

Peter Constant & Marion Schaap and friends

LIGHT ON THE EDGE

solo and chamber works featuring classical guitar

PHILLIP HOUGHTON

move

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- 1 CAVE PAINTING**5'07
flute, guitar, didjeridu, bass classical guitar
- OPALS** — four classical guitars9'50
- 2** *Black Opal* 2'26
- 3** *Water Opal* 4'12
- 4** *White Opal* 3'08
- 5 FANTASIA**3'09
As a Jade Unicorn Might in the Rain – guitar solo
- 6 GOD OF THE NORTHERN FOREST**6'07
guitar solo
- TWO NIGHT MOVEMENTS** – violin and guitar .9'29
- 7** *Full Moon* 5'54
- 8** *Banshee* 3'28
- 9 BROLGA** — guitar duet.....7'07
- STELE & WEB** (from the suite *Stele*) — guitar solo 6'44
- 10** *Stele* 4'20
- 11** *Web* 2'21
- * **THE LIGHT ON THE EDGE** 20'46
two guitars, zither, harp, double bass,
percussion, didjeridu, environment sounds
- 12** *Yin – the light in the earth* 5'55
- 13** *Rim – the light on the edge* 3'19
- 14** *Turquoise Sea – glides at night like liquid black opal* 6'41
- 15** *Spiralling Blue Flame – the sky is alive* 4'41

* live 'one take' recording except for didjeridu overdub

Total playing time 68'50"

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Z.O.O. D U O

Peter Constant & Marion Schaap: guitars

GUITAR TREK

Timothy Kain, Carolyn Kidd,

Mark Norton, Peter Constant

Miwako Abe: violin

Charlie McMahon: didjeridu

Delyth Sian Stafford: harp

Mardi McSullea: flute

Arwen Johnston: percussion

Shannon Birchall: double bass

Willem van der Vis: conductor

Peter Mumme: environment sounds

It was not hard to be struck by Phil when we first met him - a tall, thin, gentle, rather enigmatic character with a distinctive hat which never left a hedge worth of hair that could easily be mistaken for steel wool in a room with magnetic walls. Here was someone going on about musical beats, vegetable 'beets' and inspiration drawn from colours and light, smells and sensations, plants and animals, spirits, mythology and the depths of personal experience. A 'classical' composer who seemed to be operating less as a craftsman of musical structures, but as one through whom all of the above enabled a piece of music to be coaxed into existence.

"I stink, therefore I am" (Tom Robbins).

Hmm, interesting, even in the guitar world. Save, perhaps, percussion (from matchboxes and saucepan lids upwards), the guitar is surely the most eclectic of instruments. Given its prominence in cultures world wide, it seems there's nothing people everywhere like more than a good pluck! This disparate background is partly why the classical guitar (now a well established 'serious' concert instrument) has such a diverse and open-minded bunch of both exponents and enthusiastic followers. Also, guitarist/composers, who are especially attuned to the history, cultural background, possibilities and idiosyncrasies of the guitar, play (as they always have) a prominent role in the life of the instrument.

Thoroughly distinctive and immensely gifted, Phillip Houghton is Australia's most well known guitarist/composer. To play a single chord of Phil's music is to know that it is his. He has a way of using the guitar's natural resonance and timbral qualities to create music which is totally unique, thoroughly engaging, inseparably 'guitar', almost tangibly Australian, and very 'Phil'. Our great friends (some old and some new) who play with us here will also tell you that Phil's fastidiousness, imagination and ear for colour serve him well whatever the instrumental medium (from didjeridu and frog noises through to flute and violin).

Anyway, please have a listen and make up your own mind, after all, we just play the stuff... Phil can tell you about the pieces.

