

CHAKRA MEDITATION and INVOKING THE MUSE:

Tools for Unleashing the Deep Power of Inspiration and Consciousness within Us: An Interview with Layne Redmond

In February 2000, *DRUM! Magazine* named Layne Redmond to its list of 53 Heavyweight Drummers Who Made A Difference in the '90s. Not only is she a woman who has risen to the top of the playing field in what has traditionally been a man's domain, she is also one of the few drummers listed who has not been in a commercially successful pop, rock or jazz band. Instead Layne Redmond has followed an extremely unusual path specializing in the small hand-held frame drum played primarily by women in the ancient Mediterranean world. Layne's newest book, *Chakra Meditation*, which includes a CD of guided yoga practices and her new recording, *Invoking the Muse*, are due out in June 2004. In this interview, Layne discusses her life and work.



QUESTION: *I wonder if you could give our readers a little background into what it was that turned you on to drumming.*

LR: I actually remember clearly the very moment it hit me that I wanted to be a drummer. I was about 14 years old and I saw Karen Carpenter performing on television. She was best known as a singer but on this show she was playing drum set, and I just knew I was meant to be a drummer also. I told my mother, and she said, oh honey, drumming is for boys, stick with your tap dancing, so there was no way for me to pursue getting drums or drum lessons.

QUESTION: *So in the tap dance lessons, did you find a connection between the rhythm of the feet and the use of the hands and fingers in frame drumming?*

LR: Tap dancing is an extremely sophisticated and complex rhythmic system so it served as a powerful foundation for my rhythmic development. I find that fingers, hands or even drumming sticks are only the final extension of your rhythmic being. The rhythmic training takes place within the mind/body complex, between the two hemispheres of the brain and your nervous system.

QUESTION: *Layne, you are also one of the foremost teachers of the frame drum. Can anyone learn this?*

LR: Yes, anyone can learn to drum. It takes perseverance like any musical instrument, but the rewards are immense. The trance union of being in rhythm with other human beings, of moving together in time, of having the group's brain waves synchronized, brings us to experience the oneness of everything through the pulse. It is the basis of the oldest religious rituals known to humans. The frame drum is an archetypal idea that people all over the world and at all times have been compelled to create and play to transform their consciousness into higher states of awareness. It is a time tested, powerful trance-inducing instrument that gives us a means of creating peace and wisdom within ourselves. So to study the frame drum answers a deep and ancient archetypal need within ourselves.

QUESTION: *And are you seeing any kind of trend with your students as to why they are drawn to drumming?*

LR: The first sound we hear is the pulse of our mother's blood and drumming is the musical expression of this primal truth. We took form to the pulse of our mother's heartbeat. All drumming is an echo of this primordial first sound. Drumming draws us back to our earliest stirrings of awareness and returns us to the pre-socialized and unconditioned state of awareness we experienced in the womb. At the oldest level of our memory the drum functions as an ancient technology for transforming consciousness and was often used to create conditions for psychological and physical healing, which are things we are in great need of today.

QUESTION: *Yoga is also an integral part of your work as a musician. What are the forms of yoga that you draw on and incorporate into your work?*

LR: As a musician all the sounds I create are a product of my state of consciousness. The actual word yoga comes from the root yuj meaning to join or unite the mind's attention to the supreme state of primordial awareness, the source of the innermost Self. The goal of yoga is to clear the mind so that we can actually understand who we are and what our purpose in life is. The more clarity I have within my own mind, the more clarity I can transmit through the sounds I create.

I began studying the physical postures of yoga, the asanas, in 1970. These postures place the body in positions that cultivate relaxation, concentrated awareness, and a meditative state while massaging, stretching, and stimulating the internal organs. Asanas also open and clear the energy channels and chakras within the mind and body. In 1982 I met my primary yoga teacher, Swami Bua, who teaches a very rigorous form of South Indian yoga similar to Iyengar yoga. With him I also studied rhythmic breathing exercises called pranayama, rhythmic chanting of sacred sounds, known as mantras and the shat karmas, the cleansing practices for the mind and body. Pranayama clears the energy passageways in the body and charges the chakras. Mantra practice calms and brings the mind into a one-pointed state of awareness. At the yoga

teacher training program I attended under the auspices of Baba Hari Dass, I studied mudras, gestures that create specific energy circuits synchronizing the mind and body, and bandhas, muscular locks that prevent the loss of prana, or the life force from the body.

