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AUSTRALIAN
COMPOSER SERIES

GRAEME KOEHNE

tivoli dances



AUSTRALIAN
COMPOSER SERIES



TASMANIAN
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

Graeme Koehne b. 1956

Tivoli Dances

[1]	I. Santa Ana Freeway	4'46	[20'39]
[2]	II. Forgotten Waltz (Tivoli Memories)	5'52	
[3]	III. Salvation Hymn and Whistling Song	5'10	
[4]	IV. Vamp 'Til Ready	4'51	

Shaker Dances

[5]	I. Whirling Dance	7'25	[21'14]
[6]	II. Precept and Line	7'00	
[7]	III. Square Order Shuffle	6'49	

Palm Court Suite

[8]	I. Nocturne (Prelude I)	2'27	[24'25]
[9]	II. Valse noble...	3'29	
[10]	III. Berceuse (Prelude II)	2'59	
[11]	IV. Blues	5'44	
[12]	V. Elegy (Prelude III)	2'06	
[13]	VI. ...et sentimentale	7'40	

[14]	To His Servant Bach, God Grants a Final Glimpse: The Morning Star	4'06	
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Total Playing Time 70'24

The selection of pieces recorded here forms a survey, ranging across 20 years, of Graeme Koehne's engagement with an aesthetic of the 'lighter touch'. Graeme's turn towards 'lightness' began in the early 1980s, when he moved from Adelaide to the university town of Armidale in New South Wales. Here he encountered, on the one hand, a withdrawal from the support network of Adelaide's then thriving 'new music' scene; and on the other, a small, close-knit but musically active community. The change of social environment prompted Graeme to re-evaluate his aesthetic priorities, leading progressively to his rejection of the ideology of 'heroic' modernism in favour of a new, more modest aim of engagement with the listener. The extraordinary thing I recall from the time, though, is the excitement which this change generated for Graeme: the realization that he was free to compose in a more traditional mode, to explore a language growing from his own enthusiasms – such as Ravel and Debussy. It was a tremendous release, not to say an epiphany.

Graeme was offered the perfect opportunity to further explore his radical stylistic shift when Graeme Murphy asked him to write the music for a new dance work to be premiered at the Sydney Dance Company's 1984 Triple Bill in the Sydney Opera House. Murphy wanted to make a work combining young SDC dancers with retired guest dancers, with the music performed

on-stage by a piano quintet. The ballet explored themes of the continuities between the past and the present, and Murphy called it *Old Friends*, *New Friends*. Graeme (Koehne) chose to write in a 'Palm Court' style both because it suited the ensemble and had an appropriately nostalgic quality – hence the title **Palm Court Suite** when the work appears without dancers. The piece was the surprise success of the program and Murphy decided to expand it into a full evening work called *Nearly Beloved*, which has had several seasons, including at the Créteil Maison des Arts.

The return to simplicity and vernacular musical expression of the early 1980s led Graeme on a line of enquiry into the aesthetic questions posed by his rejection of modernity and return to musical tradition. Among the diverse sources from which Graeme drew conviction and support for his stylistic alteration, he was attracted to 'the unique philosophy and way of life developed by the 19th-century American religious community known as the Shakers'. When the Australian String Quartet commissioned Graeme's second string quartet in 1994, he adapted the Shaker way of life and concepts as both an inspiration and a guide to the piece's construction.

As Graeme points out in his program note to the piece, he was not the first composer inspired by 'the Shakers' spiritual integrity and their

communistic philosophy': Copland and John Adams had been there before him. Encompassing the philosophical views which Graeme had developed by this time, his program note for ***Shaker Dances*** continues:

The Shakers are remembered today for their skill as craftsmen and designers; for the affecting directness of their poetry; and for their use of dance to celebrate the union of physicality with spirituality. Music was central to their lives, melding with their poetry and the divine joyfulness of their dance. Simplicity of spirit, life and art was the governing principle of Shaker culture. In every aspect, their culture reflects an idealism which sought to reject crass materialism, to instil dignity into human lives, and to restore harmony with nature.

All in all, there is much in Shaker culture which deserves to be honoured, not just as nostalgic memory, but as a continuing spiritual and philosophical presence. My string quartet *Shaker Dances* is inspired by this presence. People say that contemporary music should 'reflect the spirit of the age', or that the artist should give expression to 'serious' emotions like personal angst, or that he should 'confront' the audience. For various reasons I think these are the least interesting, and the least important things that music can do.

Angst, offensiveness and modernity are prevalent enough without me adding to the load. Like the Shakers, I prefer to reject negative values, and celebrate constructive ones. Beauty and simplicity are serious objectives for an artist.

The theme of humility and gentleness pervades another of Graeme's most popular chamber works from this period, ***To His Servant Bach, God Grants a Final Glimpse: The Morning Star***. Here, Bach is the model, aesthetically and musically. The long title aims to encapsulate a story from Spitta's famous biography of the composer. Suffering blindness in his last years, Bach momentarily regained his sight on the day before he died, sufficient to view the stars for one final time. This modest homage to Bach was commissioned and premiered by Janis Laurs for the Mt Buller Chamber Music Camp then adapted for the guitar quartet Guitar Trek at the request of Timothy Kain. In response to demand from performers, Graeme re-worked it for string orchestra (the version recorded here).

