewing Tips

冲泡技巧 完成好茶

Meadow is one of the easiest teas to brew that we have ever shared. It is delicious and fragrant, refreshing and uplifting, no matter how you prepare it. It is gorgeous leaves in a bowl. We recommend at least one session prepared in this way. The leaves open in a very beautiful shade of dark green with red edges, and it is so nice to have the fragrance right under your face in an open bowl. Also, this tea is excellent when brewed gongfu or even in a sidehandle pot. You should treat it as you would a green tea, as it is really closer to that than to traditionally-processed oolong teas.

Since Meadow is so versatile, we thought we could offer some suggestions for choosing a brewing method when more than one is available to you. It can be confusing to know when to brew tea leaves in a bowl and when to use a sidehandle pot, for example. And when or why would you choose gongfu tea over bowl tea?

Choosing between gongfu and bowl tea is the place to start. To keep it simple, let's discuss two factors that are the main considerations behind this decision. First of all, there are certain levels of quality in tea that really demand gongfu brewing. When a tea is very rare and precious, we want to brew it in the way that best brings out its potential, allowing it to shine on the stage it was meant to. This brewing method improves the quality of the tea and our ability to appreciate it. It therefore seems wasteful to brew a very fine tea in bowls. One might wonder why you wouldn't want to brew all your tea gongfu if it produces a better cup. Good question. The answer leads us to the second factor in choosing bowl tea versus gongfu tea: the energy of the session. Though there is some overlap, bowl tea is more meditative, with a focus on ceremonial procedure, mindfulness and creating the meditative space of self-cultivation and connection to Nature. Gongfu tea is about skill, refinement and subtlety. Bowl tea even uses larger muscle groups, while gongfu forces us to use the very tips of our fingers. Do you want to meditate, creating space for sacred intention and focus, or do you want to refine your skills? Do you want to let go of the qualitative mind, or strengthen its perspicacity? Are your guests better served by a heightened appreciation of the tea liquor or a ceremonial relaxation into themselves and the occasion? Again, there is overlap, meaning that gongfu sessions can be deep and ceremonial, and bowl tea sessions can also be more loose and casual. However, in general understanding the focus of these two methods will help you choose which one to apply to the tea session before you.

If you decide on bowl tea, the question then becomes whether to choose leaves in a bowl or a sidehandle. For us, leaves in a bowl is always the favorite. The only reason to choose sidehandle over leaves in a bowl is if the tea or the situation demands it. Many teas respond better to sidehandle brewing—some cannot be put in a bowl, as they have too many buds, are compressed or perhaps too strong. Some occasions, like larger groups, can also demand a sidehandle. Nevertheless, it is really better to view the sidehandle as an extension of leaves in a bowl brewing as opposed to something separate.



Sidehandle



Gongfu



Leaves in a Bowl



**Water:** spring water or best bottled

**Fire:** coals, infrared or gas

**Heat:** crab-eye, roughly 85–90 °C

**Brewing Methods:** leaves in a bowl, gongfu or sidehandle

**Steeping:** for gongfu first steeping is longer, flash, flash, then growing

**Patience:** ten (gongfu)/seven (bowl)

茶 Try brewing this tea in multiple ways to experience the difference in the tea as well as the variations in the overall sessions.

Leaves in a bowl and gongfu are ideal to contrast.





樂茶

Music & Tea

茶人: *Wu De* (無的)

Music for Tea

<u>Album</u>	<u>Artist</u>	<u>Notes</u>
1. P. boy sleeps	Joni & Alex	BT
2. Silencia	Hammock	BT
3. Pine	Olaf Mill	BT, GT
4. China	Xi Xiangting	GT
5. et-Hadra	Wiese/...	BT
6. Raku	Widoff	
7. Tow of Peace/Healing		
8. <del>Love Supreme</del>		
9. Call of the Valley	Peter Gabriell	
10. A winged Victory	Juliana B.	
11. Passion		

Soul Tea = BT  
Yangfu Tea = GT  
Morning = M  
Afternoon = A  
Evening = E





**M**usic and Tea share a lasting dance through the rhythm of bowls filled with resonant notes passed on to musical scores riding the creative waves of bowls. Over millennia, tea lovers have carried instruments with them into the wilds to fill their tea sessions with sacred sounds, further easing their souls, whilst many musicians have drunk tea to inspire their songwriting, filling Music with the spirit and love of Tea. In this way, Music has woven into the Tea experience, changing the ambience of countless tea sessions and perhaps even energetically altering the frequency of the tea liquor as well as the one who consumes it. And then, like a partner in dance, Tea has responded in step down through the ages, filling myriad musicians with the energy to stay awake and the inspiration to fill the heart as they create their words and songs—sometimes sharing them live for the first time at a tea session, thereby bringing this magical cycle round again, each partner, Tea then Music, in perfect unison...

Beyond the interaction between Music and Tea, they both share a lot in common as distinct arts. Both have the power to ease tension and loosen us up, releasing the grip of heavy thoughts or emotions clouding our lives. Tea and Music also can express the inner spring of rising joy when it comes—the way we spontaneously burst into song or smile from a deep bliss as we hold our bowls. Both Tea and Music bring us together: in sacred ritual, in celebration and unity, as well as in deep peace. They are also both nonverbal teachings, offering insight into the deepest reaches of our own beings—the place beyond our sense of separation where we connect with Nature, which means that both Tea and Music can lead us to Nature through our inner nature.

In ancient Chinese cosmology, thunder began the spring cycle, catalyzing life to arise. This thunder was followed by the relief that the rains brought, germinating the Earth with Heavenly weather-energy after a long, dry time apart. Music, dance and trance were all thought to be expres-

sions aligned with this renewal. In all cultures everywhere, music and dance have been used to align people with a deep inner release from the mind and a connection to Nature. Like all art, music began with prayer, meditation and shamanic trance. The emperors of China elevated and regulated Music to the forefront of the national religion. Amongst the emperor's duties were the maintenance of a tremendous amount of ritual legacy, ceremonies and music that had to be tuned and conducted properly to harness the sacred intentions of humans and bridge our world to the unseen spirit world. Heaven and Earth were aligned through the "Son of Heaven" and his courtly rites and rituals. Confucius proposed that the ruler who performed the proper rituals, sacrifices and rites with deep spiritual understanding could "rule the world as though it were spinning in his hand." There was an entire ministry devoted to helping the emperor make sure ceremonies were conducted properly, with much emphasis placed on the music used to conduct the rituals.



茶唱自己的歌

# 旋律

All art began as an expression of sacred. In the same way that music can enhance tea, and tea enhances music, sacred art was performed to lead the participants into a state beyond separation and also written and performed from out of that state. For how can art lead us to a state beyond our individual egos if it were not a hand extended from that same space? For some, art was a guide to sacred, and for others a way of channeling the sacred into form. Painting, theater, music and tea all began as ceremonies to conduct the spiritual sentiments of humankind.

Art has since evolved into other arenas beyond religion, but its true love and purpose will always be the sacred. In *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*, James Joyce poignantly says that lower arts make us move, stirring our emotions, while the highest and purest arts will always bring us to stillness—filled with what the Greeks called “*agapé*,” which literally means that we are so halted, so still, that our mouths hang there “*agape*.” Art can satire social or political problems we need to change,

catalyze emotional movement that breaks up damaging repression and help us face our challenges, entertain us and all kinds of other wonderful creative expressions and purposes, including just the pure joy of creating for its own sake, without purpose or aim, which we will talk about shortly. However, the first and last, alpha and omega, of art is from the sacred within us to that which is holy in Nature. The highest art is sacred art. This is as true of Tea as it is of Music.

Both Tea and Music extend back beyond the record of history’s brush, both beginning in ceremonial forms that bridged the sacred and mundane. And both are equally profound and simple. All music on Earth essentially derives from just twelve notes, while all of the worlds of tea, teaware, ceremony and drinking are all really just leaves, water and heat. We can drown in the overwhelming culture surrounding both Music and Tea or return to the simplest moment of day-to-day mind. Both Music and Tea offer a gateway to connection with ourselves, Nature

and each other. They also offer entertainment, hobby and happiness in the most mundane of pastimes. As we hinted at above, the commonality that makes them both so extraordinarily ordinary is that they are purposeless activities.

Tea and Music are both without aim. If the aim of music was to get somewhere, then the fastest players would always be the best. The aim of a song is not to get to the end. The song is its own aim. Similarly, the aim of a tea session is not to finish the tea. There is no aim in Tea or in Music, which makes them very well-suited to each other. Because they are aimless activities, they counter our mind’s habit of constant ambition and craving-seeking for that ever-elusive “more.” Most of us spend a lot of our time seeking and wanting something, without ever stepping back and asking why it is that the things we want are never the things we have, or wondering how the things we used to want did not fulfill us in the way we thought they would once we got them.

We constantly struggle to change reality, trying to avoid unwanted experiences and gather what we want to us. This constant dissatisfaction means we are rarely present unto what is, focusing instead on what could be.

Tea and Music are a road home. They are a path that leads to this present moment, which is our true home. Tea and Music are also gateways to the body, through drinking or dance. And our bodies are, of course, our one true home throughout this life. With purpose or aim, we are free to be present and enjoy an experience for its own sake, as opposed to what it can do for us later. Finally, Tea and Music offer release. The constant struggle towards betterment brings all the tension of effort and ambition as well as the pain of failure. Relaxing into the moment for its own sake is like the cool rains that nourish the Earth at the beginning of spring—the very symbol of music in ancient Chinese philosophy.

There is a nonverbal, wordless space that Music and Tea both come from and lead into—an experiential force that cannot be described. Some of the greatest tea sessions of my life included improvisational music, including the unforgettable time I brewed tea while a shakuhachi master played his flute. The hosts were really invested in the idea that I say something after the performance/tea ceremony. I was reluctant to do so. What could I add to his playing? What could I say after such a deep session? I was truly at a loss for words (rare for a bigmouth like me). All I could muster was deep gratitude. I thanked the master for changing all the tea and my life so epically that I can still to this day, years later, taste that exquisite nectar filled with the stirring vibrancy of a type of wind and bamboo goddess. I also expressed that I was extremely grateful that he and I both had non-verbal ways of sharing our Zen. To this day, I often take a moment to repeat this after tea ceremonies and before sharing; that all I really have to say was said in the ceremony itself, not the words that follow.

An introduction to Tea and Music, what they share in common and how they work together is great, but not equal to a single wind-born note held shatteringly in a bowl of dark Five Element puerh... The latter might just change your life forever.

There is a lot of joy in Tea, and most of it is born of silence, and to silence it returns. This is the same for the music that accompanies our tea.

## Music with Tea

Music can be a great enhancement to a chaxi. To review, “Chaxi (茶席)” literally means “tea stage.” It is the “stage” on which our tea session unfolds. Furthermore, it is the performance as well. It is the creation of a tea space, whether it be a room or part of one, permanent or temporary. Chaxi is then the cleaning and decoration of that space to celebrate the unique spirit of the one encounter, one chance (一茶一會), that is this specific tea session and then it is the unfolding of that tea session, as well as the cleaning up afterwards. The metaphor of a stage is therefore quite apt, as a stage is first constructed, then decorated to suit the performance of the occasion; and the stage *is* also the performance itself. (We even use the word “stage” in this way, saying “take to the stage,” etc.) It can also help to think of chaxi as a mandala: a work of art meant to connect a specific moment with a teaching, the cosmos or an aspect of the cosmos. Chaxi includes what we are wearing, the space, decorations, teaware, incense, music, brewing method and so on.

In our practice of chaxi, we must always approach every aspect of our tea space with an all-important “whether or not” before we can address the “which kind” or “where.” Just as with a stage performance, the writers, producers and directors must decide whether or not to have music in the performance before deciding what kind of music and where in the show. In other words, the first question isn’t what kind of music, but whether we want music in our tea session at all!

