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Exposé THE CHAMBER MUSIC OF PETER TAHOURDIN

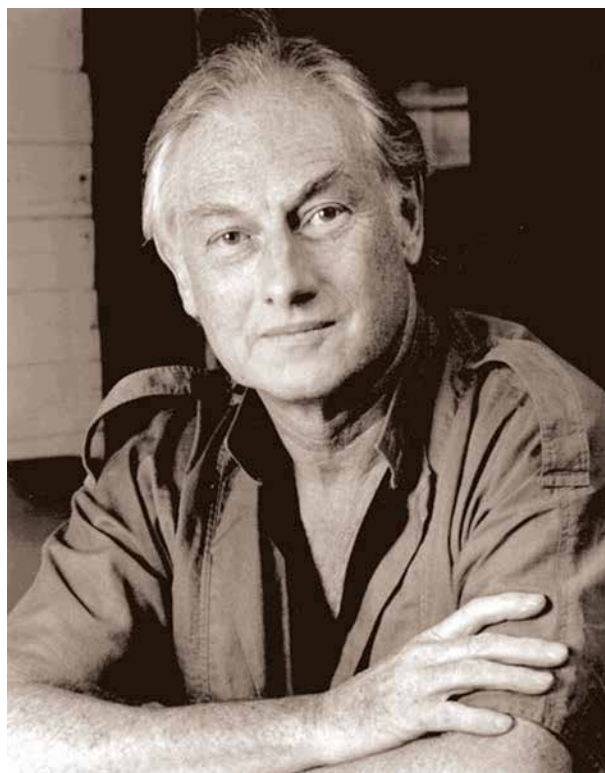
This recording spans nearly a quarter of a century of Peter Tahourdin's creative activity in the field of chamber music — from 1971 (*Dialogue No.1*) to 1995 (*Exposé* for piano solo).

His four *Dialogues* stem from a commission from Robert Cooper (the concert-master of what was then known as the South Australian Symphony Orchestra) to write a work for violin and piano. During the next thirteen years Tahourdin wrote a further three *Dialogues*, each based on the same formal plan and each composed for different duo combinations.

The idea behind the *Dialogues* sprang from the notion that the interplay between two musicians may be likened to a conversation between two people — a topic is broached, discussed and extended before a new, different topic is introduced, to be followed by another, and so on, until the dialogue reverts to its starting point. In the middle, this procedure is interrupted when each participant briefly holds the floor alone (in the form of a solo cadenza), before the dual nature of the process is resumed.

The *Raga Music* series arose from a similar set of circumstances, in this case initiated by a commission from the English soprano, Jane Manning.

Peter Tahourdin visited India early in 1985, while on leave from Melbourne University, with the express purpose of studying North Indian classical music. During the ensuing years much of his music was based, to a greater or lesser extent, on the structural principles of the Hindustani raga. A musical phrase is introduced under a drone and slowly extended over a period of time (the *alap*). This



then leads to a fully structured episode, often known in India as “the composition” (*ciz* in vocal music, *gat* in instrumental music), which in turn leads to an increasingly virtuosic display on the part of the performers before ending abruptly. The start of “the composition” is signalled by the entry of the *tabla* player (the drummer) and the length of the *raga* overall is largely determined by the skill and powers of musical invention of the principal performers — though the response of the audience is a contributing factor. An overriding element, however, is that the music as a whole is based directly on the phrases that are first articulated in the opening *alap*. Thus the abrupt close contains within it the implication of a potential return to the beginning, leaving the music essentially

open-ended.

Composed for the voice, *Raga Music 1* employs as a text a poem, *The Starlight Night*, by the late nineteenth century priest, poet and mystic, Gerard Manley Hopkins, who spent many years in India.

(The poem is printed on the next page)

Much Hindustani vocal music is based on religious texts. These texts are taken apart in the opening *alap*, in which key phrases are presented in a melismatic style, both to articulate the melodic and rhythmic contours of the *raga* and to convey the underlying sentiments of the words. In the *ciz* that follows the text is presented complete, then taken apart again and used as a medium for virtuosic display. Underpinning the second part (from the *ciz* onwards) is a *tala*, a varied rhythmic ostinato presented by the *tabla* (here by five *tomtoms* played with the fingers) which determines the rhythmic flow of the music. *The Starlight Night*, as with other poems by Hopkins, is both worldly and mystical, though certain religious images emerge as central — notably “Christ and his mother”, which ends the first part, and “Christ home”, suggesting a refuge in God as saviour, that brings the work to a close.

