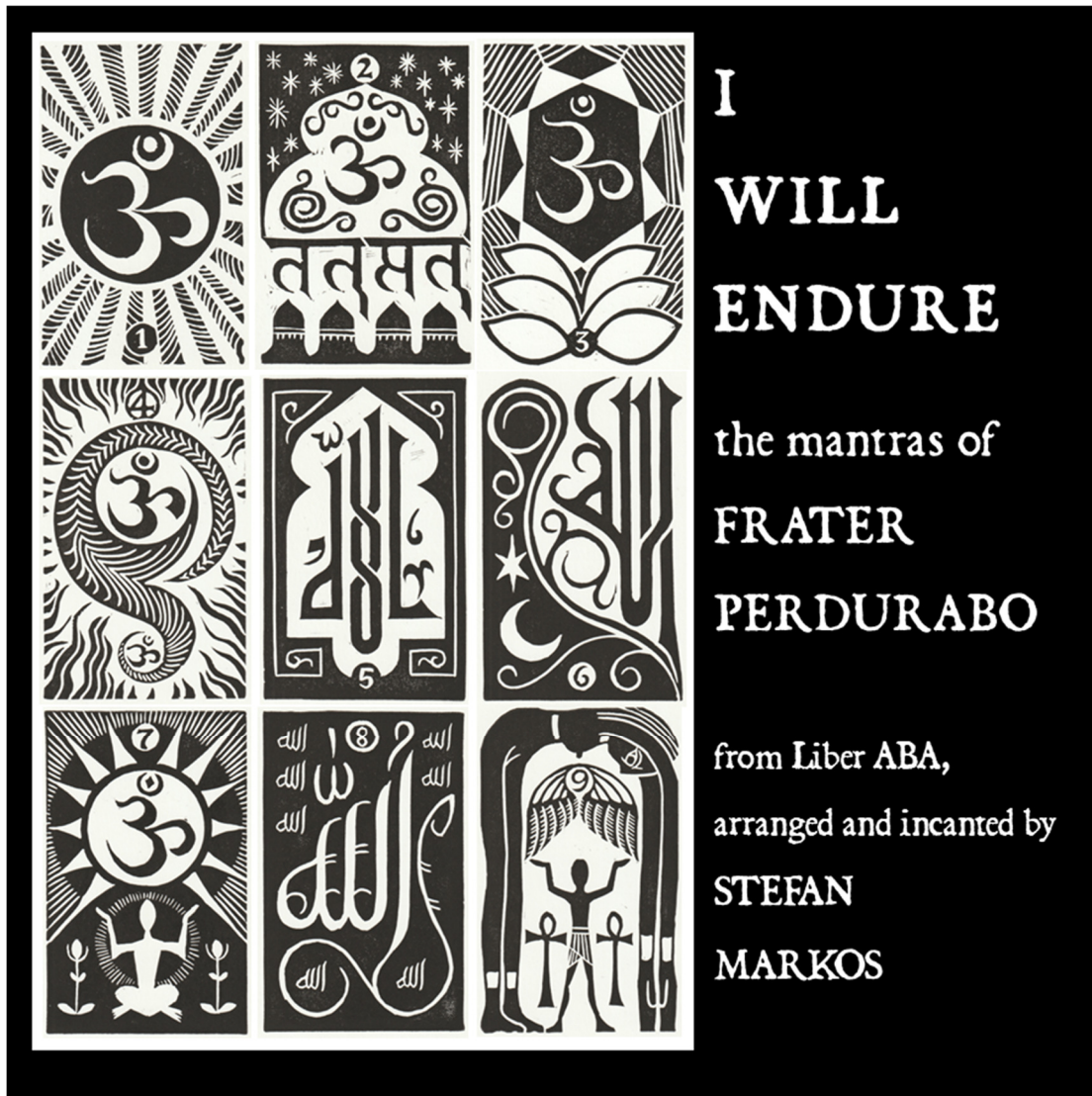


I WILL ENDURE: The Mantras of Frater Perdurabo

From *Liber ABA (Book Four)* by Aleister Crowley



Arranged and musically presented by Stefan Markos

Featuring Danielle Franklin (harp and voice), and Nick Medlock on guitar

Recording engineered and mastered by Nick Medlock

Recorded October 2021-January 2022, over numerous Saturday mornings, at St Augustine's Parish, Tempe, AZ, USA

Stefan Markos chants and plays the following instruments on this recording:

guitar, lute, sinfoniae (hurdy-gurdies), pipe & tabor, recorder, bladder-pipe, rauschpfeife, feadog, fujara, psaltery, kalimba, singing bowl, resting bell, buisine, dulcimer, and the systum

Thanks to Henry for the use of the singing bowl and kalimba.

