**Music from Heaven**

Orthopedic surgeon Tony Cicoria, while at a lakeside family gathering, was making a call on a pay phone to his mother when a bolt of lightning passed through the phone line and struck him in the face. It knocked him backwards and left him unconscious, but at the same time he beganflying*.*

*I saw my own body on the ground,* Cicoria recalls. *I said to myself, “Oh shit, I’m dead.” I saw people converging on my body. I saw a woman — she’d been waiting to use the phone right behind me — over my body, giving it CPR*.

He heard his mother-in-law screaming on the stairs, as she came rushing down toward him and went right by him towards his body*.*

*I could see and hear her, but she couldn’t hear or see me. I began to walk up the stairs but as I looked at my feet they were disappearing. By the time I reached the head of the stairs I was a ball of energy. My body had disappeared. I kept moving and went through the wall of the building without feeling a thing. When I got outside, I saw my kids and had the realization that they would be O.K.*

*Then a bluish-white light that I knew was absolute love surrounded me, and I felt like I was in a crystal stream of energy*. *I could see the rays of light passing through it, and the light had a sparkly appearance. I was able to see that this energy made up everything and flows through it. I remember thinking, I could measure this.* (*That was the scientist in me.*) *Then I thought, whatever God is, this is it. I had an enormous feeling of wellbeing and peace, and the highest and lowest points of my life raced by me. Then I had the perception of accelerating, being drawn up. But as I was saying to myself, ‘This is the most glorious feeling I have ever had’ — slam! I was back in my body.*

Cicoria later learned that the woman who had successfully restarted his heart was an emergency room nurse. Her being immediately available, in a place far from any medical resources, seemed to him more than coincidental. Once conscious and back in his body, he said to her, “It’s OK, I’m a doctor.” But she quickly replied: “Well, you weren’t a few minutes ago!”

For a couple of weeks, Cicoria had pain from burns on his face but otherwise felt all right despite his cardiac arrest. After a few weeks, however, he was surprised to experience an “insatiable desire to listen to piano music*.*” After buying a few recordings and finding he especially liked Chopin’s music, he next felt a craving to play this music. When a babysitter asked to store her piano in his house, which he thought couldn’t be coincidental, he agreed and started to teach himself how to play. Then, he began “hearing” unknown music in his head. “The first time, it was in a dream,” he recalls. “I was in a tux, onstage; I was playing something I had written.”

After waking and hearing the music playing in his mind, he got up and began writing down what he remembered. Then, whenever practicing Chopin, the music that he had heard in a dream, “Would come and take me over.” He found a piano teacher, and he began getting up at 4 to practice the piano and to write down the music he was *hearing* before going to work in the hospital. After work he was at the piano again. “My wife was not really pleased,” he admits. “I was possessed.”

Three months after his lightning strike, Cicoria was convinced: “the only reason I had been allowed to survive was the music.” He began to think he’d been given a mission, “to tune in,” as he put it, “to the music from Heaven.”

Psychologist and well-known author Oliver Sacks (1933-2015) interviewed Cicoria for an article published in *The New Yorker* magazine. Instead of suggesting Cicoria’s near-death experience was a hallucination, Sacks said to Cicoria “the music went through an awful lot of trouble to get here, so the least you can do is write it.” Cicoria remembers: “I was so shaken by what he said, I went home and bought a Sibelius music writing program.”

Cicoria spent the next seven months writing the music down, learning to play the piano, and practicing the music that continued to come to him. A year later he performed at the Goodyear Performing Arts Theater at the State University College in Oneonta, New York. He also recorded a CD entitled *Fantasia: The Lightning Sonata*. He performed the music from Heaven knowing, from his experience, that hearing it “takes you to a place that is peaceful and wonderful.” He said he hoped that sharing this music might bring others “peace of mind that there’s something beyond this life.”

**Have you had an extraordinary experience? Did this experience expand your living-world and offer you a life-transforming choice?**

Robert Traer, *Extraordinary Experiences* (2021).