It is important to remember that music can intrude upon our tea, just as our tea can intrude upon the music—muddling, rather than enhancing one another. Silent tea sessions are also great. In general, when out in the world, I rarely use music in sessions, because many of my guests live noisy lives in bustling cities and therefore have overactive minds. They can use

a bit more silence in their lives. Also, reducing the chaxi to a simple form celebrates emptiness, frugality, simplicity and contentment with the small things in life—all much-needed lessons Tea can teach us. We have enough multi-tasking and mental entertainment in our lives without approaching Tea as if it too is “not enough” and needs more to engage our attentions. Simply put: the taste, flavor and energy of the tea are often enough sensory engagement, and music or incense can overdo things in a gaudy way or perhaps distract our attention from the tea and what She has to communicate to us. Less is more, in Tea and in life. (All Tea lessons are life lessons!)

That said, Music and Tea do harmonize miraculously, and blending them is wonderful, powerful and enjoyable so long as it is done consciously. This means making the choice to include music for a session as opposed to assuming it will be there, or worse yet, becoming dependent on music to sit for tea.

Once you have decided to bring music into the equation, you have to decide what music you will play. There is no real formula. You can use albums or playlists, and the right occasion could benefit from almost any type of music. Choosing music is like all areas of chaxi practice: *each occasion is unique and never repeated*. There is no correct or incorrect choice of music, in other words, only whether or not *this* music is correct/harmonizing for *this* session. Is your session casual or formal? Is the purpose to enter deep meditative space? Is it a chance to engage our connection to Nature? To the Divine? Or are we just trying to relax? Once you know the type of ambiance of your chaxi, you will be able to choose the music that will enhance and uplift that occasion.

As with all areas of chaxi, it is a good idea to practice on your own before offering something to guests—just like a musician will rehearse many times before performing live. We never serve an unknown tea to guests, for example, unless that is the purpose of the session (i.e., to try a new tea). We get to know a tea first, learning how to prepare it in different ways and what it is like. Then we will know how to use it for our guests: which occasion/energy it suits and how to prepare it.

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Similarly, we get to know albums before sharing them, making sure we understand how they sound and feel before choosing an album or playlist for a particular chaxi.

Beyond the energy of the occasion, there is a whole area for exploration related to matching particular albums/playlists to certain teas. Some music goes well with all tea; other types of music may suite a certain genre; while some rare albums/playlists seem to fall head-over-heels in love with one special tea. When you find a pairing like that, it is unbelievable! It will be hard to drink that tea without that album, or listen to the album without that tea. They will remain a couple for you throughout your tea journey. Try getting to know a tea very well without any music, then start adding music and paying attention to any differences. Take notes about anything you experience in the tea that seems different from usual. There is endless play and learning in this.

As you can see, there are no pervasive principles to choosing music for tea. However, there are three general guidelines that may help begin your journey (and also influenced our ranking of the albums in the next section). First of all, music without lyrics is usually better for tea. When we hear words, we focus on the meaning. That is great if the aim is to listen to music, but it is distracting if your focus is tea. For that reason, we rarely choose music

with words for tea (unless the music is the focus). Second, and most obvious, peaceful, calming music is usually the best choice for a tea session. Relaxing music that enhances the tea without distracting from it is a great beginning. Finally, we like albums that have a sense of journey to them, as opposed to separate, disjointed tracks. It is ideal if the whole album flows seamlessly. This doesn't necessarily mean that there aren't any gaps or pauses, but rather that there is a synergy between the tracks that connects them to each other, the way each bowl or cup or tea liquor is unique, but still from the same tea.

## Tea with Music

Primarily, from the perspective of our tea practice, we will be bringing music into our tea spaces. And so our path will be about whether to use music or not; then, having decided to use music, determining the energy of this occasion as well as the tea and brewing method before pairing the session with a music that suits the mood and tea we are preparing. This is akin to the way music serves a movie, sometimes taking an ordinary Hollywood blockbuster and uplifting it to spiritual art. (*Gladiator* is a great example of a movie made more by its soundtrack.) Finding music to enhance our tea session, uplifting the tea and experience without

distracting us or taking us away from the tea is a part of our chaxi practice. Like all areas of chaxi, this means that the season, time of day, ambiance, decoration, brewing method and our mood will all play a role.

Beyond music as part of a tea practice, there is also tea for music. Sometimes in our personal lives outside our practice of Cha Dao, we will want to listen to music for its own sake as well. And we can also bring tea to these sessions. A nice, casual cup or bowl of tea by the side as we enjoy some music is also great. This is analogous to our connection to each other through Tea: we can prepare tea quietly and ceremonially, connecting deeply and silently with each other through our mutual reverence and through the fact that we are all concentrating on the same tea. However, tea can also sit in the background and provide the social lubricant needed for us to have wonderful conversations and connections to each other. Tea doesn't mind being in the background, serving as a heart-warming translator to make our human connections easier and more fluid. In the same way, music can come into our tea, hovering gently in the background and uplifting everything while we focus on our tea, or tea can be in the background, heightening our senses as we focus on some beautiful music. We have tried to include both types of albums in our list of the greatest tea albums that follows this introduction.



# THE GREATEST TEA ALBUMS



It is important that you understand why we have decided to create this list of tea albums and rank them. The purpose of this list of the fifty greatest tea albums of all time is not to be some kind of authoritative pronouncement. This list isn't even an opinion. The real aim of creating this list was two-fold. First and foremost, we have made this list for the fun of doing so. *I love making lists!* I always have. I have notebooks full of them—I like the nostalgia involved in contemplating the great tea sessions of my life and if music was there, which album/playlist. Many of the albums on this list are tried and true—working well with all tea or with certain teas very well, which means that they are a great place to start your journey in learning how to pair music with tea. And that brings me to the second reason why we are doing this: education, of course. We hope to encourage new travels and are excited to see where they lead you!

Not only can you use this list to start exploring Music and Tea, but each of these albums is a launching point into great music—not just for tea, but great music full stop. For that reason, we added a dimension to the creation of this list that made the ranking much, much more difficult (also more interesting and fun): we decided

not to include more than one album from any given artist. This was hard because some artists have multiple tea albums that are tried and true, forcing us to choose the best of the best from that artist. This was tons of fun because it also meant relistening to these albums to decide which one we wanted to choose as representative of that artist. But the main reason we chose to limit each artist to one tea album was to expose you to that much more tea music! By doing so, this list has become far more expansive, leaving you with a lifetime of Tea and Music exploration. We decided to stick to albums and leave out playlists since that complicates the tea and music relationship even further, but having a list of fifty different artists to explore means you can take this to the level of playlist creation if you want.

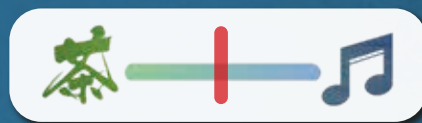
Of course, it should be stated and restated that this is not the end-all-be-all list of tea albums. Your list would look different. This list is influenced by thirty years of tea drinking, and so the best albums are often the ones that have uplifted lots of special occasions over the course of decades—forming the soundtrack to so many beautiful tea memories that make us smile, filling our hearts with gratitude and changing our best of list.

For each album, we will provide a description of the album itself, why we chose it, and if it relates to a certain tea or time of day. We will also include a section of further exploration, which may be other albums by that artist or similar artists. Finally, we have created our own unique little chart (*shown below*), which graphs the album on a “Tea to Music” scale—meaning that if the album leans towards Tea, it will work great in tea-focused sessions where the music is a background element of a chaxi. And if it leans towards the Music side of the scale, on the other hand, it will most likely be disruptive to a tea-centric experience.

We hope that this list brings you as much joy as the creation of it brought us! We hope it opens up all kinds of new portals in your tea journey, as you happily learn how to use music in your chaxi and also how to use tea to more thoroughly listen to music! Music and tea are a marriage made in Heaven, but just as enraptured on Earth!



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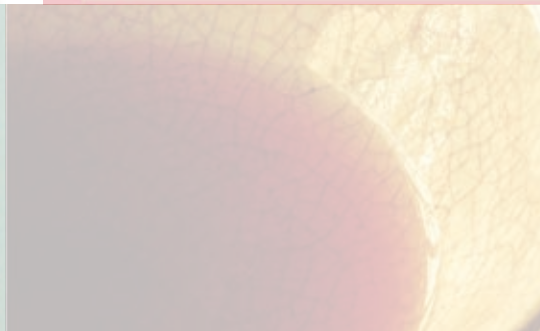
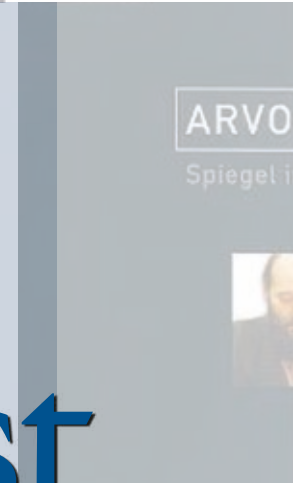
茶 Remember, the first decision to make is whether to have music at all. Don't underestimate the importance and power of silence, and try not to become reliant on music to find peace. Use music when the chaxi calls for it, and then only choose the right type of music. Above is the scale we have used for all the albums in the Hall of Fame that follows. The tea is left and the music right. If the notch is centered, the album could go either way. This scale represents whether the experience is more about listening to music or about drinking tea. Both are okay, but as with all elements in a chaxi, the decision should be a conscious one, and should enhance and harmonize with the occasion, the tea, the guests and the energy you hope to offer. Casual sessions are one thing, while formal are another. It is worth practicing truly celebrating the unique “one encounter, one chance” of every tea session, so that we do not get stuck in formulas or routines and forget to honor our guests, ourselves, the occasion and the tea. Music is just one such trap—decorations, incense, flowers and any other element of the chaxi can all become habitual and lose the power of presence and radiance the moment should convey.

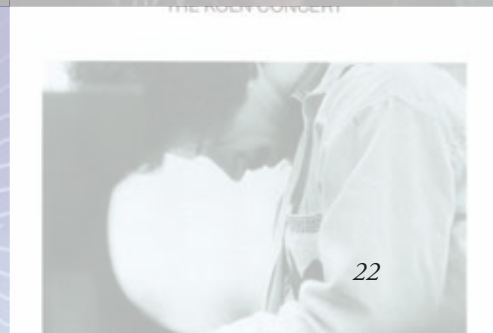
At Meeting by the River  
Ry Cooder & V.M. Bhatt  
Bottleneck Guitar      Mohan Singh



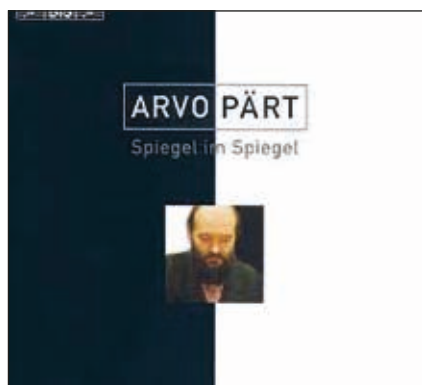
SPACES  
nils frahm

# 50 Greatest Tea Albums of All Time





# 偉大茶輯



50

## Spiegel im Spiegel

Arvo Pärt

Not only is Arvo Pärt a tea lover who visits one the best tea shops on Earth, but his music is also glorious. Arvo Pärt is an Estonian composer of classical music brimming with spiritual presence, depth and gravity. This album is powerful, subtle and deep. It can be a bit engaging for some tea, but is nice for a solo morning bowl tea session.

**Further Exploration:** In part we chose this album to open up the possibility of classical music in tea. Like most classical albums, parts of this one can be on the intense side. A well-curated playlist of classical pieces, however, can lean to tea.