And especially thanks to Nick for the use of the resting bell, not to mention being the ideal person to patiently engineer a project of this magnitude.

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I was about twelve years old when I first became aware of Aleister Crowley. It was during the “Satanic Panic” of the early 1980s, and he had a reputation as a notorious Devil worshipper, drug user, and inspiring figure to those dangerous heavy-metal bands that were corrupting our youth. Naturally, I found the man compelling, even though I was not interested in heavy metal music, nor drugs, and had no interest in devoting my life to Satan. Whatever information I could find about Crowley was consistent in its damning tone, which of course led me to accept its seeming veracity.

Around 1984, I bought my first deck of tarot cards (the Rider-Waite-Smith deck, of course) from Flo Higgins’ “Aquarius Rising” place in Fair Haven, NJ. Along with the other compelling decks on the shelf was a larger, more expensive deck: Aleister Crowley’s “Thoth” tarot. That was to be my second deck, which I still have. I admit I was expecting something from this deck that was more indicative of Crowley’s dangerous “heavy metal” persona. Instead, the designs and images suggested something deeper and more complex than a mere panorama of Satanism.

Over the years, I discovered more and more biographical information about Crowley that not only added to his mystique, but also re-evaluated (and out-and-out disposed of) his dangerous “black magic” personality. In particular, Dr Kaszynski’s biographical work *Perdurabo: The Life of Aleister Crowley* was an eye-opener, shedding light on his drug use, his mountain climbing, his travels, loves, losses and triumphs, his devotion to mystical ritual, and his lifelong struggles with money. The more I learned about the man, the more his “Satanist” persona seemed to be a sensational way of selling newspapers; had he lived in the second half of the twentieth century, Crowley would likely have been regarded as a hippie cult leader rather than an Anton LaVey-esque Satanic Priest.

Liber ABA; Book Four is considered Crowley’s most essential work, and is the result of his dictation to his primary A.:A.: students Mary d’Este Sturges, Mary Butts, and Leila Waddell (although the typical story is that the book was dictated to Mary d’Este a.k.a. Mary Desti a.k.a. Soror Virakam, while in a trance). The first part of the book pertains to meditation and is particularly attractive to me because of its radically personal approach to the practice of yoga. In chapter II, Crowley presents the transliterated texts of nine mantras as examples for the reader, four of which have simple, single-line music notation (it is entirely possible that Waddell, who provided violin music for Crowley’s rituals, may have provided the music notation). With the exception of the last mantra, which Crowley extracted from the Stele of Revealing, these texts are well-known to modern “New Age” practitioners, having Sufi or Hindu origins. In the early twentieth century, these mantras and approaches to meditation were not well-known outside of Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim lands, and for the few who subscribed to *The Equinox*, this may have been their introduction to this larger world of human consciousness.

The simple notation is vague and probably little more than a suggestion. To me, it bears comparison to medieval music notation in that there is no indication of instrumentation, and technical logistics like repeats, dynamics, and duration are at the discretion of the chanter. Since Crowley presents meditation as a solitary practice, these mantras could exist any number of ways. In creating arrangements and harmonies for these, I drew on my extensive experience in early music, world music, and meditative worship service music. Additionally, I wanted to incorporate instruments from my collection that I don't get to feature very often in my usual music performances, like the fujara, psaltery, and systrum. I felt very strongly about evoking a "New Age" sound using ancient instruments without resorting to the stereotypical keyboard synth sounds, and using only minimal, judicious effects. Between the wonderful acoustic of St Augustine's in Tempe, and Nick Medlock's skilled engineering, we were able to work toward creating a soundscape that evokes a durable sacred space for the listener.

