

ELEGY

Reflections on the music of

PETER TAHOURDIN

ELEGY

1 Capriccio (1963) ... 3'32"

Danaë Killian (piano)

2 Sonata for Clarinet and Piano (1962) ... 7'11"

3rd movement: Andante sostenuto

Robert Schubert (clarinet),

Danaë Killian (piano)

3-5 Music for Solo Violoncello (2004) ... 6'25"

Rachel Atkinson (violoncello)

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10 Music for Solo Flutes (2008) ... 6'10"

Johanna Selleck (flutes)

11 Trio for Clarinet, Piano and Violoncello

(2003) ... 8'58"

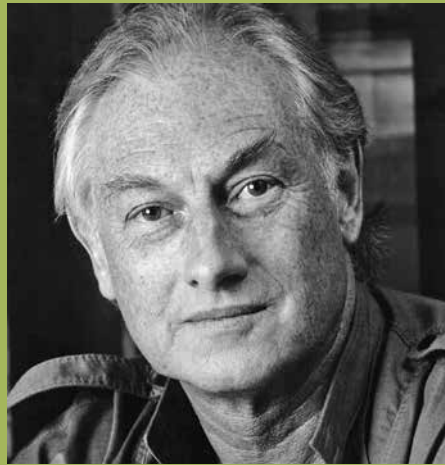
Robert Schubert (clarinet),

Danaë Killian (piano),

Rachel Atkinson (violoncello)

12-14 Three Mobiles (1974) ... 14'30"

Electro-acoustic



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Sonnet 11

*As fast as thou shalt wane, so fast thou grow'st
In one of thine, from that which thou departest;
And that fresh blood which youngly thou bestow'st,
Thou mayst call thine when thou from youth convertest.
Herein lives wisdom, beauty, and increase;
Without this folly, age, and cold decay:
If all were minded so, the times should cease
And threescore year would make the world away.
Let those whom nature hath not made for store,
Harsh, featureless, and rude, barrenly perish:
Look whom she best endowed, she gave the more;
Which bounteous gift thou shouldst in bounty cherish:
She carved thee for her seal, and meant thereby,
Thou shouldst print more, not let that copy die.*

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

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Peter Tahourdin Remembered by Barry Conyngham

In an article entitled *A Bramdean Childhood*, Peter Tahourdin gives a charming account of growing up in England — an account that embodies his familiar style: concise, clear, rich, broad ranging yet understated, and, above all, inviting further exploration and thought.

Peter Tahourdin was born in Bramdean, England, on the 27th of August 1928. He began music studies in 1949 at Trinity College London where Richard Arnell helped him develop into a fine composer and teacher. These skills brought him to Adelaide, Australia in 1964 with his wife, Barbara, and daughters Julia and Sarah. After two years in Toronto doing his Masters degree from 1966, he returned to Adelaide where his involvement in Electronic music and his effectiveness as a teacher were to blossom.

In 1973 Peter took a position at the University of Melbourne (where I met him when I joined the composition department two years later). This city was to become his base for the rest of his life, composing, and teaching, pursuing his understated yet vibrant curiosity in chamber music, the orchestra, Indian music and music theatre. But it was his teaching and composing in electronic music that dominated this period. He developed one of the pioneering electronic studios in the world and he began a long friendship with Tristram Cary — another English composer who became an Australian one — and their lifelong exploration and enthusiasm quietly enriched

our music and spawned a new generation of composers interested in the electronic field. The sparkling eyes and a broad smile were never far away as he interacted patiently and lovingly with the people in his life — Barbara, his daughters, his second wife, Jane, close and casual friends and colleagues, and the numerous students he engaged with over a long and successful period at the Faculty of Music. To those who were drawn into his circle, the converted church in inner Melbourne in which Peter lived for many years was a wondrously quirky surprise — a reminder that, as well as an elegant, calm and considerate father, husband, teacher, colleague and friend, he was also a challenging thinker and risk-taker, a person not daunted by the unusual, the new, the unexpected or the unconventional.

His quiet and diffident manner contrasted with the passion in his music. His reluctance to push himself forward or attract attention to himself obscured his desire to have his music heard. While he encouraged, and often genuinely enjoyed, the ambition — even brashness — of his Australian composer friends and students, his own style remained calm, sensitive and considerate.

