

Other Reviews

Man's Right to Know: The Life and Work of Wilhelm Reich

By Kevin Hinchey

Editor's Note: On July 15, 2002, filmmaker Kevin Hinchey delivered the following talk at Orgonon, The Wilhelm Reich Museum, in Rangeley, Maine, at the first public screening of the video he had directed, Man's Right to Know. The Journal of the Mindshift Institute is proud to publish his remarks.

Twenty-eight minutes and 30 seconds is barely enough time even to begin to grasp the life and work of Wilhelm Reich. And that's all the video *Man's Right to Know* purports to do: provide a beginning. It is not a definitive documentary. Neither is it, nor was it ever intended to be, a substitute for reading Reich's literature or spending several hours at Orgonon, The Wilhelm Reich Museum, both of which I believe are essential to educating one's self about Reich.

Ideally the video will serve as a preliminary first step in a larger process: The video introduces ideas. The Museum amplifies them. And Reich's literature elucidates them.

Man's Right to Know was produced primarily to replace the existing museum slide show, which is essentially the first exhibit in the Museum tour.

When Mary Higgins, Director of the Wilhelm Reich Museum, and I first began to discuss the project, the first thing we asked ourselves was, "Who is our audience?" This question proved to be a springboard for a much broader conversation about the purpose of the Museum, an analysis of its visitors, and an exploration of how we might enrich the experience of those visitors.

For visitors with little or no knowledge of Reich, the exhibits in the Museum can be difficult to comprehend. After all, orgonomy is a young and largely unknown science, and there is little in a typical visitor's experience to prepare them for the range and the epic quality of Reich's life and work.

In a short period of time, even the best informed tour guide simply cannot convey the magnitude of Reich's work nor sufficiently explain the connectivity from psychology to biology to physics-the crucial "red thread," as he referred to it.

Consequently, for many visitors, their image of Reich remains disjointed, and they are only able to focus and respond to isolated fragments of his legacy. Sometimes, if we are lucky, this response will translate into the purchase of books or other items at the bookstore. Sometimes this response will translate into a life-long exploration into Reich's work. And sometimes visitors simply leave Orgonon to take in the other sites in and around Rangeley.

It seemed logical, then, that if the Museum could provide every visitor, from the uninitiated to the more knowledgeable, with a coherent and compelling image of Reich from the start

of their tour in the screening room, then perhaps their response would translate into more book sales, increased membership at the Museum, greater support of the Museum, more involvement with its programs, and more people personally committed to further exploring Reich's work.

As a result, our ambitions and expectations for the video began to expand, as we asked ourselves:

- Could we present a concise overview of Reich's life and work that would be relatively easy to understand...
- that would quickly bring the viewer to a much higher level of understanding...
- that would touch the viewer emotionally...
- that would acclimate them in a practical way to the Museum exhibits...
- and that would introduce them to some of Reich's quotations and literature?

And so, for the visitor with little or no knowledge of Reich, this video is designed to be a compressed, concise introduction. It is intended to provide, quickly and succinctly, a rudimentary understanding of Reich that will better orient the visitor to the Museum exhibits and the offerings at the bookstore.

Hopefully, the visitor will recognize the parallels between the chronological organization of the material in the video *and* in the Museum, so that their tour of the Museum becomes richer and more meaningful. After watching the video and taking the tour, we hope that the visitor will be intrigued by the breadth of Reich's life...outraged by its tragedy...and inspired to learn more.

For those with more than a cursory knowledge of Reich, hopefully the video will confirm what the viewer already knows, clarify certain areas of confusion, and perhaps fill in some gaps. For viewers who are well-versed in Reich's life and work, it is unlikely that this video will provide any new knowledge or insights. But at the very least I hope that its visual elements, many of them never before seen, will deepen the viewers' appreciation of Reich and his achievements.

The video was also deliberately designed to serve a broader mission of the Museum: to be used beyond the confines of Orgonon as a means of reaching and educating an even wider audience. In addition to being on sale in the bookstore, the video will be available as an educational tool for lectures, seminars, classrooms, fund-raisers, open houses, and other events, providing audiences with a background and a context in which to further explore Reich's life and work.