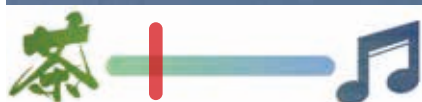
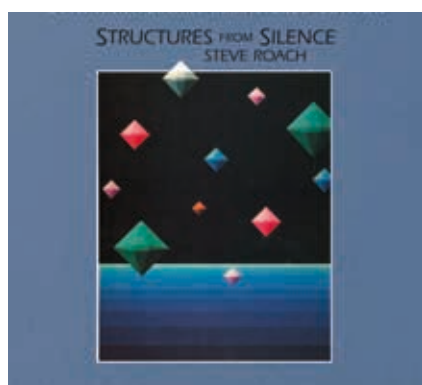
49

## Dionysus

Dead Can Dance

This is another album opening up doors. It is on the intense side of things, leaning towards music. Dead Can Dance often sound like all traditional and indigenous music of the world stirred together in a cauldron and boiled to soothe our indigenous souls. This album is a journey, deep, powerful and away from the tea.

**Further Exploration:** Any Dead Can Dance album is incredible. Several of the newer live albums, as well as *Anastasis* and *Spiritchaser* are all very strong, especially in the evening. All of them lean away from tea, though.



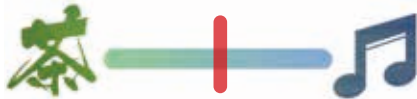
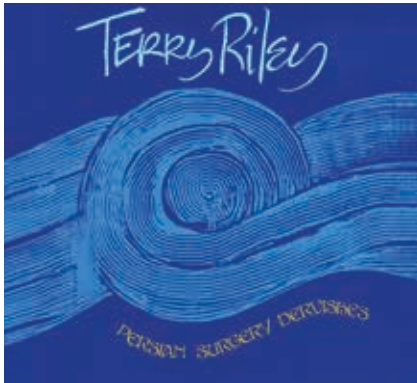
48

## Structures from Silence

Steve Roach

One of the earliest and greatest ambient albums of all time! Released in 1984, it was the first breakthrough album of a prolific musician. According to Roach, *Structures From Silence* emanates from “that sigh, that expansive place where you breathe out and then you breathe back in.” It is airy, cloudy and uplifting, perfectly harmonizing with puerh tea.

**Further Exploration:** Steve Roach has a vast body of work, and most of it is great tea music. *The Sky Opens* and *Stillpoint* are a bit more intense than this album but amongst our favorites. Also, welcome to ambient: *the* tea music genre!



# 47

## Persian Surgery Dervishes

Terry Riley

Terry Riley is a yoga practitioner and musical genius who would play all-night improvisational music on an electric organ throughout the 1970s. This is the closest we can come to those sessions. Though it can lead away from tea (we set it in the middle), his spellbinding, trance-inducing patterns weave light across your mind, especially alongside an aged tea!

**Further Exploration:** Riley has an impressive body of work, including the iconic *In C* (there's a version performed with Chinese instruments by the Shanghai Film Orchestra). *The Lion's Throne* is one of our all-time favorite albums...



# 46

## The Köln Concert

Keith Jarrett

Sometimes the Divine shines unexpectedly. Jarrett arrived late to the hall after a long, exhausting drive and was considering canceling the event due to back pain; and then, to top it all off, he didn't like the piano they had. However, what followed is one of the greatest solo recordings in history. It leans towards music, but can be so engaging with a fine oolong tea some evening!

**Further Exploration:** Keith Jarrett's work speaks for itself. We chose this album to invite you to explore the energetic relationship the piano has with tea (oolong in particular). *Changeless* is another great tea album!



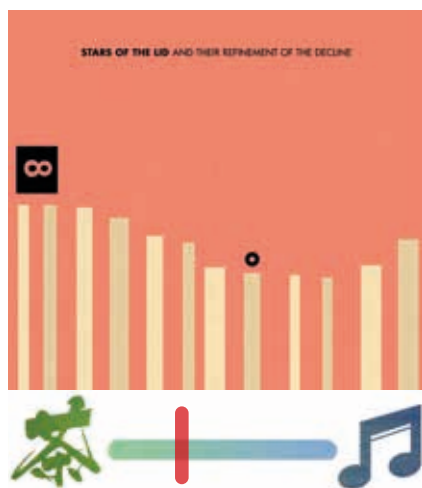
# 45

## Moïety

Helios

This album is an introduction to a wonderful tool in your tea/music utility belt: there is a subgenre of ambient music that is a bit more emotional, spilling over into movie soundtracks. This type of music is great for getting people that aren't used to sitting or being quiet to relax, engaging their minds. It also helps release tension and congested, stagnant emotions. Morning red tea for this one!

**Further Exploration:** There are a lot of albums like this, including some higher up in this list. *Yui* by Childs is an intense but great album, as is the soundtrack to *Appollo* (Brian Eno) and *The Assassination of Jesse James...* (Nick Cave).



44

## And Their Refinement of the Decline

### Stars of the Lid

This epic double album is a masterpiece of journey music. It is galactic, filling the room and your heart with breadth and scope, like solar systems slowly forming from the remnants of a supernova. Adam Wiltzie and Brian McBride pile instruments over gaseous clouds to form the worlds of this space journey. This double album requires a long session with a great and patient tea.

**Further Exploration:** You will find the solo work of these artists in this list. Everything they touch is stamped “Made for Tea.” *The Tired Sounds of Stars of the Lid* could easily be on this list if we hadn’t promised to avoid artist repetition.



43

## Breathing Space

### Sacred Earth

This is as about as far to the tea side of the scale as it gets—sweeping, gentle, relaxing flutes breeze over drones. Calming and yet with force and journey, power and movement. Jethro & Prem Williams fill this album with spirit that resonates with an ordinary daily tea practice, meaning this album can rotate through your practice and is nice with almost all teas.

**Further Exploration:** Sacred Earth has other albums, many of which include kirtan-like singing. It is worth exploring other types of gentle spa-type music. There are gems beyond the cheezy stuff, like Anugama’s wonderful albums.



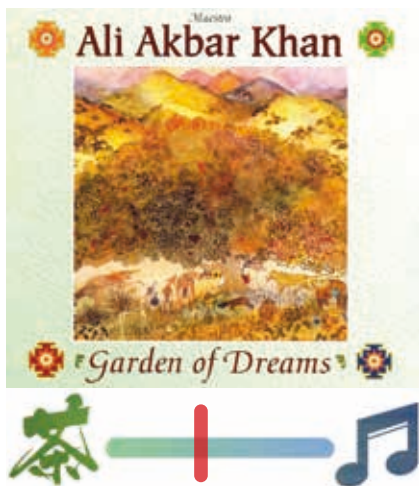
42

## Awakening the Fire

### R. Carlos Nakai & Will Clipman

This simple album is a powerful blend of Native American flute and drumming. It is slightly on the engaging side if you focus on it. Clipman’s rhythms are entrancing, and the flute soars over and around them like an eagle over the grasslands. This album is superb in the early morning with some bowls of red tea to start the day.

**Further Exploration:** R. Carlos Nakai is a legend. His album *Emergence* is also great for tea. It is better than this one, being simple flute pieces and softer, but we choose this one to encourage you to explore world music and tea.



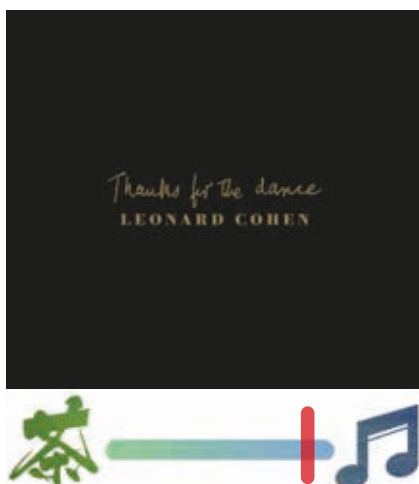
41

## Garden of Dreams

Ali Akbar Khan

And now we come to another of the great tea music genres: Indian classical music. So much of it is great for tea. This thirteen-piece East/West orchestra is just gorgeous. It is moving and Master Khan's sarod resonates deeply throughout. This album is great in the morning with red tea, filling each bowl with joy and love.

**Further Exploration:** Ali Akbar Khan (1922–2009) is a legend. The sarod is a beautiful instrument for tea. *Journey* is another great album (hard to choose between these two), and *Legacy* with Asha Bhosle singing is also nice.



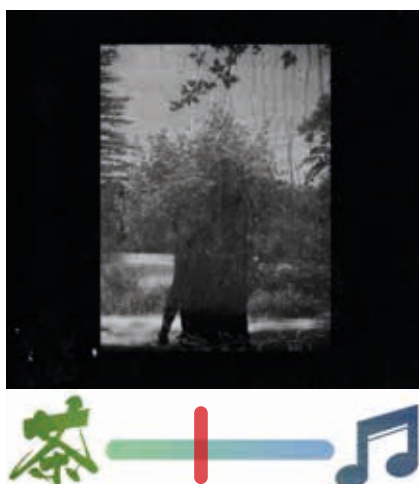
40

## Thanks for the Dance

Leonard Cohen

This is the first of our more for music than for tea albums. This posthumous album is one of his best. The soft guitars, the gruff poetry, the insight and depth as well as the last goodbye are all profound and powerful. It certainly takes you away from your tea, but to a very good place. And you are in great company for the trip as well.

**Further Exploration:** Cohen is powerful and beautiful. *You Want It Darker* can also be had (strongly) with tea. Other folk music works as well. Nick Drake's *Five Leaves Left*, for example, can make for a wonderful tea session.



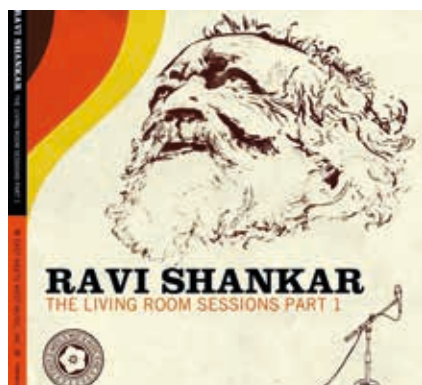
39

## Ruins

Grouper

Liz Harris' voice is stunning and transcendental. She whispers barely audible words over soft piano and Nature sounds, creating a spectral world of spirit overlaying life. It is a wonderful album, and it is short, which is important. Not every tea session is super long and deep. This album is short, sweet and gentle, which is part of why we chose it.

**Further Exploration:** Grouper's albums are all decent for tea. We chose this one because it is soft and short. *A I A : Alien Observer* is longer and more intense. It is mysterious and visceral—great for a deeper session.



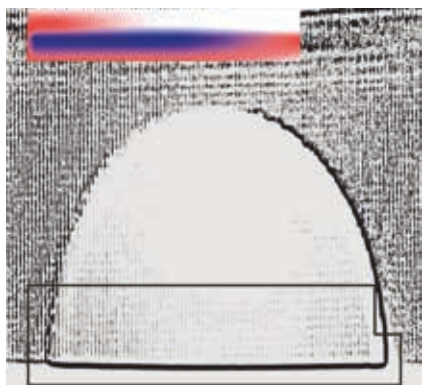
38

## The Living Room Sessions

Ravi Shankar

In 2011, at age ninety-one, India's most famous musician invited friends over to his house for an informal session. The double album that resulted won Shankar a Grammy and for good reason: It is spontaneous, real, spiritual and comes with all the wisdom of age. This is music well beyond the Industry to love and creativity, pure and simple. It is a great morning session, or even two.

**Further Exploration:** Shankar's body of work is dozens of tea sessions waiting to unfold, and deepens your understanding of the powerful relationship between Indian classical music and tea. *There are two parts to this session!*



37

## Tomorrow Was the Golden Age

Bing & Ruth

The textured minimalism of this amazing album feels like living an entire lifetime, effortlessly gliding through joy and sorrow. It is ambiguous, lost and yet searching and occasionally emerging. A deep tea opens up with this album. We have found that it has a special relationship to the tea Forest Floor in particular. You feel surrounded and lost, which can be a good thing.