QUESTION: *What is the connection between yoga and drumming?*

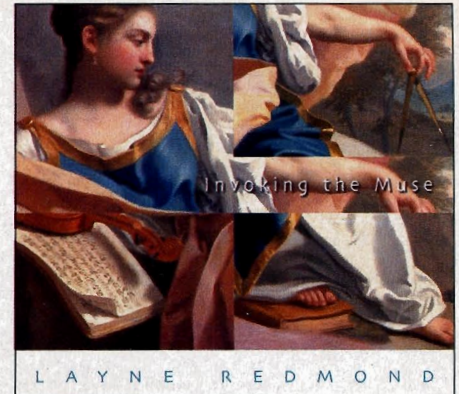
LR: Nada yoga, the yoga of sound, evolved from the study of the influence of rhythm and tuning on consciousness. The primary concept of nada yoga is that ultimate reality emanates from a primordial first sound, the pulse, or big bang that creates the universe. The frequencies of this root vibration create our physical world. This archetypal pulse of consciousness vibrates within us as the sound of our own heart beating. The mind and body throb to this constant rhythm of the life force. In nada yoga, the practitioner seeks communion with this pulsing vibration behind all sound—the heartbeat behind all heartbeats.

The sound of the drum has represented this primordial pulse of creation since the beginning of human ritual. It is also said that the 50 seed sounds of the Sanskrit alphabet pulse from the cosmic drum of Shiva, the ancient god of India who drums and dances the world into being. Known as bija mantras, they are eternal, conscious, living sounds—and make up the body of the goddess Kundalini Shakti who is the creatress of the dimensions of reality embodied in the chakras.

QUESTION: *You know, chakra is one of those terms that everyone seems to have heard about, but may not necessarily really know about. What exactly are these chakras?*

LR: The word chakra translates as circle, wheel, or vortex of energy. The chakra system is the electromagnetic structure of our consciousness created by the flow of our life force through the mind and body. The chakras are the intersections of energy and consciousness located along the main energy channel flowing from the upper brain to the base of the spine and regulating our physical, mental, and emotional states.

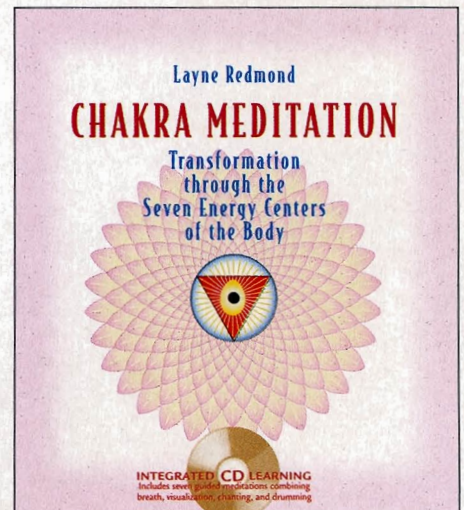
Each chakra represents a realm of thoughts, emotions, desires, goals, and ideals. The first chakra at the base of the spine is concerned with physical survival. Moving up the spine, the second