Structure

From the inception of this project, the structure of the video was self-evident: follow the "red thread." The "red thread" itself provides a lean, muscular logical storyline by which we

can follow the chronology of Reich's life and the evolution of his work.

I decided to establish at the very beginning the historic concept of Life Energy, then follow Reich's investigation of the energy principle from the libido with its psychological and social implications...to his biological experiments that led to the discovery of the orgone...to his medical work...and on into the area of orgone biophysics.

To me, this is the only way to grasp the breadth of Reich's achievements. Whether it is in a 28-minute video, a two-hour documentary, or a Hollywood movie—this is the structure to follow.

With the “red thread” as the structural backbone, I wanted to emphasize from the beginning, both narratively and visually, that Wilhelm Reich was a scientist.

Toward that end, I relied heavily on movie footage and photographs of Reich and his co-workers in the laboratory, visuals of scientific equipment, select quotations about his energy work, and titles that conveyed the documentation of that work.

It is unfortunate today that Reich's detractors fail, or refuse, to recognize the disciplined, rigorous, empirical nature of Reich's experiments. It is equally regrettable that many of Reich's admirers mysticize his work or rush to lump it together with all kinds of pseudosciences. Consequently, I felt that suffusing this video with scientific imagery was thematically appropriate.

Given the time constraints, in terms of the length of the video and my desire to maintain a terse, muscular storyline, I decided to omit any references to Reich's personal life except for the segment devoted to his early years. I felt that any discussion about his wives, children and friends in the body of the program would disrupt the flow, and were not essential to understanding his work. Furthermore, a curious viewer could always get that information from a Museum tour guide

I also saw the video as an opportunity to clarify and correct some common misconceptions. Even among those favorably disposed to Reich, we constantly find inaccuracies, untruths, misstatements and carelessness with facts.

Obviously it would take a presentation several hours long to begin to address all the rumors, slanders and vilifications during Reich's life and afterwards. But I felt it was essential to set the record straight on several key issues.

The orgone accumulator, for example: so pivotal in Reich's work, so central to the ultimate tragedy of his life, and the subject of much slander and honest misunderstanding. Without a basic scientific understanding of the accumulator, a person simply cannot grasp all that follows in Reich's life.

Since the essence of orgone energy is movement and pulsation, I did not feel that static drawings would convey the scientific principles which govern the orgone accumulator. And

so I opted for some rather basic computer animation to illustrate these concepts. And wherever appropriate, I tried to reinforce the accumulator's experimental and medical usage with titles from Reich's bulletins and journals.

The notion that the orgone accumulator is a sexual device used to enhance one's orgasmic potency is a common misconception that one hears even today, and often from people who genuinely admire Reich's work. Because this notion proved so destructive to Reich, I felt it was crucial to pinpoint for audiences the origin of this idea to a specific quotation in a specific article by a freelance journalist named Mildred Brady.

Similarly, the cloudbuster is an object of much fascination and misunderstanding, among those for Reich *and* against him. For example, many people think that the cloudbuster emanates orgone energy *into* the atmosphere during weather operations. So, again, I felt a brief and basic explanation was necessary for a fuller appreciation of Reich's work.

Let me reiterate what I said at the beginning: none of the content in the video, none of these brief illustrations of the accumulator and the cloudbuster, can substitute for the fuller explanations found in Reich's literature. Again, I hope the viewers-whether they are Museum visitors, attendees at a lecture or in a classroom, or at some other event-will be sufficiently intrigued so that they'll want to read Reich's literature and learn more about his life and work

While there is certainly no way to evade the tragedy and sadness of Reich's death in prison, Mary and I didn't want to end the video on that note. We felt that after his death might be a good opportunity to do what we hadn't done in the body of the program: to focus on the human side of Reich. Which is how the final montage evolved, with photographs of Reich with his wives, children, and friends away from work and the laboratory.

Early on, Mary and I knew that we wanted to hear Reich's voice somewhere during the program. We felt that for viewers who have never heard Reich speak (which is most viewers) his voice would confer an added dimension to our portrayal of Reich. But where would his voice be appropriate? What would the specific soundbite be? And how would it integrate into the content? After spending hours listening to tapes and poring over transcripts, finally in March we came across a few sentences which we felt provided a moving summation of Reich's commitment to his work, and as such, was the most fitting way to conclude the program.