**Further Exploration:** Another Bing & Ruth Album, *No Home of the Mind*, could also make this list any day of the week. In fact, discovering the difference between the two is a must for a tea and music lover. (*Hint: Forest Path...*)



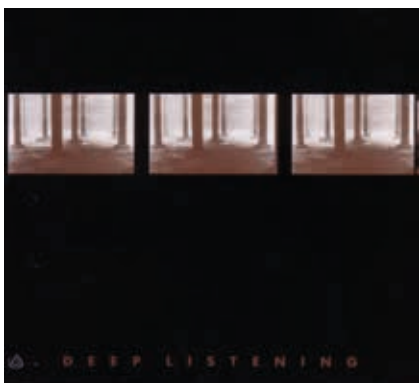
36

## Spaces

Nils Frahm

German composer Nils Frahm is a genius pushing the boundaries of music. Like some of his other albums, this is a combination of live recordings. It can get intense at times, and definitely pulls you from your cup, but the restlessness is worth it as you become mesmerized by simple patterns. His piano neatly rings like crystal over geometries. And the spaces between notes...

**Further Exploration:** Nils Frahm's compositions all work for tea sessions skewed towards music. *All Encores*, *Felt* and *Empty* are also very powerful albums we enjoy.



35

## Deep Listening

Pauline Oliveros

With Stuart Dempster & Panaiotis

Oliveros coined the term “deep listening” to describe what she called “an aesthetic of improvisation, electronic, ritual, meditation music.” Could anything be more tea sounding? You are meant to listen deeply to this, literally, which is why we marked it on the music side, but you can also let go and drift towards tea. This is amongst our all-time favorite tea albums. Just stunning!

**Further Exploration:** Oliveros’ beautiful album *Accordion and Voice* is also incredible. It is two twenty-minute pieces with gentle, slow and unfolding sounds overlaid with beautiful vocals.



34

## Silver Tree

Lisa Gerrard

There is no voice like Lisa Gerrard’s. She can rise to the depth of old caverns humans rarely travel to and then soar to the clouds, carrying your heart with her. This album sweeps you up and takes you into a dreamland where myths are enacted before you. This can be intense for tea, but it is worthwhile, especially with aged teas.

**Further Exploration:** Lisa’s solo work is all incredible! Check out *Duality*, for example, as well as *The Black Opal* and *The Mirror Pool* (even the soundtrack to *Gladiator*, which is intense but great, is worth a session).



33

## The Effective Disconnect

Biran McBride

McBride continues the same deep, sweeping drones of his *Stars of the Lid* days into his solo work. It is detailed, textured and softer, though, making it better for tea. It is a soundtrack for a documentary (which we haven’t seen), but is also great for a quiet bowl tea ceremony as well. This one can live in your tea practice, revolving around some of your favorite teas.

**Further Exploration:** *When the Detail Lost Its Freedom* is another McBride solo album that works well with tea. His albums really show what a tea album should be: filling spaces gently, leaving the tea as it is.



32

## The Pearl

Harold Budd & Brian Eno

Harold Budd brings the minimalism and drone that often make great tea music to a legendary collaboration with the great Brian Eno, father of ambient music. Budd's slow, detached piano is met with delicate, impressionistic drones and swirls of wind on an empty, clear mind; this album is so vast and open. It is the quintessence of tea music.

**Further Exploration:** Budd and Eno both are incredibly prolific, and we will meet them again in this list. You cannot really go wrong by choosing any of their albums at random for tea.



31

## Internal Flight

Estas Tonne

Estas is a Ukrainian guitarist with a powerful, soulful playing that is unlike anything you have ever heard. His albums feature long, single tracks that drone and thrum in and out of intensity that can be good for either tea or listening, though we put it a notch or two on the tea side. This album is one of the most inward-focused albums on this list and great for powerful teas.

**Further Exploration:** There is a live version of this album which is wonderful. Beyond that Tonne has two other live albums which are also great for tea: *Inner* and *Outer*.



30

## Welcome Home

Craig Pruess

This is a happy-slappy smiley album. It is joyous. It can be a bit much, but sometimes you need a session to uplift you. If you can sit through this album on a morning, drink some dian hong and not stand up happy, we'll give you the Grump of the Year Award! It is a kind of new age Indian-influenced album, with sitar, bells and lots of joy!

**Further Exploration:** Pruess has some other albums that are nice for tea as well, including *Language of Love* and *Temple of Spice*. If you want to go super deep, he has another album of Buddhist chants as well.



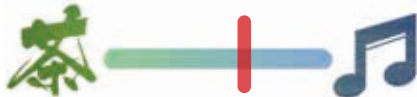
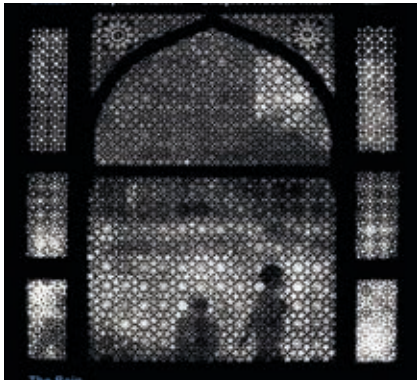
29

## Sacred Earth Drums

David & Steve Gordon

This introduces us to “world fusion” music, which is a great genre for tea music. This album is really just Nature sounds with Native American drumming and flute. The rhythms can be engaging, pulling you away from the tea, but for the most part this is a gorgeous album that has supported dozens and dozens of sessions at the Center. It is great in the morning with a young sheng.

**Further Exploration:** There is a sequel to this album called *Sacred Spirit Drums*. It is also wonderful. Their first album, *Misty Forest Morning*, does just what the name implies. Also, check out the similar work of Byron Metcalf.



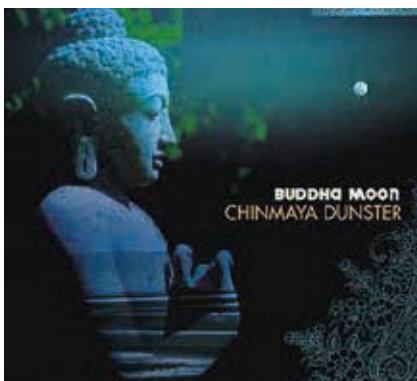
28

## The Rain

Ghazal

Kayhan Kalhor is one of the first musicians to bring classical Iranian music to the West. The instrument he has mastered is called the “kamancheh.” *The Rain* is one of the best albums on this list, not just for tea, but in general. Kalhour has teamed up with vocalist Shujaat Husain Khan, whose singing is beyond ethereal, to make this stunning album. It goes with Yancha and other oolongs so well.

**Further Exploration:** *Moon Rise Over the Silk Road*, *As Night Falls on the Silk Road* and *Lost Songs of the Silk Road* are all ancient, haunting albums that are worth a tea sit.



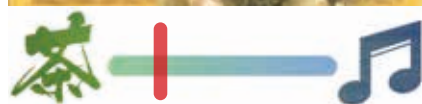
27

## Buddha Moon

Chinmaya Dunster

Chinmaya Dunster is a lot like Craig Pruess, creating new age Indian fusion music. This gentle album features beautiful drones overlaid with flutes and sarod. It is a wonderful tea album, and the soundtrack to so many memorial sessions. Amazingly, the name is apt, for we have found that it is indeed better in the evening or night.

**Further Exploration:** Dunster has some other cool albums, but none as good for tea as this one. *Mindfulness* is nice for tea, and *Celtic Ragas* is very interesting, combining two very distinct types of music.



# 26

## Shamanic Dream II

Anugama

Long, sweeping tracks with chimes, bird sounds, entrancing percussion, didgeridoo and flutes that sound like the wind is playing them make this one of the best tea albums of all time. We even enjoy the exception that an old Indian baba comes on the mic at random intervals to remind us “*shanti, shanti, shanti*.” This album seems to work best in the morning or evening, and with all tea.

**Further Exploration:** There is a version one of this album, which is not as refined. It feels like Volume II perfected the vision. Anugama has lots of tea albums, all wonderful. *Morning Breeze* is another favorite here at the Center.



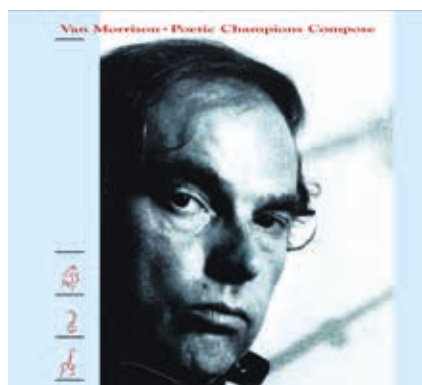
# 25

## Music for Tea

M. J. Green Mountain

This tea album was produced by our tea brother, M.J., and he even wrote about the process in the November 2016 issue. It is an unbelievable collection of talented musicians playing many of the instruments found elsewhere on this list, which all harmonize with tea—and all in one album. It includes the qin, sarod, kora and many other powerful instruments. It is truly “music for tea.”

**Further Exploration:** This powerful album allows you the opportunity to start exploring all of the instruments featured within. We recommend searching for the work of the musicians on the album and others who play them.



# 24

## Poetic Champions Compose

Van Morrison

This album is another that leans heavily away from tea, but does so into mystery and majesty. It is smooth and winding, like a river journey from tea to the mountains. And the lyrics are alchemical. They are a discourse on life and Zen. This album is the domain of the evening—when you need some guidance (musical and spiritual) over a cup of tea. Listen to these lyrics!

**Further Exploration:** Van the Man! Of course, all his music will lean away from tea, but some albums go off the chart and into music. Other albums that work with tea are *Common One* and *No Guru, No Method, No Teacher*.



# 23

## Circle of Bliss

Pablo Arellano

It would be hard to gather a group of musicians and make an album more suited to tea than this stunning rapture of tea bliss. The soft, billowy piano of Arellano is accompanied by various other instruments and voice, creating a dreamlike forest that you are free to wander in and out of from your tea. We love this album in the evening with some gongfu tea, but *all* tea works.

**Further Exploration:** There is a volume two of this, which is equally stunning. It leans a bit more away from tea, but we have had several sessions with it, nonetheless.



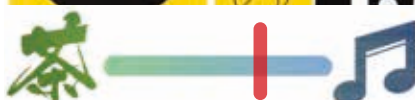
# 22

## Drift Music

Harold Budd  
With John Foxx

As the name suggests, this album really does feel like you are an old Daoist who kicks a canoe off the shore and lets the gentle current carry you downstream—without an oar, nor a care in the world. The sound of this album is so pervasive and immersive that is difficult to describe or understand after it's over. It is perfect for all types of tea.

**Further Exploration:** Harold Budd has a great body of work for tea music. He has two other albums with John Foxx: *Translucence* and *Nighthawks*, the latter of which, as the name suggests, is great for nighttime tea.



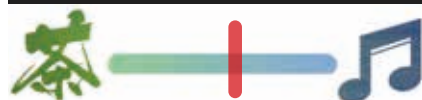
# 21

## East/West

Bill Frisell

Bill Frisell has a very unique style of guitar playing. It is almost as if his strings were made of crystal. He plays the guitar like a bell, *literally*: each note is precise, clean and perfect. This mellow album leans away from tea, but only in a friendly way. It is absolutely perfect for a casual tea session in the evening, especially gongfu brewing.

**Further Exploration:** There is a second volume to *East/West*, which is not as good as the first, but still worth a listen. Hopefully, this album will encourage you to explore other jazz as well.



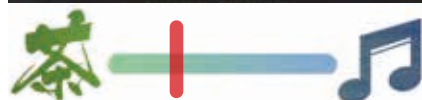
20

## Different Colors

Marconi Union

While slightly more engaging than lots of atmospheric albums, this one situates you. Marconi Union incorporates electronic and jazz music into their ambient sensibilities to create beautiful landscapes. This album is dreamy enough for tea and engaging enough to listen to. It is another of the albums that can help set the mood and hold the ceremonial fort.

