

HAMILTON

TEAM OF PIANISTS



The origins of this recording came from a recital given by the Team of Pianists in 1989 in the Town Hall at Hamilton, a rural city and well-established cultural centre in Western Victoria. The members of the Team were so inspired by the magnificent sound of the Steinway Concert Grand piano and the acoustics of the hall, that they investigated the possibility of making a recording there. After a trial, arrangements were made to record in February 1990, but nature intervened. A hot Australian summer produced a ubiquitous plague of crickets, which permeated buildings including the Hamilton Town Hall. The recording was constantly interrupted by these troublesome insects. After repeated attempts, even at 6.45 am on Sunday morning, the recording sessions were abandoned and the Team returned to Melbourne.

Sadly, due to the imminent departure of several members of the Team on prolonged overseas sojourns, the project was transferred to the Victoria College in Burwood, Melbourne. Allans Music kindly supplied a Steinway Concert Grand piano.

Ultimately, the only work that could be salvaged from the Hamilton recordings was *Clair de Lune* by Debussy. Despite this, the Team wished to dedicate this whole recording to Hamilton as a tribute not only to the wonderful piano and marvellous acoustic of the hall, but also to the citizens of the City of Hamilton, without whose friendship and support the project would not have been possible.

Four members of the Team of Pianists present mini-recitals of music of their own choice, each including some Australian music. An encore piece is provided by guest pianist-composer Sonny Chua.

Darryl Coote (tracks 1 2 3)

Melbourne-based Darryl Coote has become established as one of the finest pianists of Australia's younger generation.

Born in Korumburra, South Gippsland, in 1963, he began his piano studies at the age of eight. In 1981 he commenced the Bachelor of Music degree at the University of Melbourne, studying piano with Max Cooke. During his course he was awarded several prizes, including the Allans Award for high distinction in piano playing. In 1984 he completed his Bachelor's degree with first class honours.

The year 1985 brought Darryl good fortune; he was the winner of the Victorian State Final of the ABC's Instrumental and Vocal Competition, playing the Rachmaninoff Concerto No 1, and he was also the inaugural winner of the National Hephzibah Menuhin Scholarship, which enabled him to travel to Germany for a year's study with Kurt Bauer at the Musikhochschule in Hanover. On his return he completed his Master of Music in concert performance at Melbourne.

On the Australian scene he is active as soloist and teacher, being a member of the piano staff at the University of Melbourne. As Artistic Co-ordinator of the Melbourne-based Team of Pianists, he

has taken part in four recordings on the Move Records label, playing solo music by Brahms, Handel, Gifford and Debussy, and duet music with Max Cooke by Sculthorpe, Brahms, Fauré, Stolz and Grieg.

A special highlight of his career was to accompany Sir Yehudi Menuhin in a special concert of the Musical Society of Victoria in 1988.

Alexander Furman (4 5 6)

Alexander Furman, winner of the Clarke Scholarship, is a versatile musician, whose activities include piano and fortepiano performances, recordings and chamber music. As a member of the Team of Pianists, he has given many solo performances at major centres in Melbourne, country Victoria and in Newcastle, Brisbane, the Gold Coast and Canberra.

In 1989, at the invitation of the composer, he contributed to a collective recording of the piano music of Peter Sculthorpe, he broadcast on ABC Radio National and 3MBS FM, and he participated in the video recording of the books by Max Cooke, *Tone Touch* and *Technique*.

Linda Kouvaras (tracks 7 8 9)

Linda Kouvaras is particularly interested in twentieth-century music, and especially in music of Australian composers. She has featured in the ABC programmes *Showcase Australia*, *In Tempo* and *The Pianists' Way*, contributed

to the Symposium on the composer Conyngham, and is currently involved in research on the Australian Piano Concerto. She included in her programme for the degree of Master of Music at Melbourne University a presentation of Broadstock's Piano Concerto and the premiere public performance of Sculthorpe's Callabonna. She has worked as a professional musician in a number of fields including theatre, rock bands, accompaniment and teaching. During 1983 and 1984 she studied in the UK.