Did Crowley "compose" the four melodies found in *Book Four*? I have been unable to find any information to satisfy this query. Crowley was an occasional composer of music (and was for a brief time a manager of a music ensemble), so it is entirely possible that his creative mind was the source of these tunes, perhaps developed over the years that he was fine-tuning his theories of yoga and meditation. It is also entirely likely that he heard melodic chanting while traveling in the East, and the melodies in *Book Four* may be transcriptions or interpretations of 'traditional' melodies from other lands. In the case of mantra number nine (*A ka dua*), I am willing to accept that melody as his composition, as this is the first evidence of this text being set to music in 2600 years. Of course, the question of composition tends to pose further questions about the true associations between notated music and the person credited with its composition, but that is a matter for another time.

The idea for this project began around 2015 when I obtained an edition of *Book Four*, printed in facsimile by the Weiser press. As with most of my music arranging endeavors, I used lute and guitar to develop and draft my ideas, and with this project I also used an electronic keyboard set to a very 'new-age' sound in the process. For a long while, I considered using a mix of acoustic and electronic instruments in the recording. Ultimately, I decided on an all-acoustic approach.

Although the melodies are simple, my harmonic accompaniments did not come as naturally as they do when I'm arranging, say, Playford dances or Carolan tunes. For example, the second mantra (*Aum tat sat aum*) seems to defy all attempts at 'classic' harmonizing, being based on a close cluster of three notes. I went through several ideas, eventually settling on the four-measure sequence that allows the harmonic support to essentially re-define the melodic motif with each measure: the A minor chord at the beginning resonates closely with the recurring a's in the melody, and the G major chord that follows resonates with the g and b notes, and so on.

Of the nine mantras, five do not feature music notation. The decision on how to approach these went through several revisions, even during the recording sessions. In true Crowley fashion, I often found melodic material hidden in the melodies already provided; it was simply a matter of changing my perspective.

Recording was fairly straightforward, even if it was one Saturday morning at a time, which was all the free time we could afford. St Augustine's wonderful acoustic notwithstanding, we had to cope with frequent street noise, as well as vacations, Covid concerns, and our frequent (and passionate) discussions about mythology, religion, movies, and other topics that Nick and I found fascinating. For the most part, each track was a 'live' performance, resorting to edits or 'punch-ins' only in matters of last resort or convenience, or when it just made sense. My goal was to generate an organic sound. I would approach every session with a 'rough sketch' of ideas, and sometimes these ideas would develop, or be revised, or inspire new ideas.

My long-term goal for the recording is to have the music assume a durable existence of its own. Multitracking an entire album tends to make live performance impractical, even in this modern age of looping pedals and backing tracks. Covid and time constraints prevented me from using all the guest musicians I had in mind. But the consideration of live performances based on this repertory revealed endless possibilities for instrumentation, collaboration, and presentation. The arrangements that I crafted for these mantras are mere foundations upon which might be built all kinds of musical ceremony, unique to that occasion.

Ultimately, a **mantra** is a sound that stimulates higher consciousness. It could be in any language, or no language at all. With this in mind, I felt comfortable enough to approach chanting these ancient phrases in unfamiliar languages for a recording. Because of this, my pronunciation of these words and sounds may be a little “off,” particularly to those who are familiar with these languages. The few among us who can pronounce ancient Egyptian with scholarly authority will certainly cringe at my approach of mantra number 9, but then again, Aleister likely had no idea of authentic pronunciation, and his music for this chant certainly reflects that. My only claim to authenticity lies in my sincere expression of these mantras as a gateway to another realm of sound, consciousness, and music. If this recording takes you to another world, then I feel I have accomplished a Great Work.



1: Aum *sinfonye, singing bowl, fujara*

This mantra features no music, which is just as well, as it is often intoned on a single tone chosen by the practitioner. Even so, I devised a simple melody to be played on the hurdy-gurdy (an instrument which I refer to by its medieval name “sinfonye”) that first ascends from the tonic, and then descends, hinting at a mixolydian mode. I could not resist adding the singing bowl and wonderful overtones of the fujara.