Perhaps he always carried with him some of the small English village in which he was born. But he loved the Aussie sun and our lack of formality, and became one of this country's creative sons. In his Bramdean article, Peter says "I have no regrets about my move to Australia and I have lived a rewarding and productive life there, working as a composer and as a lecturer at both the universities of

Adelaide and Melbourne. Now that I have retired from my university life, I still remain active as a composer and still enjoy life in Australia."

Peter died peacefully at home in Melbourne on the 28th of July 2009, leaving a strong musical and personal legacy.



Peter 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. The works on this CD spans nearly a half a century of his creative activity in the field of chamber and electronic music.

Capriccio (1963)

Capriccio, a short piece for piano in three contrasting sections, was especially written for Ian Lake, as an opening item for his recital that year.

Sonata for Clarinet and Piano (1962)

This piece was composed in England in 1962. It was not a commissioned piece, simply a piece that Tahourdin wanted to write due to his fondness for the clarinet's wide-ranging expressive capabilities. The piano part was conceived as both an accompaniment and an equal partner in the unfolding of the music.

The sonata is in four movements, each of which exploits in different ways the range and expressive possibilities inherent in the clarinet. The first, *Moderato*, is both lyrical and dynamic. The second, *Allegro marziale*, is more jocular and introduces for the first time the idea of the military march and its association with the clarinet in a wind band.

The third movement is marked *Andante sostenuto* and is the emotional heart of the sonata. It employs the full range of the instrument from the gentle woodiness of the low, chalumeau register to the expressive potential of the brighter upper register, especially when played softly. This movement is in ternary form: the sustained melody of the opening (with a simple piano accompaniment) reappears, varied, at the end after a more assertive middle section.

The final movement, *Vivace*, is a binary rondo, alternating sections in 6/8 and 2/4 rhythms. Here the notion of the military march is more fully exploited in both these sections.

Music for Solo Violoncello (2004)

This short work, composed in early 2004, was written for the violoncellist Rachel Atkinson and is a companion piece to two other similar works composed since the turn of the century: *Music for Solo Viola* (2001, written for Gerald Gentry) and *Music for Solo Bassoon* (late 2001, commissioned by the School of Music–Conservatorium at Monash University). It may also be said to complement Tahourdin's Trio for clarinet, violoncello and piano, composed in 2003.

It is in one movement, lasting just under six minutes, divided into three sections: slow, fast –scherzo-like in 6/8 – and fast again in 2/4. Separating sections two and three is a brief reference back to the slow material of the opening (from which the music of the rest of the piece is derived), and this slow music returns again at the very end to bring the work to a quiet close.

The music makes use of a full three-octave range of the violoncello, and throughout contrasts the pizzicato and bowed sounds of the instrument. It is not for the faint-hearted!

San Diego Canons (1983)

San Diego Canons came from a five week visit to the University of California at San Diego in 1980. In the Center for Music Experiment there is a unique collection of percussion instruments, created over a number of years by various visitors to the University: suspended wooden discs of different sizes, a similar array of metal discs, a drum supporting a row of steel rods that produce an ethereal scale of ascending pitches as the rods become progressively shorter, and of course many others.

One evening Tahourdin spent a couple of hours playing and recording these instruments, subsequently composing a short tape piece from the material Tahourdin had recorded. However, he was not entirely satisfied with the result and decided to make another piece from the same material. In 1982 Tahourdin visited Bali and, like many others, became fascinated by the life and culture he found there.

Early in 1983, with the sound of Balinese music still strong in his mind, he tackled the San Diego material again. The piece that resulted is a sequence of two and four part canons that links together these diverse percussive sonorities. Though originally designed for four spatially separate channels, the piece works well in its stereo format.

Elegy – A lament for a world that might have been (2005)

Dedicated to Giles, in memoriam.

Elegy (for string orchestra and percussion) was composed some ten years after Tahourdin's 5th Symphony and may be regarded as a postlude to it. The symphony was concerned with matters of war and peace and with humankind's innate disposition to resort to violence over questions of territory, religion and political ideology, rather than to finding peaceful solutions to such disputes. Has this attitude changed in the past ten years? Have we learnt the lessons of the past?

Tahourdin feared not, though it may be that some modest progress has been made during the past five hundred years. Today our taste for violence and conflict is largely directed to film, literature, television and computer games; whereas five hundred years ago a public, and live, display of appalling violence and suffering was regarded as popular entertainment.

Elegy is in three interlocking parts with an overall duration of approximately fifteen minutes. The opening and closing sections, which together form the 'elegy', are separated by a central section, whose tempo is twice that of the other two. Here the music increases in vitality, tempered by a hint of aggression.

