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# charM : MARSHALL McGUIRE

20th-century music for harp

BERIO : BRITTEN : TAKEMITSU : PÄRT : KATS-CHERNIN

CAGE : TIPPETT : GLANVILLE-HICKS





**CD1**

MARCEL TOURNIER 1879-1951

- 1** **Vers la source dans le bois (Towards the spring in the woods)** (1919/22) 4'41

PAUL HINDEMITH 1895-1963

**Sonata** (1939) [10'22]

- 2** I. Mässig schnell 4'49  
**3** II. Lebhaft 2'29  
**4** III. Lied 3'04

JOHN CAGE 1912-1992

- 5** **In a Landscape** (1948) 7'40

PEGGY GLANVILLE-HICKS 1912-1990

**Sonata** (1950) [9'48]

- 6** I. Saeta 4'01  
**7** II. Pastorale 2'14  
**8** III. Rondo 3'33

LUCIANO BERIO 1925-2003

- 9** **Sequenza II** (1963) 8'34

BENJAMIN BRITTEN 1913-1976

**Suite** Op. 83 (1969) [14'17]

- 10** I. Overture 2'59  
**11** II. Toccata 1'29  
**12** III. Nocturne 3'29  
**13** IV. Fugue 1'18  
**14** V. Hymn (St Denio) 5'02

TORU TAKEMITSU 1930-1996

- 15** **Stanza II for harp and tape** (1971) 6'44

PAUL STANHOPE b. 1969

- 16** **The Arch Window** (1997) 6'01

Total Playing Time 68'10

<b>CD2</b>	
FRANCO DONATONI 1927-2000	
1	Marches (1979) 8'38
MICHAEL FINNISSY b. 1947	
Two Scenes from 'Shameful Vice' (1994) [7'52]	
2	Scene V 3'49
3	Scene XII 4'03
ELENA KATS-CHERNIN b. 1957	
4	Chamber of Horrors (1995) 6'45
ARVO PÄRT b. 1935, arr. Elinor Bennett	
5	Pari intervallo (1976; arr. 1992) 6'26
MICHAEL TIPPETT 1905-1998, arr. Meirion Bowen	
6	'Dreaming' from Suite: The Tempest (1961; arr. 1995) 6'54
Patricia Pollett <i>viola</i>	
ANDREW FORD b. 1957	
7	Rough Magic (1996) 7'59
CARLO GIACCO b. 1972	
8	The Lair of Sweet Caterpillar Blossoms (1997) 5'59
ALESSANDRO SOLBIATI b. 1956	
9	Vezelay (1994) 9'15
GERARD BROPHY b. 1953	
10	charM (1996) 7'15
Geoffrey Collins <i>flute</i> , Patricia Pollett <i>viola</i>	
Total Playing Time 67'58	

Marshall McGuire harp

In contemporary music the harp has become a versatile and international instrument – crossing geographical and musicological borders with ease. It has adapted successfully to serious and light music and is equally at home in concert halls and more relaxed environs. In classical music it has adapted to a wide variety of compositional styles – the tonal and the atonal, to early music as well as to that of a Classical, Romantic, impressionistic or expressionistic style. In more recent times it has also been used in a more experimental manner, often playing against the instrument's inherent qualities, or at least extending its boundaries both sonically and technically.

The harp has consolidated for itself an important and individual position in contemporary music. It is capable of an extraordinary range of effects – from delicate glass chime-like sounds, through harpsichord and pizzicato strings, to piano, guitar, lute and even, in its lower registers, an organ. As the German composer Werner Egk has noted, in modern music the harp can express 'sublime exaltation, capricious playfulness or profound depth, and there is no area of human expression to which it does not have access.'

The harp's broad range and its capacity for sharp, stinging sounds as well as soothing ones also appealed to the radical avant-garde that emerged in the 1950s, which included composers like Boulez and Stockhausen. It was Italian composers in particular, though, who really set the tone for the New Harp: above all Berio, with

his *Sequenza II* and the prominent harp part in his song cycle *Circles*.

However, as so often in post-war music, it was not the instrument alone that inspired the repertoire, but particular performers: in this case the harpist Francis Pierre, followed by Claudia Antonelli and Marie-Claire Jamet. Today this tradition is represented by, as much as anyone, the Australian harpist Marshall McGuire (who studied with Jamet). Without his artistry and virtuosity, many of the works on this album would be unthinkable.