To learn more about the video, or to order a copy, visit our [Store](#).

Tension and Release in Musical Composition: Its Relation to Wilhelm Reich's Orgasm Formula

By Andy Kahn

Editor's Note: Andy Kahn is a musician who is knowledgeable about Reich's work. He composed the original score for the documentary film about Reich, Man's Right to Know. He delivered the following talk at Orgonon, The Wilhelm Reich Museum, in July 2002, as part of a week-long conference on the topic of "Self-Regulation." We feel that he has made a unique connection between musical composition and Reich's tension-charge orgasm formula. The Journal of the Mindshift Institute is proud to publish this thought-provoking contribution.

Music figured prominently in Reich's life. He is seen playing the accordion in photos and in films. His organ sits in the Observatory building. His record collection more than demonstrates his appreciation of the classics and the famous composers who penned them. On display, next to Reich's record albums, is an entry from his Observatory Diary from July 9, 1949 that reads:

"I am enjoying my observatory. These are its main characteristics so far:

1. It is located in a mountainous region 1650-1700 feet above sea level among pines and birches and hills 3-4000 feet high.
2. Thus, it reminds me of my beloved Bukovina, Austria-Vienna, Norway, Rex, Schneeberg, Mamau Wiese, where I love to dwell.
3. The Observatory terrace surveys all hills up to the White Mountains some 90 miles away, three lakes, meadows, pastures.
4. The wind blows *my* music there."

"*My* music," he wrote. Certainly not music written by him. Rather, music that whistled through the trees, played by an orchestra of natural elements at Orgonon, reminding him of places he loved. His journal entry continued:

7. Roominess, airiness, heights, breadth, width...
9. A final home after 28 years of wandering around...
13. A foundation of rock."

What a perfect environment in which to think, study, observe, do research and write. Where Reich could listen to *his* music. Whether it came from the natural sounds at Orgonon or from the recordings he collected and listened to in his Study, Reich heard music there. One can imagine him placing a heavy 78 RPM platter on his record player. Smoking, having a whiskey, peering out any of the many large windows that encouraged the outside in. Thinking. Listening.

The music of the masters filling the room. Musical energy from so many years past. Vibrant

energy imbued with pain, suffering, anguish, fear, hope, renewal, excitement, love, success. Energy having made the long journey, from the composer's mind to paper to performance on record many years later, now to Wilhelm Reich's record player at Orgonon. Proof that energy continues by renewing itself in many forms.

Music and energy at Orgonon were intertwined. Reich defined orgone energy's powerful effect on mankind. Music represented audible energy and Reich heard it loud and clear in the masterpieces that made up his record collection. He recognized the similarity between a common format utilized in both musical compositions and his own tension-charge orgasm formula that governed life in all aspects everywhere.

Let's talk about Tension and Release (T and R) in music and the common thread that links the Orgasm Formula with the symphonic recordings that make up Wilhelm Reich's personal musical library at Orgonon.

T and R is a manipulative tool found in Melody and Harmony, the devices a composer uses to paint his musical images. These components affect the listener as the piece moves through mood swings and attitudes, producing agitation and relaxation, sadness or happiness. Harmony, in its most simplistic terms, may be major or minor. Adding in more intervals of notes, making a simple major or minor chord more complex, creates tension. This same method is used to create a release, depending on the original construction of the harmony. Melody, the single line of "dialogue" that accompanies harmony, is the messenger, delivering the composer's description of action about to take or taking place. Melody is comprised of a sequence of musical notes that tell a story with relation to the color or mood provided by the harmony.

I would like to refer at this time to *JAZZ IMPROV*, a text printed in 1990 by pianist and educator Jimmy Amadie, currently in use by music students, teachers and musicians alike. The subtitle of this book is "*A Unique Method For Improvisation based on The Concept of Tension and Release.*" On page one, Mr. Amadie writes:

"Our approach (to improvisation) begins with the tonal concept of 'Tension and Release'...Each chord has its corresponding scale from which it is derived. Playing notes that are not in the chord (which may or not be in the scale) against (that) basic chord causes a 'tension' that needs to be resolved. Resolving a 'tension' tone is its 'release.' (A chord is made up of chord tones.) These are called target notes because they are the notes we aim at in order to release the tension.