**Further Exploration:** Marconi Union's other albums can all work with tea. We enjoy *Ghost Stations*, *Anomic* and *Weightless* in particular. They are all of a similar dreamy vibe.



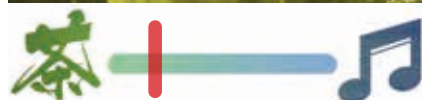
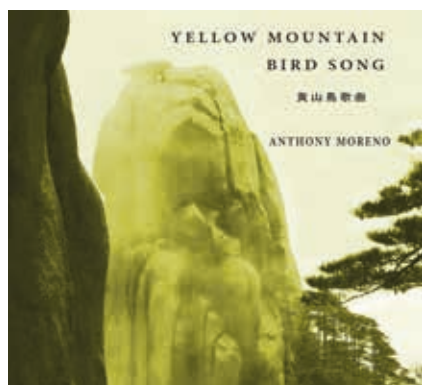
19

## Om Guitar

Stevin McNamara

A long time ago, we sat discussing the potential the acoustic guitar had for tea music. Years later, we discovered McNamara's "yogitar," as he calls it, and voila! His albums are all radiant, happy, free and loving. Morning tea sessions would not be what they are without his work. It was difficult to choose a tea album from his works, but this is the first one we heard.

**Further Exploration:** They are all great! *Shanti Guitar*, *Shakti Guitar* and even *Prana Groove* are all excellent ways to start the day. Some leaves in a bowl and a McNamara album...



18

## Yellow Mountain Bird Song

Antonio Moreno

Global Tea Hut's own tea brother and friend made this stunning album after visiting Yellow Mountain with us all. He wrote about creating the album in the February issue of this year. His piano works are written out of a heart full to the brim with tea spirit, and it shows. They take you back if you were on that magical trip and let you imagine if you weren't.

**Further Exploration:** Like many of the other albums on this list, this one invites us to explore the powerful and energetic connection tea can have with the piano.



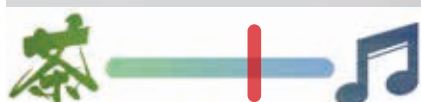
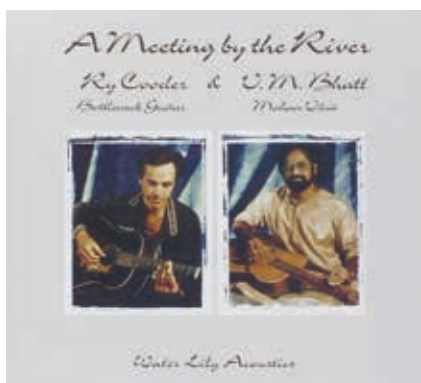
17

## A Love Supreme

John Coltrane

After getting sober in 1957, Coltrane said he “experienced, by the grace of God, a spiritual awakening which was to lead to a richer, fuller, more productive life.” Carlos Santana famously said that listening to *A Love Supreme* start to finish “re-molecularizes” you. We couldn’t agree more. This is a sound bath—a portal; a physical experience as much as a listening one. This album changes you...

**Further Exploration:** Hopefully this splits the jazz/tea door wide open. Other Coltrane albums, yes, but also how about *The Blues and the Abstract Truth* or even *Soul Station*?



16

## A Meeting by the River

Ry Cooder & Vishwa Mohan Bhatt

Master Bhat plays the veena, which is something like an Indian classical slide guitar, which makes Ry Cooder the perfect friend to join him. This album was part of Cooder’s round-the-world journey of albums. It perfectly bridges East and West in a fluid, happy way that leaves you smiling all throughout and afterwards as well. It is great in the evening.

**Further Exploration:** Vishwa Mohan Bhatt’s other works are all stellar tea albums, some even better than this—though with less nostalgia for us. *Mohan’s Veena* and *Indian Delta* are our favorites.



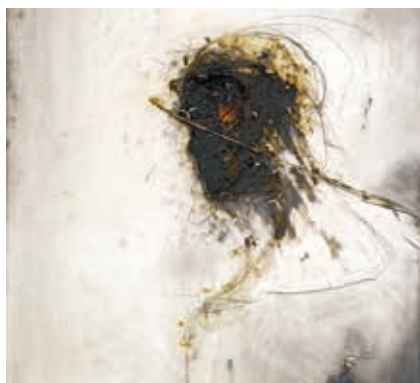
15

## Rasdharma

Shiv Kumar Sharma  
& Hariprasad Chaurasia

Master Sharma plays a hammered Indian classical instrument called the “santoor” with heavenly charm. And Chaurasia is India’s greatest flute player. This is the example of an album that charges a particular tea: Joy. If you can drink Joy (substitute any dian hong) with this album, you will have checked off one of the tea lover’s bucket list to-dos. (It is a double album, so strap in...)

**Further Exploration:** These two have another double album called *The Valley Recalls*, which is equally stunning. It is especially good in the afternoon, for that long tea session you know you should sit for.



14

## Passion

Peter Gabriel

There is no greater journey album than this. *Passion* is the soundtrack to the movie *The Last Temptation of Christ*. It perfectly maps the spiritual journey from beginning, through struggle, doubt, conflict, separation and finally triumph in enlightenment. This is like taking a road trip through the entire spiritual journey for only the cost of some patient tea and an afternoon.

**Further Exploration:** There is a subsequent album called *Passion Sources* that offers up all the amazing samples Gabriel used from all around the world to mix *Passion*.



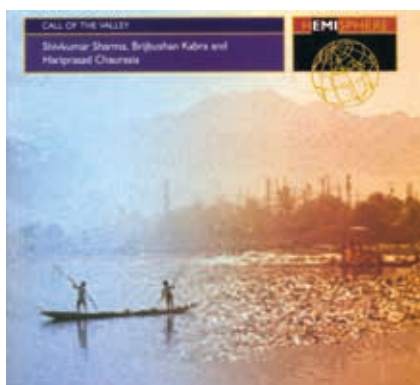
13

## Englaborn & Variations

Jóhann Jóhannsson

Jóhann Jóhannsson was a powerful, deep and multi-talented Icelandic composer whose work speaks for itself. Combining elements of classical, religious and traditional music with electronic elements makes this album unique. It feels ceremonial, surrounding a tea with depth, solemnity and heaviness, which can be just what is needed for certain occasions.

**Further Exploration:** Jóhannsson's works are all powerful and many can be used with tea. We use another of his albums, *Orphée*, to similar effect as this one.



12

## Call of the Valley

Hariprasad Chaurasia & Friends

This album brings together many of the greatest Indian classical musicians. It is an instrumental journey, following a day in the life of a shepherd living in Kashmir. (Make sure you get the 1967 version.) It is an album suited to the carefree letting go that a tea session often inspires. Some nice gongfu tea and a casual chaxi and you are in Kashmir-Heaven...

**Further Exploration:** We hope that this and others on this list open up the power of Indian classical music—its effect on the mind, tea liquor and a mind filled with tea liquor.



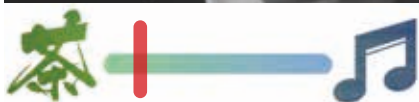
11

## A Winged Victory for the Sullen

A Winged Victory for the Sullen

The other half of Stars of the Lid made this epic tea album that has filled so many teas sessions around the world. It is a meditation soundtrack: broad and sweeping, gentle piano and drones that are so gentle as to be unheard. The melodies are neutral and free, seeming to lift off from earthly attachments and soar in the clouds.

**Further Exploration:** Adam Wiltzie, one half of Stars of the Lid, created this gorgeous masterpiece with his other band. They have another album called *Atomos*, which is also worth a tea session.



10

## Pine

Olan Mill

One could say this album is aptly titled, as it feels like wandering through a mist-enshrouded pine forest. The cover also does it justice: an image of dancers with cloth billowing round in circles of peace. It is broadly spaced and sweeping, like many tea albums on this list, but much more so. It is a dream within a dream and absolutely perfect for tea.

**Further Exploration:** All of Olan Mill's work is tea music. We love the albums *Paths* and *Home* in particular. They aren't as perfect as this one, but they are very worthwhile tea sessions.



9

## Nepenthe

Julianna Barwick

There is a reason religious services around the world use choirs. There is a power and profundity in our own voices calling out to the sacred. Over her career, Julianna Barwick has perfected a very unique and ethereal vocal ambient music. This opus was recorded in Iceland with the help of Alex Somers, who will be appearing in this list again later.

**Further Exploration:** All of Barwick's albums are great for tea. They are uplifting and powerful, ceremonial and spacious. We love *The Magic Place* and *Will* in particular. And she has a new one: *Healing is a Miracle*.



## Ambient 1: Music for Airports

**Brian Eno**

Eno literally named the genre “ambient.” He sets out to invite, gently. There is no imposition, just emotional resonance. This album is like glass. It is amongst the most open albums ever produced. Like all great art, the spaces are considered as much as the form, and we are free to listen, interpret or just be with our tea wholly and completely.

**Further Exploration:** Along with Eno’s vast body of work, the other three albums in the “Ambient” series are all great, especially *Ambient 3: The Dance*, which features the radiant Laraaji.



## Tao of Peace

**Dean Evenson & Li Xiangting**

Sweeping drones, gorgeous flute and the guqin is about as perfect a recipe for tea as one could possibly imagine. This album is the go-to tea album! When you aren’t sure what type of session you will have; when you don’t know where to start or which tea will go with which music, choose this album and you will be fine. Only silence could be better!

**Further Exploration:** These two legends made a second album called *Tao of Healing*. We usually just put the two together in one playlist and let it go for the duration of both albums. They flow well together.



## Raku

**PC Davidoff & Friends**

This album takes many of the best parts of relaxing ambient music and dives deeper into them. It is somehow softer, gentler and deeper than the others. It has drones, gentle flute, water sounds like many other albums on this list, but it is more liquid, more watery and therefore more tea. This is one of the most played tea albums of all time!

**Further Exploration:** All of Davidoff’s albums make for good tea music. You cannot go wrong with anything he has made. We love *Sacred Tree*, *Breathless Breath* and *Bamboo* the best after this one.



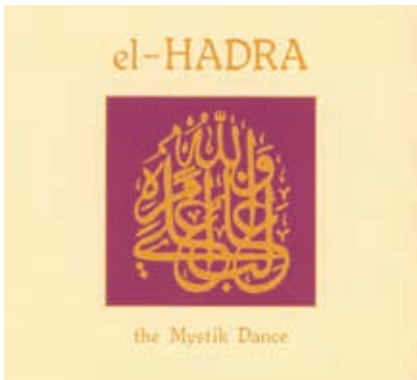
5

## Homage to Mother Teresa

### Amjad Ali Khan

Of all the Indian instruments, the sarod is the most “tuned” to the frequency of tea. It is mystical and crystalline, alchemizing the mind and the liquor. There have been many great sarod players, including others on this list, but Amjad is lord! He speaks to all that is sacred, calling on the heart to show up naturally and openly. Most his albums are concerts like this one, honoring Saint Teresa.

**Further Exploration:** Any Amjad Ali Khan album works with tea, and all are worth a tea session. Most recently he has made two great albums with American violinist Elmira Darvarova, called *Amalgam* and *Peace Worshipers*.



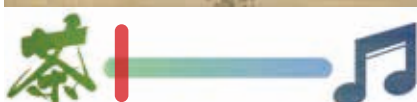
4

## el-Hadra: The Mystik Dance

Klaus Wiese, Matthias Grassau & Ted de Jong

This is literally a sufi trance... *literally!* The pulse throughout it leads in and out of the constant drone until very soon there is no you, no tea and no music. It is mystical, beyond words and cosmic. We have found that strange things can happen to our experience of time with a powerful aged tea, this album and an hour that is not an hour...

**Further Exploration:** Every single Klaus Wiese album is worthy of tea. We use many of them. *Soma*, *Seed*, *Vision* and *Ceremony* are all great and worthy of a deep sit.