**Marcel Tournier** was a child prodigy who, after studying piano, was awarded his *premier prix* in harp at the Paris Conservatoire following a mere four years of study. Being as much a composer as a musician, he won the prestigious Prix de Rome and Prix de Rossini in 1909 and was immediately appointed to the Conservatoire's composition staff. Soon afterwards he was offered the position of Professor of Harp, a post he held until 1948. The majority of Tournier's works feature the harp, either as soloist or in combination with other instruments. His finely crafted and evocative pieces owe much to the impressionistic style of Debussy and have secured for themselves a prominent position within the instrument's repertoire. Like the equally popular *Au matin, Vers la source dans le bois*, with its Debussyan colours and swirling arpeggios, is typical of his compositional style and approach to the instrument.

**Paul Hindemith's** music deserves to be more popular than it currently is. Initially, in his native Germany, he had a reputation as a prodigiously gifted *enfant terrible*. Not only was he a violist of the highest calibre (amongst other works, he premiered William Walton's concerto) but he also proved to be a precocious composing talent, hitting his first peak with 1933's magisterial *Mathis der Maler* (both an opera and a symphony extracted from the former). However, with its themes on the morality of the artist in a corrupt society, he soon found himself defined as *persona non grata* in Nazi Germany and settled in the United States, where he not only continued composing and performing, but also taught many of the country's finest at Yale University. Since his death in 1963, many of his solo sonatas (and he wrote a great many) have struggled to receive the attention they deserve. Only the piano sonatas (primarily due to the advocacy of Glenn Gould) and the harp sonata have kept their rightful place in respective repertoires.

Hindemith's Sonata for harp is a work of great stature and design that suggested, at the time of composition, new musical and technical possibilities for the instrument. Its tripartite structure, in Hindemith's inimitable neo-Baroque style (like that of the *Mathis der Maler* symphony), owes as much to Hindemith's spiritual vision of the artist and his personal philosophy as it does to his undoubted gifts as a composer. By the time Hindemith had written

the sonata in 1939, he had published *The Craft of Musical Composition* (1937) and reached his peak as a composer – a fact clearly demonstrated in this remarkable work. In Hindemith's mind, the music bridges God and man, an idea that goes back to the myth of the harp-carrying Orpheus. It was an idea that would reach fulfilment in his late opera *Die Harmonie der Welt*, which deals with the Renaissance figure Johannes Kepler.

The American composer **John Cage** has long been regarded as a maverick in the field of composition. After study with Arnold Schoenberg in one of the most rigorous compositional methods, twelve-tone serialism, Cage chose instead to explore ideas relating to chance and silence, notions associated more at the time with Eastern philosophies than with the West.

*In a Landscape* is able to be performed on the prepared piano as well as the harp. Cage's concept of the piano was arrived at via an aesthetic problem which was solved as much by inspiration as by common sense: he found that his compositional quandaries arose not from within himself but from the limitations of the instrument, and so he set about changing the instrument to suit his purposes. Another of his teachers, Henry Cowell, had already been experimenting with the manipulation of the insides of the piano, so he simply adapted this approach to his own compositions. And of

course many of the 'deadened' and manipulated sounds that he wished to create were already inherent to the sound world of the harp.

Known as PG-H from her New York *Herald Tribune* by-line, Australian-born **Peggy Glanville-Hicks** was a distinguished critic on Virgil Thomson's staff, a passionate advocate of modern music and a very fine, if underrated, composer who had studied with Vaughan Williams, Egon Wellesz and Nadia Boulanger. In spite of her impressive teachers and obvious gifts as a composer, she is still often overlooked by performers, critics and indeed feminists. From the late 1940s she was at the centre of the American group of gifted outriders that included Cage, Thomson, Paul Bowles (who turned to writing instead of fulfilling his early promise as a composer) and Lou Harrison, and her compositions show her to be a talented and individualistic composer. Like many before her, she incorporated elements from ancient and indigenous musics (India, Morocco, sub-Saharan Africa, South America, Spain, ancient Greece and Etrusca) in her work, but not merely content to adopt a traveller's approach, she delved past the obvious and superficial differences to see how melody was used as a structural device. Like Cage and Harrison, with her fascination for this and the use of rhythm-driven ostinato, Glanville-Hicks was a major influence on minimalists such as Philip Glass and Steve Reich.