2: Aum tat sat aum *guitar, kalimba, double pipe & tabor, feadog, psaltery, harp*

The hypnotic four-note motif is very minimal, and after many re-workings, I came up with a progression that cycles back every four repeats of the chant. The pipe and tabor is unusual here: the pipe actually features a drone which makes an intriguing rhythmic and harmonic contribution to the musical texture. I was especially pleased with how naturally the kalimba fit in (I grew up with a Hugh Tracey kalimba in my little hands).



3: Aum mane padme hum *lute, sinfonye, harp, feadog*

Another minimal notation from Crowley. This melody is apparently an elaboration on the four-note motif of mantra number two, with the two middle notes subdivided into eighth notes. This time, I devised a harmonic support that spans two reiterations of the melody, to give the mantra an opening-closing feel. This arrangement fit neatly on the renaissance lute.



4: Aum shivaya Vashi *guitar, two sinfonyes, pipe & tabor, harp*

This is a fascinating melody which shifts back and forth between Lydian and Phrygian modalities. Due to this tonal shift, drones could not figure into the arrangement. Instead, I improvised on the two separate melody strings of the hurdy-gurdy, with the instrument's drone strings disengaged.



5: Allah *sinfonye, dulcimer, rauschpfeife, dulcimer, guitar, resting bell*

There is no notation provided, of course. In his footnotes, Crowley seems to suggest the mystical Sufi practice of *dhikr*, in which mantras are rhythmically aspirated for a specific number of times. As this is the fifth mantra in *Book Four*, I chose a five-beat pattern on which to structure this chant. This was the ideal backdrop for some improvisations on the *rauschpfeife*, a renaissance-era capped-reed instrument similar to the shawm, and Nick contributed an oud-inspired modal meditation on the guitar.



6: al-Hashr *sinfonye, tenor recorder, dulcimer*

This mantra is from sura 59 of the Quran (“the exile”). Although no notation was provided with this, I devised one by turning the melody for mantra number four upside down and backwards, then playing with the rhythm and adjusting the modal shift so it was more drone-friendly. As with the Sufi traditions, I added a dance motif to my hurdy-gurdy improvisation.



7: Gayatri *sinfonye, singing bowl*

This is one of the well-known Hindu mantras, and Crowley's presentation is a little perplexing. The Gayatri comes to us over thousands of years, from the *Rig Veda* to the *Upanishads* to the *Bhagavad Gita*, and the word "gayatri" refers to the verse's meter of twenty-four syllables. Crowley omits the *mahavyahrti* "bhuur-bhuvah svah" after the opening "Aum," and instructs us to "scan this as trochaic tetrameters." In practice, the Gayatri is to be chanted as three groups of eight syllables ("varenyam" is usually modified to be a four-syllable word to make this work). Ultimately, I stuck with Crowley's version, recited against a drone. I improvised on the hurdy-gurdy, loosely based on the four-note motif of mantra number two, in a plagal-scale Lydian mode.



8: Tawhid *pipe & tabor, dulcimer, lute, singing bowl*

This mantra is the Tawhid verse from *sura* 112 of the Quran (“the Sincerity”). It is a declaration of submission to unification, often accompanied by a single raised index finger. I devised this tune by turning the melody for mantra number three upside down and backwards. The pipe and tabor once again hints at the Sufi mystic traditions which incorporate dance. The resulting melody was simple enough that improvising around on the lute was a natural next step. I have always been enchanted by the traditional Muslim call to prayer and sought to emulate that style in my chant.



9: A ka dua *lute, psaltery, sinfonye, systrum, busine, bladderpipe, rauschpfeife, pipe & tabor, harp*

Crowley devised this mantra from the Stele of Revealing, and almost certainly composed this engagingly simple melody himself. Indeed, 'simplicity' was the formula I followed in composing the harmonic support for this mantra. In addition to a full ensemble of ancient instruments, I added the sounds of the busine (a long, straight trumpet) and the systrum, an ankh-shaped jingle-shaker associated with the priestesses of Hathor.