Z.O.O. D U O

(Peter Constant and Marion Schaap)





CAVE PAINTING

(1991 adapted 1995)

Mardi McSullea: flute

Marion Schaap: guitar

Charlie McMahon: didgeridoo

Peter Constant: bass classical guitar

Cave Painting is the first movement of a work for flute and guitar entitled *From The Dreaming* which was written for the Byzantine/ Mallon Duo. The music was inspired by a seven month visit to Australia's central and northern outback regions. The journey left powerful impressions on me; the space, isolation and stillness; the storms, dust, caves and iridescent colours; the raw energy and sense of connectedness. *Cave Painting* was inspired by ancient rock art, mystery and 'powerfields'.

In the original, the guitar attempts to imitate the didgeridoo so it seemed natural to add real didgeridoo for this recording. Dr Funk also joined in to extract some extra juice from his bass classical guitar. During this recording session, several sounds and effects (flute notebends, didgeridoo curlew calls etc.) were improvised by the players. For the driving middle section Charlie used two of his rhythms (the *wobble* and the *walla-walla*) and improvised a dramatic 'shudder' effect as the music suddenly slows and broadens.

OPALS (1994)

'Guitar Trek' guitar quartet:

Timothy Kain, Carolyn Kidd, Mark Norton, Peter Constant.

This recording continues my long and happy collaboration with Guitar Trek.

The music was inspired by opals and also by *Opal Spirit* (1993), a painting by Australian artist Lyndall Gerlach which brilliantly captures the colour of opal and the colour and spirit of the land in Australia where opal is found.

The black opal is a stone of fantastic colour. Against a dark matrix, electric purples, blues and greens predominate, refract and collide in a fiery rainbow of splinters of brilliant light. Found in black opal is the 'harlequin checkerboard' which describes block patterns of colour which I 'heard' as block patterns of sound. This led me to mark on the score of *Black Opal* 'like a big kalimba'.

You could say opal is made from water, and in the second movement I imagined a kaleidoscope of floating colours. *Water Opal* was also inspired by *Circe Invidiosa* (1892), a painting by John Waterhouse in which mythological enchantress Circe is depicted holding a crystal bowl of emerald water and casting a spell.

Set against a white matrix, the lighter colours of white opal are brilliant and translucent. Evident in this stone is an effect known as 'pinfire' (glittering points of reds and greens) and the 'rolling flash' which describes the effect of layers of colour that ripple abruptly and sparkle when the stone is moved. In *White Opal* I've attempted to represent the 'rolling flash' in layers of cross rhythms. The mood of the movement is bright and bustling.

The opal is the national stone of Australia. *Opals* is dedicated to Lyndall Gerlach and was premiered by the ID Guitar Quartet, Melbourne, 1994.



'Guitar Trek': Peter, Mark, Carolyn, Timothy



FANTASIA As a Jade Unicorn Might in the Rain (1979)

Peter Constant: *guitar*

In 1979 lutenist/guitarist Roger Treble lent me a lute. I loved its delicacy and transparency of sound and wrote this short Fantasia for him. I imagined, hidden away in a remote jungle, an ancient statue of a jade unicorn which may or may not come to life whenever it rains. The guitar's 3rd string is tuned to F sharp and a capo attached to the third fret. *Jade Unicorn* was premiered by Australian guitarist/composer John Mills in 1981 at Montsalvat, Melbourne.

GOD OF THE NORTHERN FOREST (1989)

Peter Constant: *guitar*

God of the Northern Forest was written for my former teacher Sebastian Jorgensen, who gave the premiere of this piece at the 1990 Melbourne International Guitar Festival.

In composing this work, I drew inspiration from both Sebastian's Nordic heritage and his childhood experiences growing up in the Australian bush at Eltham in Victoria. In my imagination, two images brought these diverse backgrounds and elements together. One was a distinctive symbol unique to the Australian bush at Eltham, the Eltham Copper Butterfly and the other was the painting *God of the Northern Forest* by Paul Klee, which depicts a dark brooding forest. Finding musical ideas to express these two contrasting images created a chiaroscuro effect as the themes merged and interacted.

The guitar's bass string is tuned up to F as I felt it captured something of the painting's 'resonance', especially the powerful inverted D minor chord it makes with the open A and D strings. This chord, played 'like an anvil', is the backbone of the piece.