Throughout the work, though, the twin emotions of aggression and grief are mollified by moments of transcendent light – indicating a modicum of hope? This abrupt and enigmatic close suggests this may be so.

A prevailing influence has been that of the sullen and lowering skies of northern Europe in autumn and winter, a characteristic that pervades the painted landscapes by certain Old Dutch masters.

A final word about the dedication. Giles was a dog – large and lovable – a loyal and faithful companion to Peter's eldest daughter; he died of old age and a consequent decrepitude only days before the completion of this work. Perhaps the dedication to him then is fitting. In his youth Giles had an engaging vitality and playfulness, but he was always a gentle creature. Maybe we humans have something to learn from an animal like Giles?

Music for Solo Flutes (2008)

Music for Solo Flutes is for one player, playing two instruments – flute in C and alto flute. At the beginning the change from one instrument to the other is intended to be theatrical, but the changeover should never be deliberately delayed.

The opening few bars for the flute in C sets the mood and provides the basic musical material. However, the work is in several sections – including a form of scherzo in triple time (flute in C). The overall duration is about six minutes, and the final section, for flute in C, ends somewhat enigmatically.

Trio for Clarinet, Piano and Violoncello (2003)

This trio, composed in Melbourne, Australia, towards the end of 2003, seeks to combine the

contrasting colours and registers of the three instruments. It is in one continuous movement, lasting about nine minutes, and is divided into a number of sections that alternate between slow and fast. The opening few bars (slow) provide the material from which the remaining sections are derived. Immediately before the final fast section, there is a concise statement of the Shaker melody *Simple Gifts*, which returns at a slower tempo before the brief flourish that brings the work to a close.

Three Mobiles (1974)

The work was composed during the latter part of 1973 and early 1974, soon after Tahourdin came to Melbourne; it was a means of getting to know the newly acquired SYNTHI 100 – all the sounds were produced and treated electronically on the synthesizer. The original tape is in four channels and has been condensed to two for this CD.

The title and the concept sprang from the visual image of a sculptured mobile suspended in space, turning through the movement of air around it, and so presenting different facets of itself as it revolves; sometimes the transition is abrupt, sometimes gradual. Each of the three mobiles has its own individual character, but each adheres to that principle for the presentation and evolution of the musical materials from which it is made.





Danaë Killian (Piano)

Danaë Killian is an Australian pianist whose performances have found regard internationally for their intense originality and rare communicative power. Her

repertoire ranges across the complete solo piano music of the Second Viennese School, major polyphonic works by JS Bach, and a wealth of Australian compositions. She has been the recipient of prestigious awards for her musical and academic prowess, including a Fulbright Scholarship and an Endeavour Research Fellowship, and has performed throughout Europe, the USA, and China. Danaë Killian is an Honorary Fellow in the VCA's Centre for Ideas at the University of Melbourne, where she earned her PhD in 2010. Danaë Killian's recording *Arnold Schoenberg: Complete Works for Piano Solo* for the Move label was launched in 2015 to critical acclaim.

Robert Schubert (Clarinet)

From 1983 to 1984 Robert Schubert studied clarinet with James Campbell at the Royal Conservatory of Music, Toronto, Canada and with James Morton (Principal Clarinet) National Arts Orchestra of Canada. In 1991 he was a finalist in the Tokyo International



Clarinet Competition. Robert Schubert has recorded with the Orchestra Ensemble Kanazawa on Deutsche Gramophone, Victor and Sony labels. In Melbourne he has performed

with the Melbourne Symphony and Orchestra Victoria. Since 1996 he has held the position of Lecturer in Woodwind at the Victorian College of the Arts.

The Southern Cross Philharmonia Orchestra

The Southern Cross Philharmonia Orchestra (also referred to as the SCPO) is an Australian orchestra established in Melbourne, which performs works from Australian and International composers, and appeals to classical music connoisseurs with some of the rare works that they play.

The late Gerald Gentry was the conductor for this performance of *Elegy*. He 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 was 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.