In 1988 Linda completed her Bachelor of Music degree at Melbourne University, gaining first class honours in all subjects. During her studies there, she was awarded scholarships and prizes, including an Australian Postgraduate and Research Award and the McWilliam Prize for the best student in the final year. In her final year, she also gained the major award for piano performance. She has given recitals and masterclasses and made recordings with the Team of Pianists since 1986.

Robert Chamberlain (10-13)

Robert Chamberlain has an interest in both solo piano music and accompanying. In 1985 he won the Apex/Robert Stolz Scholarship for studies in Vienna, Austria. Working with Igo Koch on solo music and with David Lutz on vocal accompaniment, he was able to absorb much of Viennese culture, making him ideally suited to the performance of the Viennese classics. Robert attended summer masterclasses

given by Paul Badura-Skoda, whom he met on an earlier overseas visit, and Alexander Jenner. He has performed as soloist and accompanist in concerts in Vienna and as accompanist in the USA.

Robert Chamberlain grew up in Canberra, and in 1981 he began a course for the degree of Bachelor of Music at the University of Melbourne, with piano studies under Max Cooke. He graduated in 1984 with first class honours in performance and musicology, and was awarded the McWilliam Prize for the best student in the final year.

Since its inception in 1983, Robert has performed with the Team of Pianists in concerts in Melbourne, Canberra and in Victorian country centres, as well as on radio 3MBS FM. He is a member of the piano staff at the University of Melbourne, and has spent some time at the Centre for the Performing Arts in Banff, Canada.

Sonny Chua (Guest Artist: track 14)

At the age of eleven, Sonny Chua commenced music lessons, and one year later he started to improvise and compose. His compositional output includes large orchestral works, choral, vocal and chamber music. He works as a piano tutor and 'resident composer' at the Balwyn Primary School. The Team of Pianists has invited him to be guest artist in this recording.



1 HARMONIOUS BLACKSMITH VARIATIONS George Frederick Handel (1685–1759)

Of Handel's solo keyboard works, all originally composed for the harpsichord, probably none is more famous than that known as the Harmonious Blacksmith Variations. Once included, with minor alterations, in a Sonata per Cembalo, it eventually became the 'Air' and five variations we know today, comprising the last movement of the Suite No 5 in E major.

Typical of Handel's variations, these are melodically decorative, with a feeling of spontaneity, but without introducing any fundamental alterations into the harmony and metre. The basis for variation is therefore melodic elaboration, with the possibility of further change in the repeats, as the work is actually an 'Air with Doubles'. Thus the 'hammer-stroke' quavers of the 'Air' become couched amongst the semiquavers of the first variation, inverted in the lower and inner parts of the second variation, set with lively running triplets in the third and fourth variations, before the brilliant cascading scales of the last variation bring the piece to a grand close. DC

2 CLAIR DE LUNE (Suite Bergamasque) Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

The inspiration behind Debussy's Suite Bergamasque lies in seventeenth-century Italy in the rustic dances of Bergamo.

Debussy characterized their theatrical features, already satirized in the Paris theatre, into a classical dance suite for solo piano comprising a Prélude, Menuet, Clair de Lune and Passepied.

Clair de Lune takes the place of a slow dance in the Suite and reflects also the delicate refinement of the earlier French school of 'clavicinistes'. The lyrical sensitivity of Clair de Lune stems from Debussy's fine understanding of the piano's resonant qualities via discriminating use of both pedals and the deployment of various sonorities: heard for example in the nostalgic effect of a single note, C flat, strategically introduced in the reprise (bar 59).

Whether one considers this gem of Debussy's a piece of romanticism or impressionism is immaterial; undeniable is the fact that here, in this moment of quiet contemplation, great beauty springs forth from simplicity. DC

3 PIANO SONATA Helen Gifford (1935–)

As her third composition, the Piano Sonata of the Melbourne composer Helen Gifford displays already a remarkable maturity and high degree of compositional competence. Despite its short duration of only eight minutes, the depth of musical expression and difficult technical demands justify the title of Sonata rather than the diminutive Sonatina. The technical difficulties, together with the fact that the score has until recently been generally

unavailable, mean that the work has been seldom performed since its composition in 1960.