Raga Music 4 was commissioned by The Duo Contemporain, who gave it its first performance in Australia at La Mama in Melbourne 1993. Here it is played by the Australian musicians, Carl Rosman and Peter Neville. It follows a similar formal pattern to *Raga Music 1*, though it should be pointed out that in neither case does the composer seek to imitate the sounds of Indian music, but rather to follow the inherent structure of the *raga*, which,

The Starlight Night

Gerard Manley Hopkins

*Look at the stars! Look, look up at the skies!
O look at all the fire-folk sitting in the air!
The bright boroughs, the circle-citadels there!
Down in dim woods the diamond delves! the elves'-eyes!
The grey lawns cold where gold, where quick gold lies!
Wind-beat whitebeam! airy abeles set on a flare!
Flake-doves sent floating forth at a farmyard scare!
Ah well! it is all a purchase, all is a prize.*

*Buy then! bid then!—What?—Prayer, patience, alms, vows.
Look, look: a May-mess, like an orchard boughs!
Look! March-bloom, like on mealed-with-yellow sallows!
These are indeed the barn; withindoors house
The shocks. This piece-bright paling shuts the spouse
Christ home, Christ and his mother and all his hallows.*

through the elaboration and extension of a musical idea heard at the start of the piece, yields a logical and satisfying whole.

Songs of Love and Fortune was commissioned by David Alexander-Ross. The five poems that comprise the cycle are taken from the *Carmina Burana*, a collection of songs and poems from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, discovered during the nineteenth century in a Benedictine monastery in Bavaria. Believed to have been written by a varied group of minstrels, monks and scholars, they cover a wide range of human experience, from the profound to the comic and the bawdy. This song cycle was composed immediately after the completion of Tahourdin's opera, *Heloise and Abelard*, based on a true story from a similar period in mediaeval France. While the titles of the individual songs are in Latin the body of the text is translated into English.

O Fortuna deals, as one might expect, with the vagaries of luck and fortune. **Olim lacus colueram** begins with the image of a white swan, flying peacefully over inland seas, only to be caught, roasted and served up for the delectation of the diners at a local tavern. **Ego sum Abbas Cucaniensis** draws a portrait of a recalcitrant abbot with his drinking and gambling companions. **Stetit puella** presents the unattainable vision of a beautiful girl in a crimson dress, while in **Dira vi amoris teror** the cycle ends with a desperate plea for rescue from an all-consuming passionate love.

Exposé was written for the French pianist, Alain Raës. The title has a triple meaning: a musical exposition — in this case a long, slow introduction followed by two faster episodes

linked by references back to the opening; an exhibition (the primary meaning of the French word); and an exposure of the musical personality of the composer — at least in terms of this particular work.

Peter Tahourdin was born in England in 1928. He studied composition with Richard Arnell at Trinity College of Music in London, and in the years that followed various concert and broadcast performances of his music were given in England, Holland and Canada.

Tahourdin came to Australia in 1964 and was appointed visiting composer to the University of Adelaide. Later he spent a year in Canada before returning to Adelaide, where he worked as a composer, teacher and broadcaster. He established the first practical course in electronic music in Australia at the University of Adelaide in 1969. He left in 1973 to take up the post of lecturer (later senior lecturer) in composition at the University of Melbourne, where he has lived ever since. From 1978-79 he was chairman of the Composers' Guild of Australia.

Tahourdin's compositional output covers a wide variety of genres, from orchestral music (including five symphonies) to chamber music and music for the theatre (mixed media, ballet and opera), choral, electronic and educational music.

Kirsten Williams is one of Australia's leading violinists. Studying first at the New South Wales State Conservatorium of Music in Sydney, she continued her studies with Professor Igor Ozim in Switzerland. She has performed widely in

Europe with such renowned ensembles as the Philharmonie Akademie of Bern and London's Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields. In 1992 she returned to her own country to join the Australian Chamber Orchestra, both as associate leader and as a soloist.

Michael Kieran Harvey began his piano studies in his native Sydney before postgraduate study with Professor Sándor Falvai at the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest. He was awarded the Debussy Medal in Paris in 1985 and in 1993 he gained the Grand Prix in the inaugural Ivo Pogorelich Solo Piano Competition in Pasadena, California. As a soloist he performs extensively around the world, while at home he has made a particular point of commissioning and performing the work of Australian composers.