The performers were:

- Violins:* Elizabeth Sellars (concert master), Helen Ayres (principal 2nd violin), Jane Mason, Sonia Baldock, Andrea Keeble, Cameron Hill, Imelda Baligold, Severin Donnenberg, Susie Ng, Oliver Dennis and Rachel Homburg
- Violas:* Caroline Henbest (principal viola), Paul McMillan, Airlie Smart and Beth Hemming
- Violoncellos:* Molly Kadarau (principal violoncello), Sharon Draper, Virginia Kable and Tara Cudderford
- Double Basses:* Nicholas Synot and Rosie Westbrook
- Percussion:* Peter Neville

**Rachel Atkinson
(Violoncello)**

Rachel Atkinson performs with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and is a regular recording artist for ABC Classic FM. She teaches violoncello and chamber music at the Faculty of VCAM, the University of Melbourne. Rachel studied violoncello with Georg Pedersen at the Sydney Conservatorium and with David Strange and Lynn Harrell at the Royal Academy of Music in London. She continued her studies with William Pleeth.



Johanna Selleck (Flutes)

Johanna Selleck is a composer, flautist, and musicologist. She completed a PhD in composition at the University of Melbourne in 2006 studying under Brenton Broadstock. Her works have been performed by some of the most renowned performers in Australia and internationally including the Queensland, Tasmania, and Melbourne Symphony orchestras, Astra and the Song Company as well as international artists of the calibre of Merlyn Quaife, Caroline Almonte and Michael Kieran Harvey. She currently teaches at the University of Melbourne and her work as a composer and researcher has been presented at conferences and festivals world-wide.



Acknowledgements

There are two electroacoustic pieces – *San Diego Canons* (1983) and *Three Mobiles* (1974) – on this CD.

The School of Music, Australian National University, has provided the recording of *San Diego Canons*; it was first released on the disc CSM:5 from the Anthology of Australian Music produced by the Canberra School of Music.

Tonmeister Leslie Craythorn has provided a re-mix of the digital four track quadrophonic recording of *Three Mobiles* to stereo of for this CD. In March 1975 Leslie commenced work in the Electronic Music Studio at the Faculty of Music, University of Melbourne, working with Peter Tahourdin. Leslie digitised *Three Mobiles* to four mono tracks in the early 1990s. In 2015 Leslie was awarded an Honorary Fellow and he has continued his connection with the Synthesizer 100. That year he rebuilt this piece as a digital four track quadrophonic work, as well as editing it to a four-minute version. Leslie premiered the full-length version of *Three Mobiles* at the Melbourne Recital Centre on 23 April 2016.

The Australian Broadcasting Commission has provided three recordings on this CD. These works are *Elegy – A lament for a world that might have been* (2005) performed at the South Melbourne Town Hall on 22 July 2006; *Trio for Clarinet, Piano and Violoncello* (2003) and *Music for Solo Violoncello* (2004) both performed at the Iwaki Auditorium on 7 April 2006.

Capriccio (1963), *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano* (1962), and *Music for Solo Flutes* (2008) were recorded at Move Records studio in late 2016. *Recording and editing*: Martin Wright and Vaughan McAlley.

Cover photograph: Michael Van Ewijk/Auscape (reproduced by permission) Carters Creek flowing through moss-covered boulders. Bemboka Section, South East Forest National Park, New South Wales, Australia – www.auscape.com.au

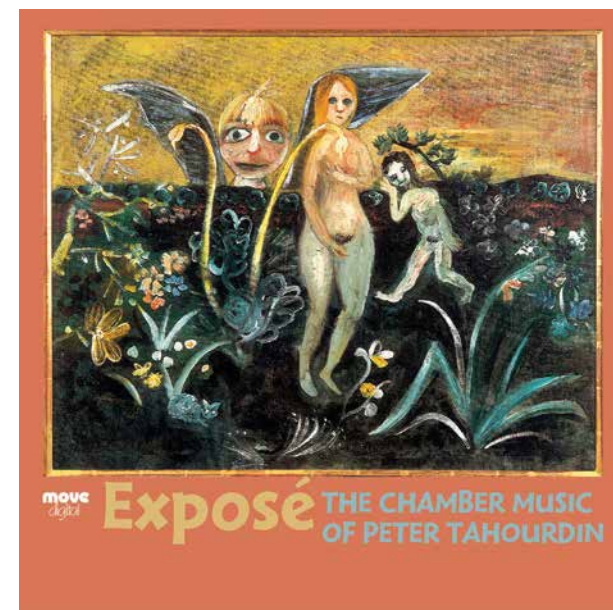
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Jim Rolon (reproduced by permission)

Mastering: Martin Wright (Move Records)

Producers: Julia and Sarah Tahourdin



Exposé is a companion CD to *Elegy*. The recordings on *Exposé* span 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). The pieces reflect Peter's compositional metamorphosis and encompass a myriad of influences and themes, from Indian ragas to the Carmina Burana. Available from Move Records.