Whilst the thematic material of the first movement Allegro Inquieto is mostly linear in content, there are many abrupt changes of texture, with an extended harmonic palette. A harmonic analysis reveals the influences of several European composers, notably Brahms and Rachmaninoff.

The influence of Klangfarbenmelodie as practised by Webern is readily apparent in the intimately static quality of the second movement Lento e Sostenuto, where the quasi twelve-tone structure exploits well the resonant qualities of the modern piano. Interesting use is made of the harmonics of the piano, by way of sympathetic resonance. The syncopated chords in the middle of the movement are reminiscent of muted brass in the jazz of the 1920s.

The vibrant percussive qualities at the beginning of the Finale Allegro Ostinato soon lead into an unexpected frenzied outburst, before engaging in antiphonal responses based on fragments of the main thematic material. This fragmentation becomes an increasingly important feature of the rest of the movement, concentrating on ever smaller motivic snippets, becoming, in the words of the composer: "more and more piquant". DC

4 RONDO ALLA TURCA Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–91)

The Sonata in A major K.311 was composed in the summer of 1784, and with its beautiful first movement in theme and variation form, and the ever popular Alla Turca finale, it remains one of Mozart's most attractive Sonatas for the piano. The Alla Turca movement probably owes something to the highly successful Vienna premiere of the opera Die Entführung aus dem Serail (1782), notable for its use of 'turkish' music in the overture. The Alla Turca effect is achieved by the alternation of major and minor modes during much of the movement and by the use of militaristic drum-like arpeggiated chords and snappy appoggiaturas in the coda. AF

5 NOCTURNE OPUS 36 IN E FLAT MAJOR Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924)

For fifteen years, Gabriel Fauré was the director of the Paris Conservatoire. He was the teacher of many of the later French Impressionist composers such as Ravel and Roger-Ducasse, but he was himself a Romantic, whose music showed 'classical' qualities like that of Brahms. The Nocturne in E flat is the fourth in a set of thirteen that Fauré composed between 1875 and 1921; it was probably composed in 1884. The opening cantabile melody floats over a seductive set of harmonies, and leads to a central episode which resembles the tinkle of distant bells. The sound of the bells

draws closer and leads to a climax before the return of the first theme. AF

6 COUNTRY GARDENS
Percy Grainger (1882–1961)

Country Gardens is a setting of one of the Morris Dance Tunes collected and arranged by Cecil J. Sharp. Percy Grainger composed this work in 1918 as a birthday gift for his mother, with whom he kept a very close relationship. The rightful popularity of the piece derives from the vitality and endearing happiness of the music. AF

7 THE LOVER AND THE NIGHTINGALE

8 DANZA (SPANISH DANCE No 5)
Enrique Granados y Campina (1867–1916)

Granados was a fiercely nationalistic composer. The Lover and the Nightingale is from two sets of piano pieces called Goyescas, which took inspiration from paintings by fellow Spaniard Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes. Granados later adapted Goyescas to produce an opera of the same name. The libretto by Periquet has a plot of love and death in a Goya-like setting. It is a tragic irony that in 1916, while crossing the Atlantic on the way back from New York, the ship on which he was travelling was torpedoed and the composer died in a futile attempt to save his beloved wife.

Danza comes from another set of

piano works, Danzas Espanoles. The left hand accompaniment imitates both the castanets and the Flamenco guitar, while the contrasting middle section comes from a Spanish folksong. LK

9 IN THE SILENCE OF NIGHT
Brenton Broadstock (1952–)

I have but one friend, Echo, and why is Echo my friend? Because I love my sorrow and Echo does not take it away from me. I have only one confidant, the silence of the night; and why is it my confidant? Because it is silent. (Kirkegaard)

In the Silence of Night was commissioned by pianist Linda Kouvaras and is dedicated both to her and to Broadstock's former composition teacher, Peter Sculthorpe. In the composer's own words: "...much of my music is very dramatic, very noisy, and I have been wanting to write a quiet piece for quite some time".