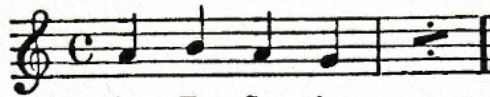
The following are the pages from *Book Four* in which Crowley presents and discusses mantras. Note the antiquated musical typeface, the casual presentation of notation (particularly the odd repeat indication in the middle of mantra number four), and the “Meanings of the Mantras” footnote that starts at the bottom of the page, then jumps up to the top of the footnote field (which may be a typographical irregularity). Also of interest: the antiquated transcriptions of Sanskrit, Arabic, and Egyptian, and Crowley’s poetic “translations” of these texts, especially that of mantra number nine, from the Stele of Revealing.

The ideal mantra should be rhythmical, one might even say musical; but there should be sufficient emphasis on some syllable to assist the faculty of attention. The best mantras are of medium length, so far as the beginner is concerned. If the mantra is too long, one is apt to forget it, unless one practises very hard for a great length of time. On the other hand, mantras of a single syllable, such as *Aum*,² are rather jerky; the rhythmical idea is lost. Here are a few useful mantras:

1. *Aum*.

2. *Aum Tat Sat Aum*. This mantra is purely spondaic.

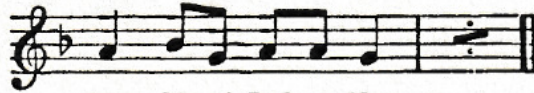
II.



Aum Tat Sat Aum

3. *Aum mani padme hum*; two trochees between two caesuras.

III.



Aum Ma-ni Pad-me Hum

4. *Aum shivaya vashi*; three trochees. Note that “shi” means rest, the absolute or male aspect of the Deity; “va” is energy, the manifested or female side of the Deity. This Mantra therefore expresses the whole course of the Universe, from Zero through the finite back to Zero.

IV.



Aum shi - va - ya Va-shi Aum shi - va - ya Va-shi

5. *Allah*. The syllables of this are accented equally, with a certain pause between them; and are usually combined by fakirs with a rhythmical motion of the body to and fro.

6. *Húa állahú alázi láiláha ílla Húa*.

¹ See Part II.

² However, in saying a mantra containing the word *Aum*, one sometimes forgets the other words, and remains concentrated, repeating the *Aum* at intervals; but this is the result of a practice already begun, not the beginning of a practice.

Here are some longer ones:

7. The famous Gayatri.

Aum! tat savitur varenyam
Bhargo devasya dimahi
Dhiyo yo na pratyodayat.

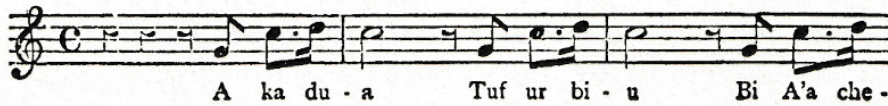
Scan this as trochaic tetrameters.

8. Qól: Húa Állahú achád; Állahú Ássamád; lám yalíd walám yulád;
walám yakún lahú kufwán achád.

9. This mantra is the holiest of all that are or can be. It is from the
Stelé of Revealing.¹

A ka d:ia
Tuf ur biu
Bi aa chefu
Dudu ner af an nuteru.

IX.



Such are enough for selection.²

There are many other mantras. Sri Sabapaty Swami gives a particular
one for each of the Cakkras. But let the student select one mantra and
master it thoroughly.

and gradually closing the mouth. The three sounds represent the creative, preserva-
tive, and destructive principles. There are many more points about this, enough to
fill a volume.

2. O that Existent! O!—An aspiration after reality, truth.
3. O the Jewel in the Lotus! Amen!—Refers to Buddha and Harpocrates; but
also to the symbolism of the Rosy Cross.
4. Gives the cycle of creation. Peace manifesting as Power, Power dissolving in
Peace.
5. God. It adds to 66, the sum of the first 11 numbers.
6. He is God, and there is no other God than He.
7. O! let us strictly meditate on the adorable light of that divine Savitri (the
interior Sun, etc.). May she enlighten our minds!
8. Say:

He is God alone!
God the Eternal!
He begets not and is not begotten!
Nor is there like unto Him any one!

9. Unity uttermost showed!
I adore the might of Thy breath,
Supreme and terrible God,
Who makest the Gods and Death
To tremble before Thee:—
I, I adore Thee!

¹ See Equinox VII.

² Meanings of mantras:

1 Aum is the sound produced by breathing forcibly from the back of the throat