The most recent work on this disc again stems from a ballet project in which Graeme Koehne collaborated with Graeme Murphy: the huge touring production of the Australian Centenary of Federation, *Tivoli*. Telling the story of the rise and fall of the Tivoli variety entertainment circuit – Australia's vaudeville empire until the advent of television – the show brought together the

Australian Ballet and Sydney Dance Company and a host of additional artists in a grand collaboration. The production also, as Graeme says in his notes, covered 'the period of popular music's most exhilarating years, and afforded rich potential for a composer like me, keenly interested in the diversity of popular music forms and integrating them into "classical" music-making.'

Graeme notes that for this lavish production, Murphy 'devised a scenario which gave him free rein to conjure spectacular dances and tableaux, revelling in the delicious aesthetic indulgence which Tivoli had presented throughout its life. The ballet required music to accompany scenes for Swing Band, a Salvation Army Rally, and a French Lido-Style revue, among others. Weaving between the risqué and the sentimental, the scenario gave me all the inspiration I needed to indulge my musical imagination.'

At the request of the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, a year or two after the original production, Graeme organised some of the key orchestral sections into a four-movement suite, ***Tivoli Dances***. To the first movement Graeme gave the title *Santa Ana Freeway*, in reference to the legend that many of the original old scores of the great Hollywood film composers (including Carl Stalling's Warner Brothers cartoons) were used as landfill for the freeway's construction. The second and third movements

evoke scenes from the original *Tivoli* production featuring a love scene and a Salvation Army rally respectively, and the final movement makes, says Graeme, 'an eccentric commentary on the function of music as theatrical accompaniment, taking as its starting point the ubiquitous "vamp" of early popular music.'

James Koehne

Richard Mills

Richard Mills is one of Australia's most sought-after composers and music directors. Mills studied with Edmund Rubbra (composition) and Gilbert Webster (percussion) at the Guildhall School of Music, London, where he won the Saltzman Prize. He has also been recipient of the Maggs Award (1982), the Don Banks Music Fellowship (1995), and an Order of Australia (1999). Victoria State Opera commissioned him to write an opera of Ray Lawler's *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, which premiered in Melbourne in 1996. Opera Australia commissioned his second opera *Batavia*, which was premiered at the Melbourne Festival in 2001 and received Green Room and Helpmann Awards including Best Opera and Best New Australian Work. In 2006 his performance of *Tristan and Isolde* at the Queensland Music Festival won Best Classical Concert Helpmann Award. His CD recording *Richard Mills Orchestral Works with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra* has become a best-seller

for ABC Classics. In 1992 his recording of the film music of Franz Waxman with the same orchestra was awarded a Deutsche Schallplatten Kritiks Preis. Richard Mills has undertaken commissions for the 1982 Commonwealth Games, the 2000 Olympic Games, and the Australian Bicentenary re-orchestration of Charles Williams' *Majestic*

Fanfare (the ABC news theme). He has been Lecturer in Composition and Conducting at the Queensland Conservatorium of Music and Visiting Fellow, University of Melbourne School of Music. Since 1997 he has been Artistic Director of the West Australian Opera, and has recently taken up the post of Artistic Consultant with Orchestra Victoria.

Executive Producers Martin Buzacott, Robert Patterson, Lyle Chan

Recording Producer Brooke Green [1]-[6], [8]-[14], Anthony Peluso, Veronika Vincze [7]

Recording Engineers Andrew Dixon [14], Veronika Vincze [1]-[13]

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ABC Classics thanks Alexandra Alewood and Melissa Kennedy.

For Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra

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Manager, Artistic Planning Simon Rogers, Anthony Peluso

Australian Music Program Director Richard Mills

Concertmaster Jun Yi Ma

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Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra

Established in 1948, the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra is acclaimed as one of the world's finest small orchestras. Resident in the purpose-built Federation Concert Hall, Hobart, the TSO presents more than 60 diverse concerts across Tasmania and mainland Australia each year. German-born Sebastian Lang-Lessing has been the orchestra's Chief Conductor and Artistic Director since 2004.

With a full-time complement of 47 musicians, the TSO's core repertoire is the music of the Classical and early Romantic periods. It is, however, a versatile orchestra, equally at home in jazz, popular music and light classics, and recognised internationally as a champion for Australian music.

The TSO presents annual subscription seasons in Hobart and Launceston, and since its inception has regularly toured regional Tasmania and mainland Australia. The orchestra appears at major Australian arts festivals and in 2005 initiated an annual Sydney Season. International touring has seen the TSO in North and South America, Greece, Israel, South Korea, China, Japan and Indonesia.

The TSO regularly records for radio, CD, film and TV. Its recordings on international and Australian CD labels have garnered critical praise, and the TSO is the only Australian orchestra to have released a complete set of the Beethoven symphonies, conducted by David Porcelijn, and a complete cycle of Schumann symphonies, conducted by current Chief Conductor Sebastian Lang-Lessing.

In 2003 the orchestra launched its Australian Music Program under Program Director Richard Mills. This acclaimed program is dedicated to the performing and recording of music by Australian composers, most notably through the ongoing Australian Composer Series on ABC Classics.



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