Jeannie Marsh has been singing and presenting the music of her own time for the past fifteen years at major Australian arts festivals and in over forty recordings for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. She has been featured as a soloist with the Victoria State Opera, Chamber Made Opera, Musica Viva and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. She has toured in Europe, Japan and Vietnam, performing Australian music, and she works regularly with the community choir, Canto Coro, as well as appearing as a guest lecturer in contemporary vocal music and music theatre at universities around Australia.

Gerald Gentry studied music at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London and privately with Armstrong Gibbs, Walter Goehr

and Paul van Kempen. Beginning his career as a viola player in the 1940s, in the early '50s he was appointed a staff conductor with the BBC. Following nearly twenty years as a music consultant to the West Riding Education Department in Yorkshire, England, he migrated to Australia in 1984. Throughout his career Gerald Gentry has been a tireless promoter of contemporary music, regarding the work of present-day composers as a vital and essential element in a nation's musical life.

Frederick Shade, Rudolf Osadnik and Arturs Ezerģailis are principal or associate principal players with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

Peter Neville is one of Australia's most accomplished percussion players. He has a particular interest in twentieth century music and has worked extensively in Australia with such ensembles as Elision, the David Chesworth Ensemble, the Southbank Ensemble, Jouissance, the Chronochromie Duo and the Nadoya Dance and Music Company. He has made many recordings with these ensembles, has performed in Europe with Elision and has appeared as a guest with the internationally-known Ensemble Moderne and with the Balanescu Quartet.

Barrie Webb was born in England. He read music at Cambridge University, studied trombone with Denis Wick and Vinko Globokar and conducting with Constantin Bugeanu. A leading figure in the development of new music for the trombone, his worldwide solo performances include numerous premières,

concertos and recordings. Conductor and director of the ensemble, Firebird, he has directed recordings for the BBC and has conducted in the USA, Australia and Europe — more particularly in Romania where he appears frequently on television and radio.

Julian Warburton gained a first class honours degree in music from the University of Huddersfield before continuing his studies in the advanced soloists course at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. He became the first percussionist to win the Young Concert Artists' Trust Competition, under whose management he has given solo recitals throughout the UK and has toured extensively overseas.

Bradley Daley read music at the University of Southern Queensland before continuing his studies on a scholarship at the Queensland Conservatorium and in the USA. He has toured with the Victoria State Opera and with the Queensland Lyric Opera, has performed with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and with Elision, broadcast for the ABC and has appeared regularly on the concert platform. In 1996 he was invited to sing the rôle of Gus, the Opera Cat, in the Hamburg production of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Cats*. From there he moved to London and has since established a successful career in the UK.

Phillipa Safey was born in New Zealand where she studied applied mathematics at Massey University before moving to Australia to study accompanying and chamber music at

the Victorian College of the Arts — in turn followed by a period of study of languages and lieder in England and Germany. She has worked as a pianist and vocal coach with the Victoria State Opera, Chamber Made Opera and with leading choral groups in Melbourne. Whether performing with instrumentalists or with singers, she is equally at home on the concert platform and in the recording studio. She has appeared frequently as an associate artist with Bradley Daley.

Carl Rosman is one of Australia's finest clarinet players, with a particular interest and expertise in twentieth century music. He is in as much demand as a recitalist as an ensemble player and, together with Peter Neville, he has toured Europe with Elision and has appeared with Germany's Ensemble Moderne.



This recording is supported by the Victorian Government through Arts Victoria — Department of Premier and Cabinet.

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Digital recording and editing: Martin Wright and Vaughan McAlley at Move Records studio



1 Dialogue No.1
(1971) 9'46"
Kirsten Williams (violin)
Michael Kieran Harvey
(piano)

2 Raga Music 1 –
The Starlight Night
(1985) 16'04"
Gerald Gentry
(conductor)
Jeannie Marsh (soprano)
Frederick Shade (flutes)
Rudolf Osadnik (violin)
Arturs Ezergailis (cello)
Peter Neville
(percussion)

3 Dialogue No. 4
(1984) 10'53"
Barrie Webb (trombone)
Julian Warburton
(percussion)

4 Songs of Love
and Fortune (1992)
14'29"
Bradley Daley (baritone)
Phillipa Safey (piano)

5 Raga Music 4 –
For Two (1991)
11'54"
Carl Rosman (bass
clarinet)
Peter Neville
(percussion)

6 Exposé (1995)
6'38"
Michael Kieran Harvey
(piano)

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