3

## Chine, L'Art Du Qin

Li Xiangting

For thousands of years the guqin and tea have been paired. This instrument is powerful, simple and utterly Zen. It stills the mind, just as it must be played with a still heart. Li Xiangting is a modern master, and plays on an antique qin. This album is perfect for all tea, and gongfu tea in particular. A live qin performance along with fine tea is bucket list for any tea lover. In the meantime...

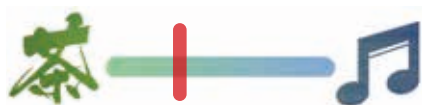
**Further Exploration:** This will hopefully open up the door to the power the qin has to romance your tea, still your heart and open your mind. We would suggest a thorough exploration of guqin albums.

# 2

## Silencia

### Hammock

If we didn't set out with the rule that we would not repeat any album by the same artist in order to introduce more music, then this list would have been chock-full of albums from this Nashville duo of guitarists: Marc Byrd and Andrew Thompson. There is no artist we have used more in our tea sessions. They do everything right. Their albums are emotional, calming, cathartic and often feel like a journey. This latest album seems to take everything to the best possible conclusion for tea. It is calmer and more understated, without losing any of the emotional power. We often prefer silence for a ceremony, but if we are going to use music, we want it to help people find their center, release tension and enjoy the tea's ability to uplift them and lead them inward. Hammock albums are the standard for this.



**Further Exploration:** Every Hammock album is worth hearing, but not all are great for tea. Aside from this one, the best tea albums are *Mysterium*, *Universalis* and *Oblivion Hymns*.





## Riceboy Sleeps

Jónsi & Alex Somers

Many of you probably guessed this one right away—hands down the greatest tea album of all time! More listened to and loved by tea ceremonialists around the world than any other album. It ticks all the boxes: sacred, sweeping, open, a journey inward... but it also has the *je ne sais quoi* that no other albums do. We cannot describe why it is the best tea album. It is mystical, but in our experience this album *does something* to our tea... It unlocks the gates, opens the doors... It makes people cry. It is like a well-placed acupuncture needle. When you make some nice bowl tea and play *Riceboy Sleeps*, you will see that your movements easily and magically align with the music. The filling of the pot or bowls, the decanting, the coming and going of you and your guests drinking all become choreography for this amazing tea album.



**Further Exploration:** These geniuses just released a bunch of alternative tracks from *Riceboy Sleeps* called *Lost & Found*. If you know this album well, it is interesting to compare these other takes.

# Pondering Tea & Music

*We reached out to some of the most musically brilliant minds in the community and asked them to dip their brushes in ink, some of them for the second or third time, and let us know what they think about Tea and Music, Music and Tea. Of course, they wax poetic at times. How else can we talk about something so deeply personal and experiential? However, the insights their ponderings allude to are life-changing and do create a sketch of the marriage between Tea and Music that we can then color in through our own practice.*

## Music, Silence, Tea & Me

茶人: Steve Kokker (Ci Ting, 慈聽)

The link between Music and Tea as expressed through words... There are so many layers of translations needed to broach this subject that it might seem to not be worth the effort, like trying to explain a painting through an interpretive dance. Yet with every article we write about Tea, we do the same: utilizing words to convey what can only be lived. So, I guess it is worth a try...

When I set out to write these lines, my linear mind started planning and making outlines (graphs if needed!) to explain how I go about matching music to tea. Shall I place tea category names in Column A with tracks or artists in Column B, or better yet, do an interactive mindmap kind of graphic? Which vintage of aged Wuyi would ABBA be intimately tied to? Or for

that matter, Brasstronaut? After all this started to unravel a few seconds later, I knew I could only really approach this topic through the prism of what is at the heart of how I attempt to marry Music and Tea: silence. *As if that would make silence any easier to write about...*

Yet, silence comes closest to the truth in explaining any kind of musical inspiration, at least to me.

### Nudged by Online Tea

Though music has formed likely the most solid of threads in the karmic web of my existence, and therefore been an essential component to most of my tea journeys over the years, my sensitivity to music was upped recently due to the global shutdown. The “Thursday

Morning Tea Ceremonies” I had been holding in our tea space Charen for a year were stopped by the pandemic fear, and I moved them online. While the idea of an online tea ceremony at first appeared absurd and dull beyond belief (why would anyone aside from my mother watch a little screen of me sitting quietly for an hour?), I quickly saw their value first and foremost as nudges. They acted the part of the thing missing from almost everyone’s lives: a coach to keep their good habits on track.

Pretty much everyone knows full well the habits they need to nurture to maintain harmony, but few do so with any consistency as being one’s own coach for the vast majority of people ends invariably in some degree of “failure.” Sometimes all we need to keep on



track is the equivalent of a nudge, not necessarily a Zen whip, to get us back in line. And the online ceremonies fulfilled this for many.

It was odd at first how a sense of “community” could be felt at all among unseen viewers, until one realizes that even in person with others, the sense of being bonded with them or not exists in our heart-minds. While there is no substitute for physical proximity, it was surprising the degree to which one could feel part of a group virtually.

One powerful way I sought to increase this ephemeral sense of togetherness was in creating musical playlists for each session which we could all listen to at the same time. Music would then be the invisible bubble which held us all in the same embrace—our unseen brethren sharing different

physical spaces and brews but joined in the spirit of tea and in the power of music. I loved this idea. My own online ceremonies were nudging me into action too!

I have been a rabid music compiler ever since my Dad bought me my first tape recorder at the age of six. Okay, sure, I once pulled out all the tape from inside and strung it around his room in some now forgotten protest at some injustice, but I took to that machine instantly. I’ve been making sound compilations ever since. All of my high school, college and university friends (actually everyone since as well), have received cassettes, then CDs and now (*yawn*) memory stick MP3 music compilations. I have likely spent some five combined years of my life just sitting in front of records,

CDs or now (*yawn*) hard drive folders splicing, remixing or mostly arranging songs for others to discover. Allow me a plug. These pandemic-nudged tea mixes for short ceremonies can be found at: [www.mixcloud.com/stevekokker](http://www.mixcloud.com/stevekokker).

## *Silence Sources Sound*

Instead of describing how these were made—a task destined to end in shambles—I would, as I mentioned, like to redirect the discussion to the source of all these playlists: *silence*. Indeed, the source of everything. All Music and tea leads out of and into silence, which is the context for choosing tea music. I approach this from a linear and a heart-based perspective when making my playlists.

When I sit down to think of a playlist for a tea session, I can take one of two main linear paths. Either I come up with a theme (1970s ambient, water, the passage of a day, nighttime, cosmos, nature, train travel, etc.) and think of music inspired or reflective of those themes and then see how they might fit together; or I think firstly of a musical mood or particular track I wish to use and then see what other music complements, supports or contrasts my chosen one well. And then I play around, tweak and experiment according to how one track ends and how the next one begins—for example, is there a way to segue these two interestingly or subtly?

This kind of approach is more from the mind. Sometimes it works most beautifully, other times a mind-dominated approach (even a right brain dominated one) leads to a lot of wasted time trying to plug a square block into a round hole.

So, again: *silence*. I start with silence. I sit down and let the music come to me. Instead of looking at folders full of downloaded music and hoping for the best, I sit and imagine the future session in question—who's coming, what is the weather, is there a theme to the meeting, what tea do I plan to serve and so on... To quote an ABBA song, I "let the music speak" (check it out: from *The Visitors*, 1981). From the depths of silence emerges an ethereal staff on which musical notes and treble clefs start to hang themselves. I watch and listen with awe.

The link between silence and music is not new. Rests, or intervals, were codified in different ways onto written music for many centuries, though only in the 18th century did composers, taking their cues from orators and stage actors, come up with a definitive way of indicating clear rests onto sheet music. It became a *thing*, and from then on was more consciously utilized for dramatic effect, for musical punctuation—and as a visceral reminder that there can be no sound without silence to act as contrast, as counterweight.

Composers in the 19th century utilized near-silence more and more, with some pieces by Mahler, Beethoven, Brahms, Tchaikovsky and others emerging from or receding into the most ethereal moments of soundlessness.

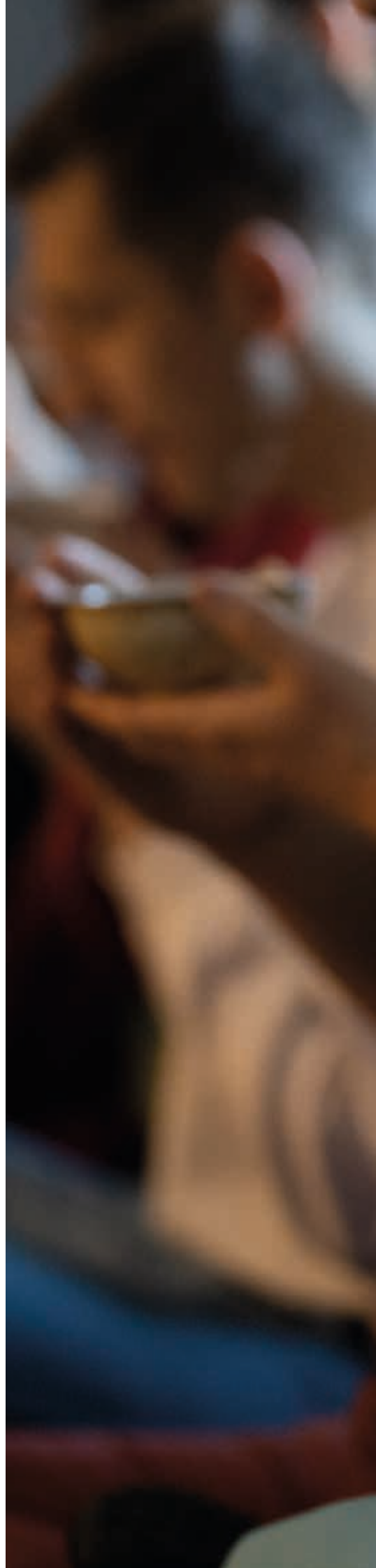
Yet silence highlighted as the inspiration of all sound really became embraced in the 20th century with modern composers like Arvo Pärt, Webern and most famously John Cage. Cage's "piece" 4:33 was a Fluxus-like performance act that slipped the rug out from listeners' safely positioned concert hall chair. It was nothing but silence, a pianist poised at his piano but for 4:33 doing nothing at all. How do we really relate to sound? What constitutes music? Why do we ignore the void when only from it comes the "things" we are all so dazzled by?

Silence—or, if you like, space, void, eternity—is the womb of all creation, creativity. Be it in the form of ideas, form, action, sound or forty-five-minute long playlists. As we have learned from our tea tradition more than anything else, cultivating silence is the only path to make our sounds (actions, words, deeds) more meaningful. And it's how I like to think of the birthplace of my musical inspirations too: a space of cultivated silence.

I am deeply inspired by the words of conductor Paul Hillier, in reference to Estonia's national treasure, Arvo Pärt (who, I shall proudly mention is a regular customer of our teashop Chado in Estonia. He comes in roughly once a month, living as he does, around the corner, especially for his beloved Japanese tea. He is happy to stand in silence and wait as others are served before him. He is a hero of mine).

*All music emerges from silence, to which sooner or later it must return. At its simplest we may conceive of music as the relationship between sounds and the silence that surrounds them. Yet silence is an imaginary state in which all sounds are absent, akin perhaps to the infinity of time and space that surrounds us. We cannot ever hear utter silence, nor can we fully imagine such concepts as infinity and eternity. When we create music, we express life. But the source of music is silence, which is the ground of our musical being, the fundamental note of life. How we live depends on our relationship with death; how we make music depends on our relationship with silence.*

—“Arvo Pärt” Paul Hillier, 1997.