Her Sonata for harp was premiered in Caracas, Venezuela in February 1951 and is dedicated to the distinguished Spanish harpist Nicanor Zabaleta (a student of Tournier) who kept the work in his active repertoire. It often appeared in recital alongside the Hindemith in places as far apart as Amsterdam, South America and New York, where it was always greeted positively. The sonata shows an intimate comprehension of the instrument and, as Marshall McGuire has said, 'a compelling use of the many timbres to be found on the harp'. Writing about Zabaleta's performance at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1952, Virgil Thomson stated, 'In a repertory lacking much music of much depth her sonata stands forth for neat poetry and elegance of statement.' This recital and a subsequent orchestral tour with Carlos Surinach revived interest in the possibilities that the harp had to offer in the field of modern music.

Following on from the felicities of Glanville-Hicks, we come to something far more experimental in nature. **Luciano Berio's** series of *Sequenzas* (1958-1995) for solo instruments (and in the case of number three, for female voice) seeks expansion and departure from a sequence of harmonic fields wherein lies their individuality. The works generally have the intention of defining and developing through melody an essentially harmonic discourse. In doing this, Berio also implies a searching sense of virtuosity of the highest order, yet never

seeking to work against the individual instrument's inherent qualities. Even so, in *Sequenza II* he has chosen to challenge the conventional 'French impressionism' view of the harp by displaying its harder, more aggressive side. Berio admits, though, that the notions of impressionism and the mental pictures it conjures will inevitably show through from time to time.

It is difficult to believe that **Benjamin Britten's** Suite for harp postdates many of the works on this disc. It is Britten's only work for solo harp but those who are familiar with the popular *A Ceremony of Carols* will recognise the composer's idiomatic approach to the instrument. Composed in response to a request by Osian Ellis, who had partnered Britten's partner Peter Pears in recital and on record, the work was written in the spring of 1969 and premiered at the same year's Aldeburgh Festival. Of the Suite, Britten said that he felt it to be 'rather 18th-century harp writing, but somehow it came out that way'; however this strongly modal approach is also rather typical of Britten's late compositional style. The Suite on English Folk Tunes 'A Time There Was', Op. 90, is obviously from the same mind.

The Suite is a well-crafted piece designed to display the virtuosity of the player and the technical capabilities of the instrument. In particular, Britten has made excellent use of the

harp's traditional resources, including glissandi and arpeggios. The five-movement work includes a lively toccata, a haunting and inward nocturne and an agile fugue. In the short program note provided for the premiere, Britten described the work as follows:

- 1 A classical 'Overture' with dotted rhythms and trumpet chords.
- 2 'Toccata', a busy rondo, with quavers and semiquavers, with much crossing of parts.
- 3 'Nocturne', a clear tune with increasing ornamentation over a low, chordal ground.
- 4 'Fugue', a brief scherzo, in three voices.
- 5 'Hymn' (St Denio), a Welsh tune, a compliment to the dedicatee, with five variants.

**Toru Takemitsu** was a mainly self-taught composer who became fascinated by Western music during World War II and the American occupation of Japan after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Prior to this, due to the isolationist policies enforced upon the Japanese population, Western classical music remained a largely unknown quantity. Takemitsu did not show any interest in traditional Japanese music until later in life, even though he lived with an aunt who played the koto. His composing style was more influenced by the colourful sonorities of Debussy, Webern's sense of integration, and Messiaen's modes of limited transpositions and

his leaning towards nature and birdsong. His first piece to gain international acclaim was the Requiem for String Orchestra (1957), thanks to the advocacy of Igor Stravinsky, who had heard the work whilst on tour in Japan. It was after the completion of the Requiem that he became aware of the notion of dualities within his work – life and death, self and others, East and West. The first piece in which he incorporated traditional Japanese instruments (shakuhachi and biwa) into a Western style was *November Steps*, written to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the New York Philharmonic. Leonard Bernstein had asked for a work that unified Eastern and Western music; Seiji Ozawa conducted the premiere. Takemitsu's idea of incorporating sounds of nature in his music was also important and is demonstrated in a great number of his pieces where the words 'water', 'tree', 'garden', 'dream' and 'the sea' appear. As early as the 1950s he had also experimented with electronics. *Stanza II for harp and tape* was written in 1971.