TWO NIGHT MOVEMENTS (1990)

Miwako Abe: violin **Peter Constant:** guitar

In composing *Two Night Movements* it was my intention to try to express feelings and emotions that night brings. During one magical, hot, windy summer evening at Christmas Hills, a sleepy hollow amongst rolling hills near Melbourne, in the middle of the bush and under stars clear and brilliant, themes of *Full Moon* surfaced. In the night I heard faint stirrings of nocturnal creatures and trees rustling, while the opal glow of the full moon shone, reigning over all. As the piece evolved, I imagined magical spectres and apparitions dancing and flying through clouds - friendly, yet a little unsettling and strange - and their dance was of yearning, love, hope and wonderment.

On the other hand the second movement, *Banshee*, depicts a wild spirit of the night. A gypsy, its dance is boisterous and swift, almost demented. Its cheeky threatening nature gives way, towards the end, to a passionate, plaintive song before returning once again to its reckless flight and screeching end. *Two Night Movements* was written for and is dedicated to Margaret and Miles Jackson (the Duo Jackson) of New Zealand. They premiered the work in N.Z., 1990.



BROLGA (1994)

Z.O.O. D U O

Peter Constant & Marion Schaap: guitars

One of my favourite paintings is *Spirit of the Plains* by Australian artist Sydney Long (1871-1955). Painted in 1897, it is an art nouveau fantasy depicting brolgas being led in a dance by a flute playing nature spirit (the broлга is a large stork native to Australia's tropical north). Especially evocative are the painting's shimmering pastel colours of claret, mauve, silver, misty blue, soft honey-gold ochres and gum greens.

While Long's beautiful painting inspired this piece, the music became not so much a literal depiction of it but an attempt to express a bird like 'presence'

or 'reflex' eg... I've represented the broлга's mating/territorial dance - a riot of loud

honking and convulsive leaping - with violent jagged chords and rhythms.

In one continuous movement (comprising 5 sections) the piece contains wide swings of mood: exotic, graceful, awkward, aloof, savage and comical. The section subtitles are *1 Flying In, Landing... my what a big beak you have! 2 Feathers/Dance 3 Alone... a bridge of sighs*

4 Dusk in the Otherworld...seen through eyes of pearl 5 Black Silhouettes in Burgundy Light.

I was fortunate to be in Melbourne with Peter and Marion to workshop the piece for its premiere. All of their comments and suggestions were spot on (they took the con funkissimo section to new heights of 'juice extraction').

Brolga is dedicated to guitarist and teacher Gregory Pikler and was premiered by Z.O.O. D U O at WestWyck, Melbourne, December 1994.



STELE & WEB (1989)

Marion Schaap: guitar

Stele and Web are the first and last movements of a four movement solo called Stele, which was written for and is dedicated to Melbourne guitarist Evangelos Karavitis.

The work is strongly influenced by Greek art and mythology and the Grecian landscape, in particular the stark blue of the Mediterranean, warm breezes, island mists and the colour and scent of the olive tree. However, the work has nothing to do with Greek music. I was more interested in expressing, in my own musical language, the spiritual and psychological elements of the imagery upon which the piece is based.

The word stele describes a headstone or monument, which was often erected on the coastline in memory of sailors and travellers lost at sea, or those never to return to their homeland. In a sense they were beacons for lost souls. The Stele of Demokleides which depicts the image of a lost sailor seated alone on a cliff, his head buried in his hands, provided great inspiration for the entire work, in particular this first movement. The last movement Web is a short relentless drone in which elements from the preceding movements are woven and compressed.

The images that inspired the music are housed in the National Museum of Athens. The complete suite Stele was premiered by John Williams at the 1990 Adelaide Festival.