INVOKING THE MUSE, by Layne Redmond at \$16.98 from Sounds True, ISBN 1591791812

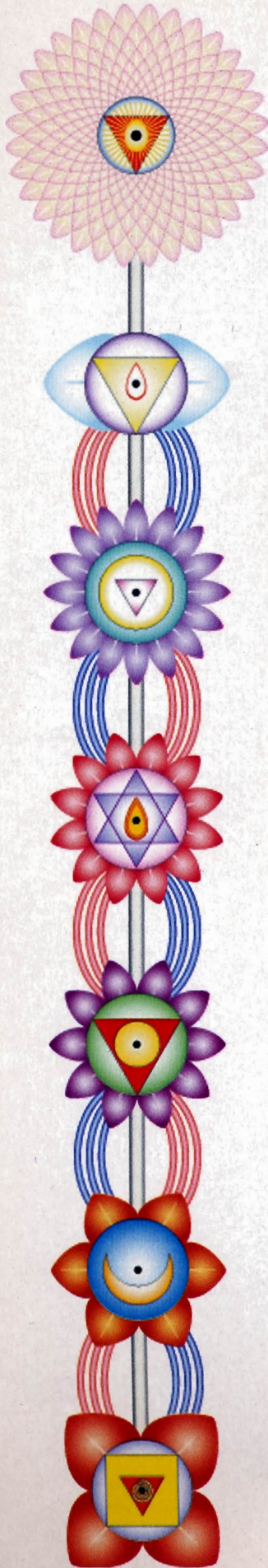


While researching the music of ancient Greece, Layne Redmond—*Drum! Magazine's* 2002 Percussionist of the Year—discovered a searingly beautiful "Hymn to the Muse" written in 157 AD, and was inspired to create a musical tribute to each of the Nine Muses. She is joined by some of the most renowned names in world music, jazz, and medieval chant, including Laurel Masse of Manhattan Transfer; Ruth Cunningham, formerly of Anonymous 4; flutist Steve Gorn; and percussionist Tommy Brunjes.



CHAKRA MEDITATION: Transformation through the Seven Energy Centers of the Body, by Layne Redmond at \$19.95 from Sounds True, ISBN 1591791782

Layne Redmond is currently on pilgrimage with a group of students drumming and exploring the ancient power spots of Crete. For further information on her work, her books, recordings and workshops, please visit: www.LayneRedmond.com.



chakra in the lower abdomen is concerned with relationships, the third chakra at the navel with our place in the world, the fourth chakra at the heart center with the power of compassion and love, the fifth chakra at the throat with the power of communication of ideas of truth and beauty, the sixth chakra in the center of the brain with the power of meditative and cognitive awareness and the seventh chakra at the crown of the head with the realization of our spiritual Self. The archetypal journey that shifts our sense of identity from the social or personal self focused on the physical body and mind to the sacred Self is an internal, spiritual passage through these dimensions of our own consciousness. The process of awakening the chakras and moving our awareness up from the first chakra to the seventh chakra is our journey back to the infinite potential of the highest Self.

The final chapter in my new book, **Chakra Meditation**, is titled "Lineage," which traces the evolution of the concept of the chakras in India and how these ideas came to the West and the changes in the perception of the chakras that occurred in the west.

QUESTION: *You also have a new recording coming out, **Invoking the Muse**. Can you tell us how you came to this project?*

LR: In 1997 while researching the ancient music of Greece I discovered the searingly beautiful "Hymn to the Muse Kalliopeia," composed by Mesomedes of Crete in the 2nd century C.E. I was so moved by this hymn, and the ancient images of the Muse playing the frame drum that I was inspired to bring into existence hymns to each of the other eight Muses. I drew on the talents of a group of musicians who completely embody the creative inspiration and the improvisatory power of the Muse. Ruth Cunningham, who sang Medieval chant with Anonymous 4, used her beautiful soprano to create a bridge between ancient and future traditions of sacred song. Steve Gorn, who played on Paul Simon's last album, brought his incomparable and divine flute to the Muse. Former Manhattan Transfer member Laurel Masse's incredible voice illuminates every line she sings and Vicki Richard's riveting violin solos draw from classical North Indian, Far Eastern and modern melodic styles. Tommy Brunjes'

percussive talents transcend musical and cultural boundaries and helped create the rhythmic core from which each song blooms.

The classical Greeks describe the Muse as She Who Knows All That Is, Ever Was or Will Be. She is the archetypal goddess of the mind, representing the forces of intuition, inspiration, and creativity that lead to wisdom and self realization. She is also the power of divine and exalted communication through words, song, music, dance and art.

Hesiod sang of Nine Muses: Kalliopeia, muse of epic poetry; Euterpe, muse of music and lyric poetry; Melpomene, muse of singing and tragedy; Erato, muse of mystical and erotic love; Terpsikhore, muse of whirling and ecstatic dance; Urania, muse of astronomy and prophecy; Kleio, muse of history and heroic poetry; Thaleia, muse of comedy and idyllic poetry; and Polyhymnia, muse of sacred hymns and meditation.