The Australian composer **Paul Stanhope** completed PhD studies with Peter Sculthorpe at the University of Sydney, later studying at the Guildhall School of Music in London. He was the Peggy Glanville-Hicks Fellow in 2002. Stanhope has stated that his music constructs a response to time and place and the context of contemporary culture within it. As such it is inspired by an array of influences ranging, like

Cage and Takemitsu, from the elemental and topographical to social undercurrents and the quirkier aspects of pop culture. In *24 Hours* magazine he was quoted as saying that his music 'presents the listener with an optimistic, personal geography...whether this is a reaction to the elemental aspects of the universe (both the celestial and terrestrial) or the throbbing energy of the inner city.' His work has been performed by many of the country's leading ensembles including the Australian String Quartet, the Tasmanian, Melbourne and Sydney Symphony Orchestras, Perihelion, Gondwana Voices, The Song Company and the Australia Ensemble.

Paul Stanhope has commented that the title *The Arch Window* 'suggests images of refracted light through stained glass, and also hints at the structural design of the piece. In ornate stained-glass windows one often finds small panels making up larger arch-shaped designs. In the same way, this piece is made up of a number of small variations on a simple theme and ground bass, which form a larger arch-shaped structure. This simple melodic theme drifts in and out of focus throughout the work, becoming more decorative as the figurations become increasingly virtuosic. A contemplative central "panel" in this work gives the opportunity for gentle reflection before the music launches into swirling arpeggiated figures and an exuberant climax.'

In many respects, the Italian composer **Franco Donatoni's** *Marches*, with its explosive energy and novel sonorities, embodies the new view of the harp. It is one of a long series of solo works (comparable to Berio's *Sequenzas*) that Donatoni began composing in the late 1970s, each of which has two contrasting movements. Though the rhythms of the first movement may call for almost military precision, the title *Marches* is also the French word for 'scales' or 'passages', and these too are much in evidence. Sharply profiled at first, the piece is gradually taken over by more wispy, mysterious elements. The second movement is like a photographic negative of the first; it begins with ethereal shimmerings which are first punctuated and then invaded by crisp chords and figures. When Marshall McGuire first played this work at a Sydney reception for Donatoni in the early 90s, it took only a few seconds for the very solidly built composer to leap up from his chair in visible astonishment.

Originally, **Michael Finnissy's** two brief pieces for solo harp were simply called *Tchaikovsky*, a name which may well conjure up the harp. But the context for these pieces is not exactly that of *Swan Lake* and *The Nutcracker*. They form the basis of two scenes from Finnissy's opera *Shameful Vice* (1994-95), an exploration of the life, homophobic persecution and death of Tchaikovsky. In the first of these scenes, Tchaikovsky dances a *pas de deux* with Saint-

Saëns, while in the second, black swans bring him poison to drink.

Despite such different scenarios, the form of the two pieces is almost identical: they begin with a sequence of soft but dense fragments, in which there are three independent rhythmic layers, and then move to recitative-like passages (melody with tremolo accompaniment), before fading and fragmenting. The musical material of both pieces consists of transformations of Tchaikovsky's arrangements of Russian folk melodies.

In total contrast to the gentle austerity of Finnissy's pieces, **Elena Kats-Chernin's** *Chamber of Horrors* takes the harp through a whole menagerie of special effects, though in a way that, miraculously, seems entirely natural. Unusually for her, Kats-Chernin had a title for the piece long before she got round to actually writing it, and for all its evocation of waxworks, the result is not so much a 'Madame Tussaud's for harp' as a homage to Hitchcock: a quasi-cinematic exploration of the instrument's more 'creepy' possibilities. Beneath the colourful surface is a fairly strict form: the piece is a sort of passacaglia, based on a sequence of seven chords which circle evasively around A minor.

The next two works are arrangements – once an obligatory part of the harpist's repertoire, but now more like an optional luxury. The Estonian composer **Arvo Pärt** is a leading exponent of what is sometimes called the 'New Simplicity':

music notable for being stripped down to bare essentials. As such, it lends itself to rearrangement, and Pärt himself has made many different versions of works such as *Fratres* and *Tabula rasa*. However, this arrangement of *Pari intervallo*, originally composed for woodwinds but best-known in its transcription for organ, is by Elinor Bennett. Most of Pärt's later work is religious in inspiration, and despite its seemingly abstract title, *Pari intervallo* is no exception. It was composed while a friend was dying, and is a typically restrained meditation on a text from Paul's Epistle to the Romans: 'For if we live, we live in the Lord, and if we die, we die in the Lord.'