# A BLUEJAY ON THE ROOF



茶人: Time Einpaul

“U nbelievable! Why does she always have to talk so loud over the phone! She is practically shouting!” I think to myself while sitting with a bowl of tea in my hands, listening to the woman next door speaking over the phone one early morning. “The guests got up extra early and made time to come here not expecting this...” So, I ramble on in my thoughts as the minutes pass.

The room is darkly lit and there’s six of us sitting on the floor, eyes closed, as the sun is slowly rising. There’s gentle ambient music playing in the background, barely audible. “I could gradually raise the volume and drown her out...” I think to myself sneakily. The muted phone playing the music through the Bluetooth speaker seems suddenly out of reach, nowhere to be found. After a moment, I give up and put the kettle back on for another bowl of tea. Ah, the familiar comforting hissing of the kettle—at least now I can’t hear her anymore. Amongst all this senseless mental commotion, I had gulped down the tea, completely forgetting to savor the flavor, nor the moment, never to return...

I am reminded of Zen Master Shunryu Suzuki describing the difference between sound and noise in one of his lectures. He tells a simple yet wonderful story of hearing a singing bird, a bluejay on the roof while reading a book and being bothered by it. “His voice is not so good. This bird should not be on my roof,” he thinks to himself. Perhaps silly to argue with a bird, but we do such things daily. Suddenly, what was once a sound becomes a noise; what once was a happening becomes a problem. Suzuki goes on to say that if you accept the bluejay and allow him into your heart, you will become the blue jay and the blue jay will be the one reading the book. Through practice, one learns to accept more things

as one’s own self, whatever they might be. In this manner, he describes sound as something coming out of one’s own personal practice.

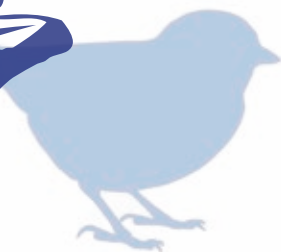
This is good advice to keep in mind during our weekly early morning tea ceremonies here in the old town of Tallinn, Estonia. The surrounding buildings in these tight quarters where a lot of people are living and working side by side are several hundred years old and have been renovated or rebuilt several times during different eras, following different standards. Our neighbor the dentist is accepting her first clients of the day and the walls are thin—now there’s a real test of equanimity for you! As well as a good opportunity to play a great playlist. The garbage truck might be beeping when backing up in the midst of the morning round. The people upstairs are listening to the morning news while preparing breakfast. These circumstances are by no means perfect—nothing really ever is—it just is what it is, and that is the most important thing, accepting what is. In this way, there’s nothing that cannot be worked with.

As we finish our tea, the first sun-rays hit the floor through the dusty window. I rinse and wipe the bowls over a few friendly exchanges with the lovely people who have come over this morning. Everybody is joyful, ready to start the day feeling refreshed and pleasantly settled. As I send them off and close the door, I think to myself smilingly: “Maybe I’d better invite the neighbor over for tea next time around.”



屋頂上的藍鳥

當心神覺醒與自由時所有聲音都是音樂





# A PURE NOTE

一個純淨的音符像是呼吸蕩漾

茶人: Antonio Moreno

*There once was a note pure and easy  
Playing so free like a breath rippling by  
—Pete Townshend*

I rarely compose music consciously, preferring to just sit down and play. Music channels my creative expression. I lose myself when playing. I'm fully present. I tap into bliss and ecstasy. And Tea is my muse. I can drink tea and meditate or I can drink tea and meditate through music. Did you know "Thea," an early word for "Tea," means "Goddess" or "Divine?" (The first edition of Linnaeus's *Species Plantarum* published in 1753 suggested calling the tea plant "Thea sinensis.") Interestingly enough, it's been said that Shennong referred to tea as "the Empress of all Medicinal Plants." Thea was the Titan goddess of sight (thea) and the Greeks believed her eyes were beams of light, helping them see with their own mortal eyes. In Traditional Chinese Medicine, one of the properties of tea is that it "brightens the eyes," suggesting it is a Shen or Spirit tonic. Don't get me wrong... I'm not rationalizing why Tea is my muse... I'm just pointing out how it's almost impossible for Her not to be! Tea and Music flow into each other and throughout my life.

My two life passions are Music and Tea... and it's at their crossroads that I find direction and purpose. The overlapping and intertwining of these passions feels like my soul mission. If I am to express myself through music, then what better way to do it than through Tea? For me Tea is the guardian at the gateway of authenticity. I drop pretension. I drop into the heart. We get to the heart of the matter.

In fact, there are so many parallels between serving tea and making music. I merely type those words and immediately I hear Wu saying: "How you do one thing is how you do everything!" And right now, I wish I still had my old typewriter and could hear the rhythm of the typebars beating purpose into the paper! But having that memory ingrained in me, I can still zone in and attack this computer keyboard from that place, even if the sound isn't the same. No, the sound isn't the same but the expression is, the flow is, the meaning is being conveyed from the source, from the heart to the fingers—from the heart to the fingers and the sound isn't the same but arms

are recovering that sway... they dance in the quick pause between thoughts and while they used to stop to puff from a cigarette, now they stop to take a sip from my bowl of tea. And a few seconds later I'm off again, lost in expression and lost for words... "Listen."

But I was writing about typing on a typewriter... I had been writing about Tea and Music and how you do anything is how you do everything, so how do we choose to do anything? With everything? Yes, with every bit of our presence. That's the ideal. *Samadhi*. The single pointed focus and concentration we practice in meditation, we practice in serving tea and then everything we do is steeped in the work we put in and we are only conscious of it when we sit down and reflect, such as now on Tea and Music and on the heart of the matter...

When we serve tea, we strive to remove our minds and persona from the table. We want to get out of the way and let the tea transmit, we just want to be the clear channel. "There once was a note, pure and easy... listen!" Yes, listen to how the tea wants

# 沉浸



to be brewed, listen to your guests, feel the vibration, breathe the presence and trust the moment, be guided by it, flow freely... *serve*. We are inviting the tea to express itself and lead us, teach us, and we go inwards and then share from this authentic space because that's the vibration we're inviting and facilitating.

I needn't only apply this metaphor to the serving of tea; the same applies as guest and the same applies when it's just you drinking tea by yourself. When you practice drinking tea in silence, many things are actually happening: breathing, for example... then the flavor and aroma become more pleasurable, more nuanced, because you're present. But then this expands to the body, and eventually in stillness. In meditation, the tea will guide you. Lessons will be learned. And you will be cultivating presence, the kind that will make you smile when you say: "How you do anything is how you do everything." You will know in your heart what this means. That is place where slogans become living wisdom that we become...

This is explained perfectly by the concept of *wu wei*... a Chinese Daoist term that can be translated as "aimless aim" or "wayless Way." It describes the action of "non-action," that place of "effortless effort" where you are present onto the moment, guided by it, led where it takes you. You follow the muse. *Wu wei* is that place of stillness at the heart of musical improvisation, meditation, tea ceremony and just about anything artful.

Now I hear Wu saying: "What you put in, is what you get out. If you drink tea in a mug while you are working, you will drink the kind of tea that belongs in a mug while you are working." So, what do I put in when I sit at the piano? For starters, my full presence. Sometimes it's just a calm breath; sometimes it's an invitation to express whatever must come; and sometimes I invite a particular thought, emotion, evoke a place, memory, person, mood... kind of like when arranging chaxi before hosting a tea ceremony.

And while I enjoy a well-crafted song with lyrics, I don't find myself electing to express myself like that these

days. Just as the chaxi shouldn't be too obvious or explicit, I prefer to expand the non-verbal experience, getting into the channel state and letting the music flow in the moment. This improvisational approach is in the spirit of *ichi-go-ichie*, so that when I play a "song" it includes the awareness that it will never be played the same again, because each time I play it, it will come out differently, there will always be strokes of emotion that are released differently because I'm not following a rule; I'm trusting the process. And unless I drill the song to death, it maintains that freshness. This personal approach applies to tea as well. We needn't follow a formula, a measured brewing parameter mentality; just practice forgetting and getting out of the way... Occasionally we will momentarily transcend and vibrate in tune with what Pete Townsend says: "The simple secret of the note in us all."







# THE DRAGON

✿: Mike Baas

I regularly reflect on the oft-quoted Zen slogan: “How you do anything is how you do everything.” I’m sure many of you do, too. But finding myself nearing the midpoint of my life, I am often wondering about the “when” along with the “how.” In my last article on the subject “Tea Music Part II” (August 2016), I reported a monumental (at least to me) musical victory with Tea and Zen in tow. Yet in the background of my story lay a deep, dark secret: I have been sitting on a vault of unfinished material for twenty years. Lest anyone wonder whether I am a hopeless procrastinator, please know that I have attempted to slay this dragon on many an occasion at various periods of my life. Each successive attempt left me with battered armor, bruised bones and my weapons in a mangled heap with the dragon sitting smugly upon his treasure trove, unvanquished...

As a result of this repetitively fruitless tarrying with the Great Beast inside of me, ceaselessly wondering where the cause of my woe truly lies, I have become an avid student of the laws of karma. I have approached this subject from many different sides. The most fundamental lesson I learned through meditation: I am 100% responsible for my experience in this Reality. Armed with that insight, aided by the tools for living an exemplary life I have received from Wu De and this tradition of Tea, I have sought to cultivate myself in order to eliminate any shortcomings keeping me from obtaining that for which I wish. Like all of us, I am riddled with flaws. But year after year of practice, I find myself acquiring more and more clarity about my place in this world, and obtaining all that I want feels more and more possible.

Along the road of karmic scholarship, another more esoteric insight arose—one that strangely enough occurred through a route Tea directed me to take into Vedic Astrology. It was a short detour, for I am no master astrologer. But I did penetrate into something that sticks with me like the tea stains on my teeth. I learned (take it or leave it) that the “planets” in the signs and houses of a birth chart, known as

“*grahas*” in Sanskrit, have a “clinging” or “grabbing” function. The import of this is that no matter how much will-power one exerts towards achieving success, there may be limiting factors present that function to prevent this. You indeed are 100% responsible for what happens to you in life, but that doesn’t mean that knowing this reverses the ill-effects of the previous actions taken without skill. Something in Reality “remembers” and the debt must be repaid. These so-called “planets” are *inside* the framework of the mind-body complex and as such, one must work with them intimately for their function to become beneficial. It almost certainly means that for periods of time in your life, you won’t be getting what you want, but you’ll almost certainly be getting what you need. No matter what cosmological framework you use to wrap your mind around “why” things happen to us (or we happen to them), we can likely all agree that there are certain times in life where retreat is a skillful means and others where action is called for, or where certain priorities become more important than others.

So, patiently and persistently, year after year, I have been working on “how I do anything” as a Chajin and a musician, while also being mindful of my timing. There is a big difference in my approach. Gone are the days of working impetuously; here are the days of working with great care, forethought and assessment. For instance, I know that right now, my attention needs to be directed towards my family and my income-generating work, not so much my art. And yet, this has not been an all-or-nothing scope of priority. Every now and again, the winds of Tea Spirit blow me into an inspired solution to a long withstanding music production quandary. I am shooting arrows at the dragon from a distance, keeping him off guard, rather than attempting a bloody blitzkrieg. I am plotting my attack over time.

It would be remiss of me if I did not complete this account of the six Ws (who, what, where, when, why, how) and the one T (tea) of Mike Baas, fellow Chajin, without a few words on

the “where.” For another great saying: “Making space for meditation is the primary meditation,” and what is making music other than a meditation within the framework of the vibratory nature of sound and its effects. I have needed all these twenty years a proper space in which to meditate on my music. It is with disbelief that I report to you that the elaborate studio space photographed on p. 40 (August 2016) of my last article has been all but abandoned. Like every other studio space I’ve ever tried to create, it ended up marred with elements that at long last proved unable to vanquish. I am no *feng shui* master, but the more I drink tea and the more I understand how to live in accordance with Nature, the more I am beginning to understand the role of space in the life of a human. I won’t bore you with the details, but my new space is coming up nicely and organically, infused with quite a bit of Phoenix Dragon tea spirit! I am fighting my dragon with a dragon. Like the tea that Wu De blends with his tea-dyed paints, Tea will be present through and through in all that I build from here on.

