

MEHFIL LUNCHTIME SERIES 2 : India by Night

1.05pm, Wednesday 15 May 2013

Ian Hanger Recital Hall

MEHFIL Lunchtime series

The word mehfil derives from the Urdu language. A traditional mehfil is a gathering of refined entertainment of poetry or music, particularly Hindustani classical music, performed for a small audience in an intimate setting. Historically, mehfls were presented in the homes or palaces of Moghul royalty, noblemen, or landowners (zamindars), who acted as patrons for these artists. Today, they are generally given in the homes of avid music lovers.

Welcome to our very own mehfls, our lunchtime feasts of music and dance.

1. Nigel WESTLAKE (born 1958).....*Shards of Jaisalmer* (2008) for three guitars

Ian Ahles, Will Towne & Padcraig Parkhurst, *guitars*

The exotic desert fortress of Jaisalmer lies on the ancient camel trade routes of western Rajasthan in India. Abundant with beautifully preserved architectural treasures standing testament to a rich and colourful history, this timeless city provided inspiration following a visit in 2007

Shards of Jaisalmer in no way tries to emulate Indian music; it is simply a fleeting vision of the alleyways, ramparts, havellis and intricate jali screens by a transitory traveller.

The work is scored for 3 guitars, two six-string guitars and one twelve-string instrument. It was written for Slava & Leonard Grigoryan and was first performed by them with Doug DeVries at the Melbourne International Arts Festival in November 2008.

Adapted from notes supplied by the composer

2. Improvisation by Peter Schaefer (adapted sitar)

Shen Flindell (tabla)

3. Peter TAHOURDIN (1928-2009).....*Raga Music I* (1985) Based on text by Gerard Manley Hopkins

Amber Evans, *soprano*
Jo Langerlow, *flute*
Kyla Matsuura-Miller, *violin*
Andrew Leaske, *cello*
Angus Wilson, *percussion*
Vanessa Tomlinson, *conductor*

While on leave from the University of Melbourne in late 1985, Peter Tahourdin visited India with the express purpose of studying North Indian music. From that time onwards until his death nearly a quarter-century later, much of his music was based on the structural principles of the Hindustani raga.

Raga Music I employs a well-known poem, The Starlight Night, by the Jesuit priest, poet and mystic Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1899), who spent many years in India.

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 table (in this case represented by five tomtom drums played with the fingers) which determines the rhythmic flow of the music.

As with other poems by Gerard Manley Hopkins, The Starlight Night 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, a notion that brings the work to a close.

Adapted from notes by the composer

ENCOUNTERS: INDIA

13 - 19 May, South Bank Brisbane

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