These Nine Muses are the daughters of Mnemosyne, the goddess of Memory, and Zeus, the god of the lightning-like flash of inspiration. Mnemosyne, the power of remembrance, is one of the three elder Muses, along with Melete, the power of practice, study, and meditation, and Aoide, the power of song, chant, and mantra. The three elder Muses are the daughters of the goddess Gaia, the Earth, and the god Uranus, the Heavens. The Muse is the connecting principle between heaven and earth. Through meditation, mantra, and memory, we can connect the power of heaven's creativity with the grounded, sustaining energy of the earth within our own being.

The Divine Muse is inspiration—the sacred breath, the life force in the air that is the power that makes consciousness possible. The word inspiration means breathing into, inhalation, the breath of life, to be filled with the breath of life, to be inspired, to show genius. This is the infinite creative energy of the universe, the force of life within everything. This primordial energy is known as prana in yogic practices from India, and as qi in Asia. Accumulation of this primal force fuses the physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions of our consciousness into the highest states of awareness.

QUESTION: *In this new recording, you connect the great philosophy of ancient Greece with a*

tradition of women drummers and an Eastern mind-body syste. How did you come to this scholarly crossroads?

LR: In my book **When The Drummers Were Women** I devoted a chapter to detailing the connections and similarities of religious and philosophical practices between ancient Greece, Egypt, Mesopotamia and India and reference the scholars that have substantiated these connections.

"Musikos," the Greek word for music, meant "relating to the Muses." Plato used musikos to refer to the quality of being, "well educated and versed in things of the mind." Plato taught that the concept of music encompassed all that relates to the mind. He believed in revealed knowledge as a path to knowing ultimate truth, describing the channel of flowing creativity between the human and divine as the Muse herself. This channel has been symbolized since ancient times as the Tree of Life, with roots in the earth and branches in the heavens, or the pathway of the serpent goddess Kundalini Shakti, who rises from the base of the spine to the crown of the head traveling through the seven dimensions of consciousness, the chakras, within our minds and bodies. Through this channel we unite the earth energy of the first chakra, Gaia, at the base of the spine with the heavenly energy of Uranus in the seventh chakra at the crown of the head.

The Muse is the power in the sacred spring at the foot of Mount Helikon, the mystical mountain at the center of the world spiraling up through the hierarchical realms of consciousness into the highest heaven. Here the Muse, chanting and spinning in a trance, splits into her nine-fold form, creating a chorus of mystical singers. As we follow the band of Muses up the spiral path of the mountain we remember who we really are. The sacred Muse leads us into the world of spirit, transcendent beauty, and immortality, united in glorious, beautiful song, and so like Kundalini Shakti, the Muse is the spiraling sacred energy raising us to the place of enlightenment.

QUESTION: *What do you hope people will realize from listening to this recording and reading your extensive liner notes on the Muse?*

LR: Within the brain there are unused areas of potential energy and psychic

awareness. The power to awaken these dormant regions lies within us. We can open the gate to wisdom and consciousness through study, meditation, chanting, drumming and dancing—the rituals of the Muse who lies hidden in our memory, waiting to lead us to the highest states of knowledge, blessedness, and being. Once the Muse reveals the truths within us, we understand who we are and what we are supposed to do.

QUESTION: *What do you hope people will gain from the book and CD set of **Chakra Meditation**?*

LR: The chakras provide a map to the structure of our consciousness. You do not even have to believe that the chakras actually exist, it is just an incredible system for understanding the conscious and unconscious mind and our behavior. The practices included on the CD give specific instructions for breathing, visualization, and chanting practices. The seventh practice on the CD is a traditional purification chanting meditation that opens, clears and balances the chakras awakening the powerful life force residing at the base of the spine. This awakened energy further activates the chakras sweeping you into new dimensions of experience and awareness. Your state of consciousness determines what your life experiences will be and as consciousness expands, your understanding of every aspect of life will also.

I wrote this book because it was a book on yoga I received as a teenager that gave me a means to understanding my mind and my life. The incredible benefits physically, mentally and emotionally I get from yoga, motivated me to write this book and to think carefully about what information and practices to include. In this program you will find a tried and true technology for understanding the energy structure of your electromagnetic being. It provides you with traditional practices for awakening the dimensions of consciousness contained in the chakras. These arts of self understanding and self transformation help us to develop our own authentic voice, purpose and path in life, leading to the ultimate goal of Self realization. My own life has been immeasurably enriched by the brilliance of these teachings. It is my greatest pleasure to share the wisdom and grace of this tradition. ☉