"The movement of a tension-creating tone (a non-chord tone) into a target note (a chord-tone note which releases tension) creates a 'Unit of Tension and Release.' The length of a "Unit of Tension and Release can vary.

"'Inside' tension tone(s) are outside (not part of) the chord (tones) BUT (inside or part of) the chord's (relative) scale. 'Outside' tension tone(s) are both outside of the chord (tones) and outside of the chord's (relative) scale.

“The concept of playing 'outside' the harmony of the notated chord...results in different harmonies occurring simultaneously (thus producing a bi-chordal effect). The purpose of playing 'outside' (the harmony) is to create a dramatic overall tension by opposing two harmonies and then to resolve the conflict by 'inside' playing.”

Beethoven was adept at creating musical tension and then resolving the conflict with a thunderous release. This approach finds its way into Beethoven's symphonies and can also be found within his concertos, sonatas and choral works. Reich's diagrammatically simple Orgasm Formula defines the tension brought on by initial excitation, elevating the desire to reach a successful climax by then layering on yet more tension until the excitement can no longer sustain itself without an eruption by the organism. Always following this explosion is relaxation from the excitement created by the tension, allowing for satisfaction and peace to take effect.

Beethoven was keen on this formula that serves as a signature in his compositions. Reich recognized the similarity between his own real-life scientific observations and Beethoven's musical masterpieces. The Orgasm Formula, as seen on paper, can be appreciated aurally through the composer's similar approach to organizing it into a musical presentation. Tension within the harmony, along with the melodies that reinforce it, affects the listener in much the same way that physical tension will interact with another attractive physical element.

The music carries us along with a heightened sense that we are going to a loftier location, aware of the intensity being created. We climb upon a threshold constructed merely of notes that rise and fall, swell and recede, tease and reward. We become caught in a musical grip that will not let go. The notes spin a complex web that bathes us in sensations—we may even get overcome emotionally, often with feelings of pain and sorrow or fear and unsteadiness, leading to physical manifestations, such as real goose bumps.

We yearn for a resolution. More blankets of melodies appear in sequences that rivet the listener. We deeply desire to reach the other side now—where joy awaits and flowers bloom. A place where the sun radiates warmth and energy and love oozes from every aspect of life and its environment. Still, harmonies continue to clash and resolve themselves while melodic phrases swirl around, tying the harmony together and binding it with hope so that after this cacophony, all will become sweet, tender and pleasurable. When the music finally reaches an elevation that neither the composer nor the listener can go beyond, a convulsion of new harmonic development takes place. The flow of its ascension to that point now reverses its direction. This allows a release from all tension and produces the sought-after and necessary satisfaction. The frantic buildup was worth all this trouble, after all.

Enough romancing. I suspect that Wilhelm Reich would disapprove of my glamorization of his formula, in my animating his painstaking research in such Hollywood fashion. However, the imagery in the music Reich listened to is vivid and covers a broad color spectrum. His library is bloated with Beethoven, arguably the most visual of the great composers. Without opening a discussion stemming from that last statement, listen closely to any Beethoven symphony and you will quickly grasp the musical parity with the Orgasm

Formula, which occupied First Chair in Reich's Orchestra of Science, Medicine and Thought.

The large number of Beethoven's works in Reich's record collection indicates his high regard for Beethoven's intuition on music invoking emotional responses and the master composer's ability to influence the listener psychologically. True, there are other composers represented in the collection. I had the opportunity to personally inspect the 62 albums Reich kept in his Study. There are 47 works of Beethoven. Mendelssohn's *Italian Symphony* might well have been one of Reich's favorite pieces. There are two versions of Edvard Grieg's *Peer Gynt Suite*. Reich had personally inscribed the jacket cover of Schubert's *Ave Maria* as performed by Marian Anderson, directing this selection to be played at his funeral. Tschaikowsky is represented, along with several Mozart Quartets, Chopin Piano Preludes, Bach's Toccata and Fugue and the deep, haunting *Alto Rhapsody* by Brahms. These are "required reading" in any classical music library.