In 1995, Meirion Bowen, an authority on the work of **Michael Tippett**, was commissioned by the BBC to make a suite of Tippett's music. Called *Suite: The Tempest*, it was largely based on the incidental music Tippett wrote for a production of Shakespeare's play, given at the Old Vic Theatre in London, early in 1962. The suite also included other works of Tippett's, including *Dreaming*, originally the slow movement of a work for solo guitar called *The Blue Guitar* and here used as an interlude. In its original form, *Dreaming* was itself based on viola and harp motifs from Tippett's Symphony No. 4, hence the instrumentation chosen by Bowen for this arrangement. The best-known offshoot of Tippett's *The Tempest* is the *Songs for Ariel*, and certain similarities between Tippett's setting of

'Come unto these yellow sands' and the present interlude suggest that Ariel is at work here too.

**Andrew Ford's** *Rough Magic* is also related to *The Tempest*: the title is taken from a speech of the magician Prospero, near the beginning of the fifth and final act:

...graves at my command  
Have waked their sleepers, oped and let 'em forth  
By my so potent art. But this rough magic  
I here abjure...

Not, Ford hastens to explain, that he intends to abjure anything; on the contrary, the idea of 'rough magic' seemed to perfectly embody his view of the modern harp, especially in Marshall McGuire's hands. Another inspiration was the harp writing in the later works of Igor Stravinsky, to whose memory the piece is dedicated. Ford's view of the instrument is by no means as austere as Stravinsky's (represented by, say, the *Epitaphium* or the *Variations Alfred Huxley in memoriam*); Stravinsky preferred low, sombre sounds, whereas Ford immediately brings the whole instrument into play. Nevertheless, there is a certain ritual severity in the lattice of 'tolling' sounds that runs throughout the piece, outlasting the various glittering episodes that momentarily encrust them.

The youngest composer in this collection, **Carlo Giacco**, takes a somewhat gentler view of the instrument, even though the first main part of

his picturesquely entitled *The Lair of Sweet Caterpillar Blossoms* is marked *aggressivo*. Here too the chunky chords and constantly shifting rhythmic accents often recall Stravinsky, albeit an earlier Stravinsky than the one celebrated in Andrew Ford's piece.

With **Alessandro Solbiati's** *Vezelay* we return emphatically to the world of the avant-garde harp: clusters, unusual sonorities, and even a little graphic (indeterminate) notation. And this is slightly curious, because the work takes its name and inspiration from an ancient French abbey, of which the composer writes: 'Everything there was built to be, and not just represent, a way from darkness to light; the church itself seems to be drawn by light.' The piece is based on two developing 'moods' – dark and light, though this is not just a matter of high and low – and three particular tunings of the harp. The main part of the piece alternates between these moods three times, changing the tuning for each new section. Then comes a muted 'cadenza', after which the 'dark' material is taken to a glittering climax, and its 'light' counterpart offers a gentle echo.

In some respects, **Gerard Brophy's** *charM* (for the Debussian combination of flute, viola and harp) brings this disc's Italian Connection full circle, since he studied in Rome with Franco Donatoni, only a few years after the composition of *Marches*. Yet here, as in much of Brophy's

recent music, the 'Latin' influence seems not so much Mediterranean as Latin-American, and however intricate its rhythms, *charM* is essentially a dance piece. The opening section consists of four 'verses', each separated by a short refrain; then comes a sequence of alternating solos for harp and viola (the latter with the intriguing instruction 'Spank it!'), and a flute solo, at the end of which the music of the opening section starts to reassert itself. The work ends with a soft sigh (of exhaustion?).