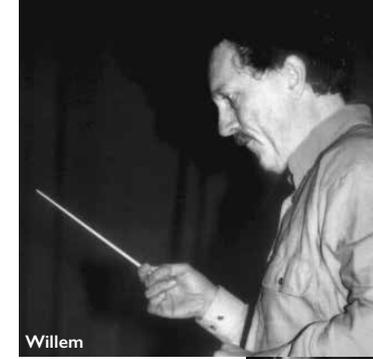
THE LIGHT ON THE EDGE (1993 rev 1995)

Marion Schaap and Peter Constant: guitars
Charlie McMahon: didjeridu
Shannon Birchall: double bass
Delyth Sian Stafford: harp
Arwen Johnston: percussion
Willem van der Vis: conductor
Peter Mumme: environment sounds
Composer guests on zither
in 3rd movement

This work was originally commissioned by Adrian Walter for the inaugural 1993 Darwin International Guitar Festival. I revised the score in 1995 adding harp, zither and environment sounds (thanks Pete) to the original line-up of two guitars, double bass, percussion and didjeridu.

Being a drone instrument, the didjeridu greatly influenced the form the music would take. The four pitches of didjeridu used in the work establish the basic note of each movement, while the other instruments shift around related keys and 'blurred modes' creating other colours.

Charlie McMahon demonstrated to me that not only can the didjeridu generate great rhythmic drive, it can produce a wide variety of sounds: hoots, barks, growls etc. (listen for Charlie's improvised dingo calls in the last and his



'gecko intro' to the second). Within the set rhythms of the fast movements Charlie's 'calls' are improvised, while in the slower movements the didjeridu flows and 'breathes'.

Feelings for the earth, sky, sea, spirit and visions of dawn & dusk horizons, coastlines, red ochre earth and opal colours coaxed this piece into being. The inspiration behind the work is probably best expressed in the following lines, written long before the music:

*A place between worlds
where land and sea touch
dreams and reality melt
and the Sun and Moon kiss
the light on the edge...*

The Light on the Edge is dedicated to Czech guitarist & composer Stepan Rak and the Darwin Guitar Festival



with warmest thanks to Adrian Walter. This piece was also inspired by the artwork of Lyndall Gerlach and is in memory of my friend Gerry McCormick. The premiere of the original version of the work was conducted by Martin Jarvis and took place on July 5th, 1993 at the NTU Soundshell, Darwin.

PHILLIP HOUGHTON

(b. 1954, Melbourne, Australia)

“When I was 9 I got a guitar for Christmas. I didn’t like it so I used it as a cricket bat until it got smashed by a fast ball. Six years later I found it in the garage, glued it up and put one piece of fishing line on it. Chords were difficult, but when I found that I could play riffs like ‘Wild Thing’ I began wondering about the other five strings. My world changed when I heard Jimi Hendrix, and later on John Williams, Alirio Diaz and Julian Bream. Before that it had been the voice of John Lennon, Bugs Bunny cartoons, rain on the roof, cicadas, crickets and radio static”.

Originally trained as an artist, Houghton began music studies at the age of 20, receiving advice and encouragement from the late John Champ. Phillip studied classical guitar with Sebastian Jorgensen at the artists colony Montsalvat, in Eltham, Victoria where he later lived and worked. As a guitarist Phillip toured extensively and was recorded by the ABC before deciding in 1980 to leave performance and concentrate on composition. Australian composers Helen Gifford and Peter Mumme encouraged his developing style. He has written for theatre, dance and film (including John Dingwall’s feature *The Custodian* and the *Plasmo* animation series by Tony Lawrence).

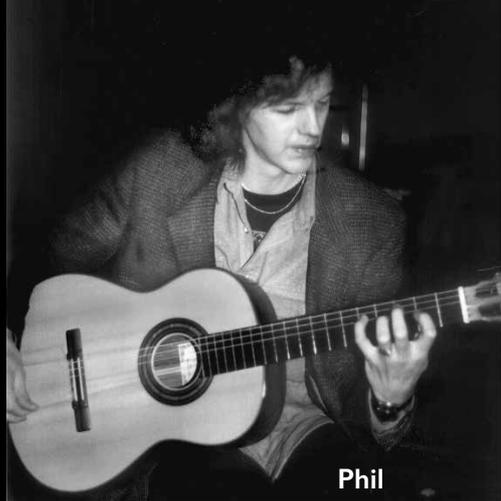
As a composer Phillip is self taught and his compositions reflect the influence of many styles: classical, jazz, rock, ambient and world music. His early influences include the music of Jimi Hendrix, The Beatles, Led Zeppelin, King Crimson, Gryphon, Gong, Miles Davis, Satie, Debussy, Ravel, Riley, Crumb and Eno, while his work continues to reflect a strong interest in art, mythology and the environment