The music, hypnotic yet somewhat wistful, based mainly upon the Aeolean mode, unfolds over a slowly changing ostinato pattern until it reaches a climax two-thirds of the way through. Not only does this climax conform to one of the composer's primary structural determinants (The Golden Mean system) in the choice of its placement in the music, but the intensity of dynamics and harmony suggests that the mediator is very much awake and perhaps using the silence of night as a time in which to make deeply

private reflections. After the turbulence has subsided, the original mood is recaptured with the ostinato patterns now changed between the hands. The piece concludes with a recapitulation of the opening gentle chime effect, which was transformed into a breathless surging at the climax, and transfigured again into E major sixth sonority, becalmed at last. LK

10 LIEBESTRAUM No 3 in A flat major
Franz Liszt (1811–1886)

Liszt composed many transcriptions for piano drawing on a wide range of material, including the symphonies of Beethoven, operatic arias of Bellini, Donizetti and others, instrumental music including organ preludes and fugues by Bach and songs by Schubert, Beethoven and Mendelssohn. Liszt also transcribed his own music, as in the three Liebestraume published in 1850, which are transcriptions of his settings of texts by Uhland and Freiligr. Liebestraum No 3 is a transcription of the song 'O lieb, so lang Du lieben kannst', originally published in 1847, and it is one of the most popular pieces by Liszt and is notable for attractive melodic writing and the filigree cadenzas. RC

11 ARCH (FANTASIA No 4)
Larry Sitsky (1934–)

Larry Sitsky was born in China of Jewish Russian parents, and came to Australia at the age of fifteen. He studied in Sydney and later in San Francisco with

Egon Petri. He is himself a formidable pianist in the virtuoso tradition of Liszt and Busoni. His virtuosic performance style is often reflected in his piano music.

Arch (Fantasia No 4) was commissioned for the Sydney International Piano Competition 1980. The title alludes to the shape of the melodic material and to the overall structure of the work, which begins quietly, builds to a massive sustained climax, and then dies away to a quiet ending. RC

12 SCORPION UNDER GLASS (1976)

13 SKETCH PORTRAIT (1983)

David Worrall (1954–)

David Worrall studied initially in Adelaide with Richard Meale, and has spent much of his time working with computer music.

Scorpion under Glass is one of the composer's earlier works written when he was in Adelaide. Worrall has written: "The title of this short piece reflects two prime motivations for its composition, firstly, fascination with insect life and in particular the time-scales of their action and repose. Scorpions provide a wonderful example in that they live an almost solitary existence, coming together only to mate and/or fight. They can move both with extremely slow and fluid movements, or with blurring rapidity. The piece attempts to convey this with the juxtaposition of rapid movement and static 'distant' harmonies created by using the sostenuto pedal to evoke specific sympathetic resonances. Secondly, it was

written at a time when I was examining, as though through a magnifying glass, my own compositional technique: I was born under the sign of Scorpio". The work has stylistic similarities to some of the music of Boulez and Richard Meale.

Sketch Portrait was composed in Melbourne in 1983, and it is a study in subtle inflections of sonority. The restricted dynamic range and gentle rhythms are immediately apparent, and the work is very short, lasting less than three minutes, in contrast to Worrall's previous large-scale essay for the piano, the Sonata (1979). The composer suggests that the listener may detect a similarity to Erik Satie's Gymnopédies. RC

14 DANCE, DANCE, DANCE
(EPISODE No 2)

Sonny Chua (1967–)

This piece was composed in 1989 as a celebration of movement, happiness and life. Sonny sees each new work as a challenge to transcend the previous one. Dance, Dance, Dance is not necessarily typical of his style, it is just one of many different moods and modes. This is an exploration of a most pleasurable and exhilarating experience; it pushes stamina, excitement and energy to their limits. Sonny sees himself as a naïve music-maker in a world that is getting smaller, therefore he is not seeking to create a nationalistic style, but rather to communicate something which is universal. MC & DC

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