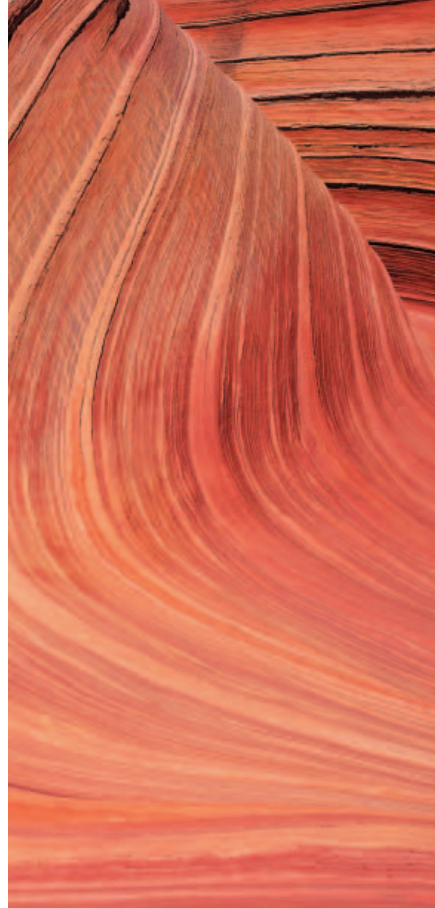
#### **Brett Allen-Bayes and Richard Toop**

#### **Production notes on the recording of Takemitsu's *Stanza II***

The composer instructs that the harp sound should be altered by three ring modulators (to create the impression of an amplified harp) with the signal then processed by an 'echo chamber'.

For this recording, we endeavoured to replicate the sound Takemitsu might have imagined given the technology available at the time of composition in the early 1970s. The signal from the harp microphones was fed into three ring modulators and, as specified by the composer, their frequencies were set at 200Hz (0 db), 554Hz (0 db) and 2216Hz (-8db). The outputs from the ring modulators, which were digital simulations of 'early' ring modulation units, were then fed to two 'authentic' reverberation devices – a Roland Space Echo (c. early 1970s) and an old Hammond spring reverberation unit.

The backing tape was provided by Editions Salabert.



## Marshall McGuire

Born in Melbourne, Marshall McGuire studied at the Victorian College of the Arts, the Paris Conservatoire and the Royal College of Music, London. His London debut recital was presented at the Purcell Room for the Park Lane Group.

He has commissioned more than 20 new works for harp, and in recognition of this received the 1997 *Sounds Australian Award* for the Most Distinguished Contribution to the Presentation of Australian Music.

Marshall McGuire has performed as soloist with the Australian Chamber Orchestra, English String Orchestra, Les Talens Lyriques, Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and the Australia Ensemble and has appeared at international festivals including Aldeburgh, Melbourne, Milan, Geneva, Brighton, Vienna, Huddersfield, Huntington and Adelaide. From 1988 to 1992, he was Principal Harpist with the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra. He has been a member of the ELISION Ensemble since 1988, and lecturer in harp at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music since 1990.

In 2003 Marshall McGuire was appointed Artistic Director of Sonic Art Ensemble, and was awarded an inaugural Creative Fellowship from the State Library of Victoria to research the works of Peggy Glanville-Hicks. He received a Churchill Fellowship in 2004 to travel to San

Francisco and New York to research Baroque performance and contemporary music ensembles.

He made his conducting debut in performances of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* with Pacific Opera in 1999. From 1996 to 2000 he created a series of chamber music concerts for the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival, the first of their type in the world. From 1999 to 2001 he was curator of the Twilight Chamber Music Series for Sydney Festival, and in 2003 he was artist-in-residence at the Bundanon Trust. He has released seven CDs, and has received three ARIA Award nominations.

Marshall McGuire is also Founding President of the New Music Network, curator of the Utzon Room Music Series at the Sydney Opera House, and Music Director of the Australian Youth Orchestra's National Music Camp 2008. He was recently appointed Executive Manager, Artistic Planning with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra.

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*Chamber of Horrors, The Lair of Sweet Caterpillar Blossoms, Rough Magic, The Arch Window and charM* were commissioned by Marshall McGuire. *Vézelay* was commissioned for Marshall McGuire by ELISION Ensemble. *Two Scenes from 'Shameful Vice'* was commissioned for Marshall McGuire by the Park Lane Group with funds provided by the London Arts Board.

Marshall McGuire would like to extend his thanks to all the composers for their brilliant creativity; to Geoff and Patricia for being the best of colleagues; to Andrew and Ralph and Bob and Allan for their unfailing good humour and professional wisdom during the recording sessions; to Huw Jones and Marie-Claire Jamet for their inspirational guidance; and to Daryl Buckley and all the ELISION gang for keeping the fire burning.

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