But Ludwig von Beethoven is the star—the Leading Man who captured the heart, mind and spirit of Reich's penchant for music. Beethoven's approach fit into Reich's model to a "T." The soundtrack for Reich's complete equation of attraction, excitement through tension, building more excitement by increasing the tension in order to achieve the obligatory climax with pleasure and relaxation, could easily be supplied by any Beethoven score, in which there are many musical sequences that demonstrates the parallel to the structure of Reich's Orgasm Formula.

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Peace, Love and Understanding

By Tami Coyne

Back in the late 1970's, Nick Lowe wrote, "(What's so funny 'bout) Peace, Love and Understanding," a song that Elvis Costello made famous when he covered it on his 1979 *Armed Forces* album. It's an intensely moving reflection on how depressing this world can seem when hope appears lost because of hatred, misery and pain. I first heard this song when I was in college and our country was in the midst of the Iran Hostage Crisis. I was bummed out, but snug as a bug in a rug, at a small New England college while across the ocean seventy-seven Americans were being held against their wills as pawns in a geopolitical game that had nothing to do with peace, love and understanding. Iran hated us because we kept the repressive Shah in power so we could receive a steady stream of oil. And we hated Iran because they wanted to overthrow the Shah and block our access to their natural resources.

Twenty-four years later, as I sit here listening to this same song ([click here](#) to listen to Kathy Fisher sing it), our government tells us that we're going to war to liberate the Iraqi people from a repressive dictator and to keep the world safe from weapons of mass destruction. But it just doesn't make sense. Saddam Hussein was our man during the Iraq/Iran war of 1980-1988 when he was kicking Iranian butt with the weapons of mass destruction we sold him, but since the first Gulf War, Saddam's been portrayed as an evil despot on the scale of Adolph Hitler. The fact that Iraq just happens to have the second largest oil reserves in the world, leads a thinking person to believe that maybe, just maybe, these problems we keep having in the Middle-East are simply about making sure that America has access to all the oil it wants, no matter what the human cost.

I must admit that all this hypocrisy has me really bummed out. If it's about oil, let's just stop saying that it's about liberation, terrorism or ridding the world of despotism. But, that's not how the game is played, as I well know. As much as I'd like to believe that George Bush, Saddam Hussein and the rest of the world leaders have the market cornered on hypocrisy and deception, they don't. This never-ending drama that is playing itself out on the world stage resonates with me so profoundly because it parallels the spiritual drama unfolding within me.

I'm no stranger to hypocrisy. Sure, I'm a Spiritual Chick, but I'm still attached to my ego—the spiritual equivalent of America's desperate reliance on oil. It's the thing that I lie to protect, that I do crazy things to placate, that I say stupid stuff to appease. I know there's only One God, one life force that animates both the good and the bad, but I still can't love all my neighbors as myself. Often, I find it difficult to understand the other guy enough to turn the other cheek. I struggle each and everyday to be peaceful. As long as I need my ego to power up my SUV of a personality, who am I to talk about peace, love and understanding? Until I can make the commitment to permanently switch from my ego to my soul as my main power source, who am I to judge those who've decided that oil profits are more important than developing alternative sources of energy? I'm no one, that's who. I wish I could remember every minute of every day that I'm not really Tami Coyne, that I am life itself, but I can't just yet. In these troubled times I'm going to keep on trying to break free of the depressing prison of my ego. I'm also going to pray like hell for the Iraqi people and our servicemen and women because there's just nothing funny about depleted uranium, Gulf War syndrome and dead children.

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Tami Coyne is the co-author of [The Spiritual Chicks Question Everything: Learn to Risk, Release and Soar](#) (Red Wheel/Weiser, October 2002) and the author of [Your Life's Work: A Guide to Creating a Spiritual and Successful Work Life](#). This essay was also inspired by Wilhelm Reich's book: Listen Little Man. Check Tami out on the web at <http://www.SpiritualChicks.com>.