At age twenty, I was certain I had everything I needed then to be successful with my art. For one, I had the art! How I have obtained this art is still a mystery to me, but it’s all there in various forms. But time and again, sculpting it into something that hit the mark remained elusive. I used to hope some savior (or even piece of equipment) would fall down from the sky to rescue me, finish me. Now I see that I have to continue sculpting myself via myself (and not self!), tea bowl always nearby, working with what is arising naturally.

Very few humans accomplish multiple feats of greatness in a single lifetime. The arc of most human lives will have one or two profound periods of success scattered with quite a bit of suffering. Everyone has their own path. Fortunately for all of us inside this Hut, we have Tea to give us the wisdom to face it all smilingly. May you all be successful!





# Voices from the Hut

*Our teapots are heartbroken, steeped in sorrow, though our bowls are full of gratitude for knowing and sharing in the blessing that was Maharlika “Mikki” Sage. Mikki has left this world, taking a life of tea spirit with her. Her glowing smile, wise hands and loving-kindness will be missed dearly. She was a bright tea sage, who served so many of us bowls and cups of life-changing peace. This Hut was blessed to have her for so many years and wouldn’t be the same had she not changed our lives so—beyond what any words could ever capture... Help us raise a bowl and shed a tear, for the world and all Chajin must now look to the stars where Mikki’s spirit swirls amongst all the other tea inspiration and ancestry that shines through our every bowl. For those who had not the fortune of meeting this brilliant spirit, let her words and photography speak to the devotion in her heart.*

## A CUP OF GRACE

茶人: Chris & Mikki Sage

Tea came to Maharlika from the heart of Spirit—that indescribable garden of flowers, where magic and inspiration are the order of the day... Tea is her poetry, her gift to you, a moment of serenity in the warm sun of the purest love. With every cup, she is there, ready to meet you where you are and not where you think you should be, sitting in that place of acceptance and grace... one mind, one heart, one cup.

Friends would come for tea and talk about dreams and new ideas, knowing that she would hold their inspirations dear and help give them wings to take flight. Oh the epiphanies that would flow like water from the kettle those days, each grander than the next... every cup awakening a spark that would breathe life into a new creation.

Maharlika was a gifted chef as well. Her style was free-form, rebel-

lious, with an absolute understanding that if it came from the heart, it would be delicious. I can’t tell you the number of amazing dishes that I experienced with the full and complete acceptance that this would be the only time that such food would be on the menu... There were no recipes; just pure intuition and an endless determination to make you smile: Birthday cakes, chocolate truffles, banana-gasms... all uniquely delicious and all a masterpiece in non-attachment.

Beyond tea and food, Maharlika was a photographer and a poet. If you were lucky to be her muse, she had an uncanny way of making you feel beautiful, seen for everything that you are, and showing you that all you are is worthy of the greatest love. Her poems are gentle reminders of the expansive beauty that lives just beyond our gaze, always accessible to those willing to

walk the Earth with open eyes—an ever unfolding daydream of angelic landscapes, radiant smiles, and wholehearted joy.

Knowing Maharlika is the grace of my life. Her love is sweet and unending, a gentle breeze you feel as you gaze on a sunlit meadow... the kind that whispers: “This is everything...” She is a warm embrace that fills you with the Divine, softly affirming that here is exactly where you need to be and that you are loved...

The following poetry is for all those who adore her and those who have never met her... It is a selection of her most recent work showcased in our recent exhibition at the Palm Springs Art Museum, excerpts from “FLOWERBOOK,” excerpts from “The Inner Sun,” as well as previously unreleased material.

—Chris Sage



## Untitled

I held her close...  
never letting go of our time...  
each moment hanging like a crystal sun.  
She held me like threads of silk, thin and loose...  
unaware that she is my breath.

## Leaves in a Bowl

Find the leaves quieting in your heart,  
your soul, your breath.  
Find the leaves moving through your body,  
like the colors  
Of the earth.  
Find the tea tree within you,  
strong yet light, full of fragrance, filled with soul.

## Touch the Sky

Your gentle voice called me in. I moved with you  
and touched each soft flowering that spoke to me.  
The sun felt crisp and I was lost in the adventure  
of seeing you, like a tempest whirl, into your love.  
Your fragrance stills my heart, fresh and fearless,  
into an echoing hush of reverence.



# 茶心

## Beyond

Adrift, until I sit for tea.  
Watching the kettle burn.  
Whistling steam  
and the sounds of water pouring into my cup,  
smells like honeydew on a cold mountain top.  
I find the freedom in being lost.

## Ode to the Sun

As she stood, eyes meditating, smelling the salty air, hearing the waves crashing before her, she could feel the power of the Sun. She opened her eyes, saw clearly and dove in. Without doubt, she swam as far as the rays guided her.

## Ode to the Inner Sun

Awakened by my guides, carry this wandering soul. Echoes of days that have gone by, remembering my experiences as new. Filling my spirit with a warm embrace, knowing how time proceeds our many lives.



## Ode to the Moon

As we dance with the Moon, I take time to wonder where I may be with the light and shadows that reflect within me.

## Ode to the Weeping Moon

Under the pink full moon, the gray clouds rolled in and suddenly the rain came pouring down. Just as the tears ran down her face, the wind and thunder grew stronger, and the collective energy that had kept her dry was now soaked in puddles of tears.



*I know not what the  
answer is, but that  
the answer knows me.*

*—Maharlika Sage*



# TeaWayfarer

*Each month, we introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you in order to help you get to know more people in this growing international community. It's also to pay homage to the many manifestations that all this wonderful spirit and Tea are becoming as the Tea is drunk and becomes human. The energy of Tea fuels some great work in this world, and we are so honored to share glimpses of such beautiful people and their Tea. This month, we would like to introduce Becky Houchin.*

I look back on my tea journey and realize we are a giant puzzle of our decisions, experiences and interactions with the world and the people in it, but I can only think of a few of these that were truly memorably life-changing. Everything else becomes a blur of what makes me “me.”

I'm British, so ever since I was small tea has just been around. It's always been a tea bag, but it's been there helping bring us together in the evenings or served when we visited someone's house and they ask: “Fancy a cuppa?” It's been said in these pages before, but it truly does seem to bring people together, warm you and bring a sense of calm when you drink a cup of tea.

In the beginning I wasn't a big tea drinker, though I did enjoy fruit herbal infusions. I introduced my partner Rich Allum (whom some of you will know) to this tea and we drank it together for years. Then, due to both our interests in Eastern Philosophy and martial arts practices, he decided to go to a Buddhist group. I wasn't interested. “I can't sit still!” I told him. When he came home and told me that one of the members was running a tea ceremony, I jumped at the chance to try something that linked to this part of his life. This was our door into the Global Tea Hut community and one of my life-changing decisions. Here we met a lost but never forgotten tea brother Prabhasvara (Nick Dilks). He started his talk with a note about how he got into tea and showed us a book by his tea teacher called *The Way of Tea*. I had bought this book for Rich a year or so before but had never gone any deeper into it and we couldn't believe the coincidence! We drank puerh and I remember thinking that although it did have a certain forest floor smell and taste; it was amazing how many different levels each bowl brought and how the feeling of the textured warm bowl felt in my hands. Also, I had sat still for a few hours and thought nothing of it! Sold, we came home, joined Global Tea Hut and booked a trip to Taiwan.

Tea has offered me a reason to be still and a connection to something I'm not sure about yet; something I'm still exploring. My life changed significantly just after we discovered Global Tea Hut, with the birth of our son Tobias. I was twelve weeks pregnant when we visited Taiwan, so didn't have much time to develop a practice before my life was turned upside down. He's almost four now, and I've struggled since to manage to find the space for quiet and tea (and the overwhelming desire to sleep whenever I can be still). For a while, he was sleeping really well and we woke every day at 5:30 a.m. for three bowls and honestly the difference this made in my life was amazing! Firstly, I figured out I can sit still. Also, I was able to deal with the day in a much calmer way and I was different on the days we had missed. A better “me” was more present when I had tea. For the past year, my relationship with Tea has taken a sidestep.



🍵🇬🇧: Becky Houchin, UK

Tea is always there, but I haven't made as much space for it. I miss it, but knowing the difference it has and does make I know we will connect again.

Tea has created the ability to connect with others in so many ways. We know so many people all over the world and a few locally we would never have met without this tea practice. Also, since visiting the Netherlands and seeing what an amazing tea community they have there, we really wanted to create something like that here. It was just a seed of thought. However, after a chance encounter I had with someone who has a wood-carving studio next to a market where we have been buying fresh bread every weekend for the past few years, we found a space to serve and have made great friends with Martin, the owner, and his family. Rich now holds tea gatherings there every other week and it's slowly growing. We planted a seed and it's being watered with tea to create something we hope can one day be a true tea community here in Nottingham. If you are ever in or near Nottingham, England and can stop in and have tea please do email us, as we would love to share some tea: [countlessfallenleaves@gmail.com](mailto:countlessfallenleaves@gmail.com)

# Inside the Hut

COMING SOON TO GLOBAL TEA HUT MAGAZINE

茶主题: Incense & Tea

茶主题: Gongfu Tea

茶道

茶主题: Classics of Tea

茶主题: Flower Arranging



We have many new subscription models available on the website, including digital. The higher subscription tiers are very much akin to the Expansion Packs that we used to offer. The added donation not only allows us to get closer to building Light Meets Life; it also means you will get one or two rarer and better quality teas that follow the topic of the month, offering even more learning opportunities. We are including an emailed newsletter describing the “bonus” teas, why we chose them and other extra credit lessons.



Would you be excited to see another online course? We are thinking of producing another week of teachings on gongfu tea specifically! What do you think?



There are some amazing teas rolling in all the time as friends continue to donate tea to Light Meets Life, including plenty of rare treats. We are also working to manage the offerings towards education.



We have added some new tea sets to the website! They are to help those who are new to tea get started. Each is discounted and comes with the basic tea and teaware one needs to start their tea journey. Help us spread the word to beginners!



Have you checked out the community section of the new website? There is a lot there, including a directory of people sharing tea. If restrictions are lifting where you are, and it is safe, you can reach out and see if tea sessions are going on near you. You can also leave a Global Tea Hut testimonial for potential newcomers. Any events are also introduced on that page, including online courses. The more you participate in that page, the more it will truly be a “community” page, showing newcomers what we are all about!

## Center News



Now that movement restrictions are lifting, we have started weekly trips out to visit possible sites where we could purchase land. We hope to find the right spot by the end of the year. We have found one spot with great potential already, including space for a tea garden!



We hope you stay excited for Light Meets Life. We want to involve you in the planning of what we hope you feel is *your* Center. The more form Light Meets Life takes, the more real it becomes. Please contact us with ideas about what you envision for the property and for the experience at ten-day courses. Perhaps you have an idea for a type of course you would like to see when we open. Please share your ideas with us. We hope to create a whole new calendar and curriculum for Light Meets Life. And it is *your* Center, after all!



We continue to offer day visits should any of you find yourself in Taiwan. As restrictions lift, Taiwan may be a safe destination for those of you looking to travel this year. Stay safe and sound, though.

## August Affirmation

*I celebrate life*

*Am I caught in patterns of negativity? Do I fail to see how blessed I am to be alive? All around me are the conditions of my happiness, if I but celebrate them!*



**[www.globalteahut.org](http://www.globalteahut.org)**

*The most harmonic tea magazine in the world!  
Sharing rare organic teas, a magazine full of tea history, lore, translations, processing techniques and heritage, as well as the spiritual aspects of Cha Dao. And through it all, we make friends with fellow tea lovers from around the world.*

**GLOBAL TEA HUT**

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE

