



**Nardoo**

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**ZANA CLARKE**

Ganassi recorder

**PETER BIFFIN**

Tar-hu, Deboosh

- |                                 |                                  |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>1</b> Willow 2'36"           | <b>10</b> Tundra 3'36"           |
| <b>2</b> Lady Grey 2'10"        | <b>11</b> Fragment Longing 3'25" |
| <b>3</b> Night Prowler 2'34"    | <b>12</b> Bihag 4'37"            |
| <b>4</b> Once Upon a Time 3'55" | <b>13</b> The Fox 2'06"          |
| <b>5</b> Sunday Sunday 4'53"    | <b>14</b> Inner Edge 5'15"       |
| <b>6</b> Taboosh 2'09"          | <b>15</b> Solace 2'10"           |
| <b>7</b> Cherry Brandy 2'51"    | <b>16</b> Charles Street 2'51"   |
| <b>8</b> Apple Blossom 3'09"    | <b>17</b> Madeira 1'50"          |
| <b>9</b> Oscillation 4'33"      | <b>18</b> Aldebaran 4'04"        |

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**O**ur meeting at a Melbourne studio early in 1996 culminated in a confluence of ideas that had up until this point existed essentially as potential. We had played as a duo, on and off, within a variety of pre-existing repertoires including Baroque sonatas, Turkish art music, and medieval estampies. Within these forms we were unable to find the balance we needed between structure, freedom and individual expression, and so at the conception of this recording we decided to write the material ourselves. While some of the tunes were written in the preceding months, we only found the essence of our meeting during the recording process, with pieces written and arranged the night before they were required - where structures emerged that permitted our separate backgrounds to compliment each other in a spontaneous setting.

**1 Willow** - pentatonic with plenty of spaces - the idiom in which we first met.

**2 Lady Grey** - Earl Grey's graceful companion. Upon a rainy day in a warm kitchen.

**3 Night Prowler** (Peter solo) A slightly sleazy sneak through aspects of Rag Puria Dhanashri.

**4 Once Upon a Time** (melody Zana, arr Peter) A cycle, light once touched, forever in motion. Here the Deboosh sound uses about 60% mic and 40% magnetic pick-up as it does on tracks 7 and 13.

**5 Sunday Sunday** - reminiscent of childhood Sundays. A day of reel cross sewing, morning bridge with sherry and Billy Joel at Festival Hall.

**6 Taboosh** - improvisation in Turkish makam ussak. This piece is dedicated to Middle Eastern hats. Over the period of the recording Peter was absorbed in the book "A Fez of the Heart" which gives a penetrating picture of the Turkish folk soul.

**7 Cherry Brandy** (Peter) For Paul Andrews, who opened a few jazz windows for me to look through.

**8 Apple Blossom** - a tune was written the night before, Peter's part worked out at the recording when he discovered the Deboosh could also be a lute.

**9 Oscillation** - written in between students, turned upside down a dozen times and found itself in this form the night before recording.

**10 Tundra** - improvisation directed by an imaginative picture - endless plains, windswept ice.

**11 Fragment Longing** (Zana solo) Written in Ursuline Chapel on a quiet Sunday. Feelings of longing, apprehension and excitement.

**12 Bihag** East Indies and West Indies meeting. The tune is based on a peaceful evening Raga of the same name.

**13 The Fox** Wind under the eaves, clouds over the moon - are the chooks OK?

**14 Inner Edge** (Peter solo) A piece that has evolved hand in hand with the evolving bowed instruments I have played it upon over the last few years.

**15 Solace** (Zana solo)

**16 Charles Street** Charles Street was where we stayed in Melbourne during the recording. A friendly inner city street with a crazy Asian market down the end.

**17 Madeira** For Peter, a beautiful Atlantic Ocean Island, held in the steady rocking of the waves. For Zana, the flat Riverina country of North Eastern Victoria where wineries are more common than houses. The rustic dust and refined richness of Buller's madeira.

**18 Aldebaran** (Peter) Based on a grand and stately raga, Darbari Kanada. Zana plays a Turkish Tanbur.

*Unless otherwise indicated all pieces were written using an original melody by Zana and a counter melody by Peter (usually improvised).*

**Peter...**" From its beginning, music for me has been free and loose - improvising within whatever styles came along - old country tunes through lonely bush teenage years, country style Bach in my early twenties, folk music

from all over, followed by a long running connection with Turkish and Indian music. I also had a Western musical past to integrate somehow, and in 1977 I began to redesign the instruments I was playing so they could cover more of the music I was interested in. This took a long time and often I found it necessary to perform with a bewildering array of instruments to achieve what I wanted. Performing overseas with the **David Hykes Trio** forced me to restrict myself to two instruments and to begin to broaden the range of expression possible from each one. The use of lightweight wooden cones instead of flat soundboards in both the current instruments made this possible and has brought me several steps closer to the sounds I have been chasing. The **Tar-hu** is a long-necked bowed instrument with four playing strings and seven sympathetic strings, and the **Deboosh** is a large fretless dobro, six strings tuned low in a variety of ways. The developing of these instruments and the music I play on them led to a somewhat

solitary focus on sound, and most of my playing has been solo. Playing with Zana has helped me float to the surface a little and find ensemble structures that can still retain some of the space I have grown used to."

**Zana...**" Music for me has always been a disciplined focus in which I learnt to project in specific mediums. With a background in violin and recorder I discovered many other related instruments that built new images of sound and expression (rebec, veille, tanbur, voice flute). On this recording I play the Ganassi type recorder (made by Michael Grinter) which is a Renaissance instrument quite different in many respects to the Baroque variety more commonly encountered. I discovered this instrument when studying recorder in the context of Western Art Music in my early twenties. I felt the need to steer away from the rigid structures I had grown up playing within, and formed a Medieval folk-based group called **Cantigas**. Through exploration

of this instrument within my teaching and performing, I found it was capable of many new sounds and textures. The ideas which have emerged when combining the **Ganassi** with Peter's instruments have added a range of further possibilities, including pitch bending and a more radical approach to intonation. I feel I have a link into another musical world where composing and improvising become vital - where I can sink from the rigours of fixed towards a freedom of expression."

**E**lements rising, binding, a rock caught in crystalline form, a body dissolving and scattered as dust on the wind. The mineral world carries on its timeless business, having no care for where it is borne.

In a garden of exotic cuttings (with occasional scattered natives), the life-print of the parent stock is represented true to form, even when transplanted far afield with unfamiliar company. The patterns and desires of the animal world are lived out across

the ages regardless of placement - the animals' code is carried deep within it. After transportation, a fox still digs an earth, sheep still seek the high star-filled ground for their nightly camp. Humans make a roof, a bed, a meal - when stripped bare, these "animal" needs can be met (or not met) anywhere from one pole to the other.

The "old country" grows a folk soul from the millennium-layered traditions of how needs are fulfilled, just in **that** place by **those** people. The reflection in art and craft of the particular journey of that fulfilment colours and defines the folk soul.

Transportation is hard on a folk soul. Displaced familiar practices dissolve amid the clamour of new demands, of spring drawn to whatever new light shines brightest, like young moths forsaking the aeons-long threads of the cocoon.

Bereft, but free from the osmotic input of the folk soul I look outwards onto the tracks of human strivings, in different directions, into different times,

creating from the kaleidoscope of offerings a cultural context that is personally agreeable - wherever images provide an awakening, and sounds strike an inner chord.

Peter Biffin

Photos taken by Chris Cooper.  
Notes by Peter Biffin and Zana Clarke.

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