Houghton’s guitar music has been performed and recorded by leading musicians, including John Williams and Timothy Kain who recently recorded his *Three Duets*. Some 20 of his guitar solos, published by Moonstone Music, are on the national music syllabus (AMEB) and is also represented in the new Benjamin Verdery Guitar Series for Frederick Harris Publishers.

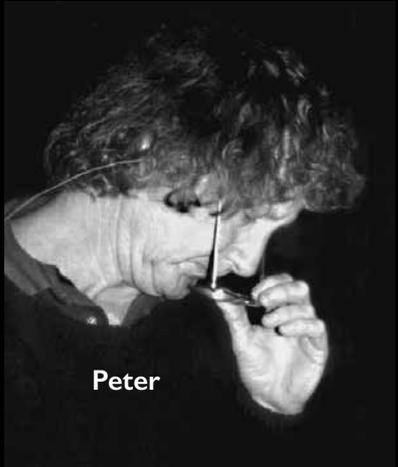
Light On The Edge is the first CD dedicated entirely to a selection of Houghton’s music.

“I’d like to dedicate this CD to my mother Ida, my beloved late father Alan, my brother and sisters, and to my children Beau and Ben. It is also dedicated to my dear friend the late John Champ. My eternal thanks John”.

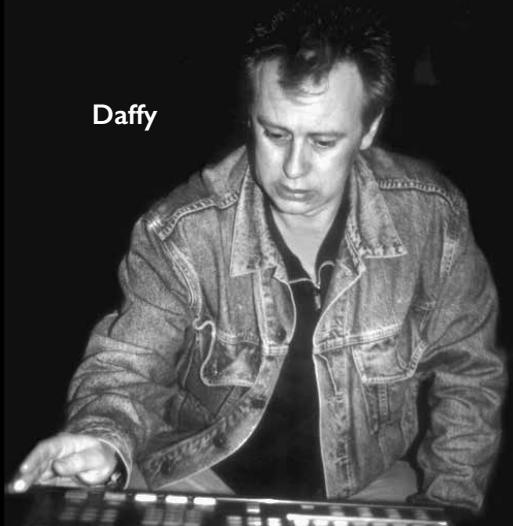
Phillip Houghton



Phil



Peter



Daffy

“My deep felt gratitude goes to Peter and Marion for initiating this CD project, for having the drive and enthusiasm to see it through, for having faith in the music and for being great musicians. This CD was their concept, they drew together everybody for the project and were the driving force behind it”. Phil H.

Opals and Two Night Movements recorded May/June '95 at Adelphia Studios, Fitzroy (thanks Kevin and Phil for the great space, vibes and assistance).
All other tracks recorded May–Sept '95 at the Victorian College of the Arts, (thanks to Gillian Wills, Kay Faunce, Barry Quinn, Rob Vincs).
Produced by Z.O.O. D U O, Peter Mumme and Phil Houghton.
Recorded and engineered by Peter Mumme and David 'Daffy' Williams.
Mixed by tribe of ears at WestWyck Nov '95 (thanks Kara & Sandy, everyone!).
Mastered at Peter Mumme Studios July '96.
Artwork and booklet design: Lyndall Gerlach.
Photography: Lyndall Gerlach (excepting photo of Miwako Abe).
Image scanning by Michael Cowdroy and Gordon Bear.
Program notes by Phil Houghton.
Thanks to Martin Jarvis and the NTU for loan of the gong (used in track 14).

Guitar Trek appears courtesy of the Canberra School of Music.
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All tracks are premiere recordings.
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