

# DARBAR NIGHT SERIES 3 : “The Drone”

7.30pm, Wednesday 15 May 2013

Conservatorium Theatre

The Drone, the bedrock of Indian and Western music, beginning with the Australian didgeridoo, the oldest instrument known to man, segueing into the Indian drone instrument the tanpura and an early evening raga on sitar. This introduces a celebration of string playing, with that prince of cellists, Rohan de Saram, presiding over a veritable palace of cellists. An Indian first half showcases music especially written for Rohan, balanced by an Australian second half. The raw energy of Richard Vella is calmed by the erotic meditations of Peter Schaefer. Our massed cellos create the sumptuous carpet-drone over which our musical cultures meet, while Ross Edwards cools the spirit in preparation for a gentle night ahead.

## The Drone in Entrance

Troy Allen, *didgeridoo*  
Huib Schippers, *sitar*  
Jae-Lin Schippers, *tanpura*

## 2. John MAYER (1930-2004).....*Ragamala VI* (1983)

- first performance in Australia -

Rohan de Saram, *cello*  
Yuki Flindell, *tanpura*

*Six Ragamalas* for cello and tanpura were commissioned by and written for Rohan de Saram with funds provided by the Arts Council of Great Britain. Each has a pictorial description.

*Ragamala VI* uses the notes of raga Marva. The rasa or mood of this raga is quiet, contemplative, uncomfortable, uneasy and sometimes war-like with its passionate emotions. It is a description of the sunset in India, where night approaches much faster than in northern countries. This creates a feeling of anxiety and solemn expectation.

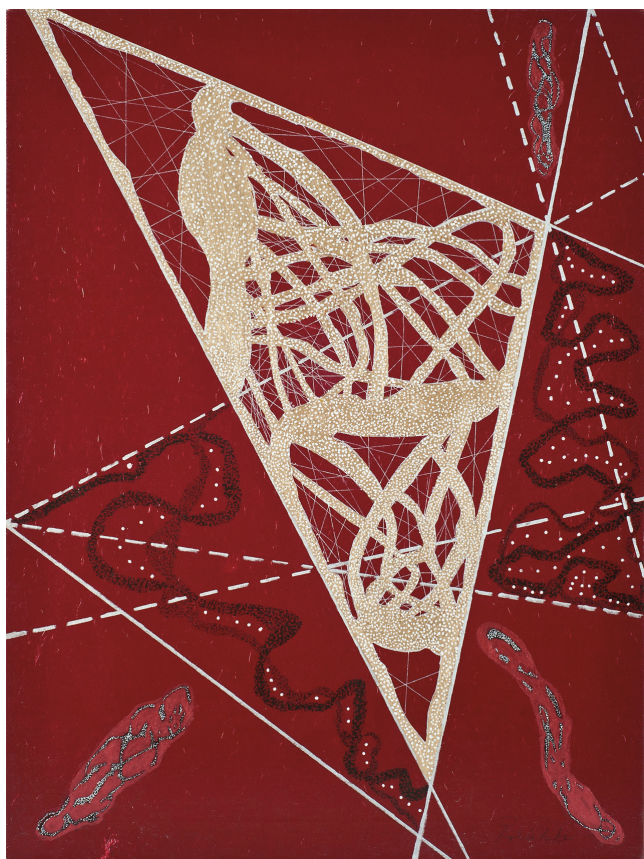
“Marva stands beneath a mango tree near to Shiva, the three-eyed lord of sleep. In her hands she holds a many-coloured discus. Her golden limbs are robed in red and richly adorned with flowers. Smiling, she praises the knights on the battlefield.”

©John Mayer 1983

## 3. Rajesh MEHTA (b.1964).....*Songlines Jewels: “energy of musicality”* (2006)

Rajesh Mehta, *hybrid trumpet ++*  
Rohan de Saram, *cello*  
Tunji Beier, *kanjira & Mrdangam*

- first performance -



This music-artwork was made in 2006, while I was a Senior Performing and Creative Arts Fellow of the American Institute of Indian Studies residing in Chennai. This intensive phase of interaction with south Indian temple musicians in this highly devotional tradition had a decisive impact on my musical vision which resulted in the creation of my company *orka-m*.

The graphical language in the painting symbolically represents the “jewels” of an Indian musical tradition that has no formal notational practice partnering contemporary musical influences from the West. However, the creation of the painting also unwittingly evoked a kinship with the unique culture of Indigenous Australians their dot paintings, and song/movement cycles. \*

The triangle is a musical architecture which represents both transformational change and a stable sanctuary. In performance, the musical composition is “song-lined” through interpreting the lines, dots and ornamental forms as rising and falling glissandi, percussive clouds, and microtonal melodies.

*Adapted from notes supplied by the composer, April 2013.*

++ Rajesh Mehta’s appearances in ENCOUNTERS:INDIA also entail the first professional appearances of his microtonal slide trumpet innovation, “the NAGA PHOENIX”, designed and constructed in Singapore. It was exhibited recently at the Musical Instruments Museum in Phoenix, Arizona, the largest museum of its kind in the world. On May 4-5, this Museum presented its Experience India weekend, launching the annual Asian American Heritage Month in the USA.

\* In January 2013, a new study was published which highlighted evidence of substantial gene flow about 4,000 years ago between Indian populations and Australia.

Dr Irina Pugach and Dr Mark Stoneking, of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Germany, joined colleagues in analysing large-scale genotyping data from Aboriginal Australians, New Guineans, Island Southeast Asians and Indians that suggest a new possibility. The authors found a common origin for populations in Australia, New Guinea and the Mamanwa (a Negrito group from the Philippines) and estimated these groups split from each other about 36,000 years ago.

The researchers say this supports the view that these groups represent the descendants of an ancient southwards migration out of Africa. They also found a substantial gene flow from India to Australia 141 generations ago, or 4230 years ago, assuming a generation span of 30 years.

See : *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*  
<http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2013/01/09/1211927110>

4. Param VIR (born 1952)..... *...beyond the reach of the world ... (2009)*

- first performance in Australia -

Rohan de Saram, *cello*  
Vanessa Tomlinson, *percussion*

This work is inspired by the writings of Kim Malthé-Bruun (1923–1945), a Danish seaman who was active in the Resistance during the Second World War. His partisan activities led to his arrest by the Nazis, who subsequently tortured him and sentenced him to death. During his incarceration Kim maintained a diary in the form of smuggled letters to his family. These texts are full of courage, hope, and compassion. But some also open a window into the grim reality of torture, a reality that stalks the world to this day.

The young man’s writings show the immense inner resources he summoned to find a way to transcend his brutal experience. The text which inspired this composition was scribbled on paper in microscopic handwriting and only discovered when freedom fighters were clearing out the prison cells after the German capitulation.

Param Vir describes his work as “a Meditation in two parts: a fast movement and then a slow one. The first relates to images of aliveness and childhood memory that Kim brought to the surface of his mind through drawings on the walls of his cell, to counter the after-effects of torture. The swift energetic lines express this exuberance and joyfulness in life as he had once known it and then expressed in his line drawings. The second quieter movement relates to the experience of transcendence, a ‘wild and soaring freedom beyond the reach of the world’, where he would no longer be capable of suffering”.

It was commissioned by the Woodend Arts Association with funding from the Scottish Arts Council and was first performed in 14th November 2009 by Rohan de Saram and his percussionist son Suren de Saram at the Aberdeen Art Gallery.

*Adapted from notes supplied by the composer*

— INTERMISSION —

5. Richard VELLA (born 1954)..... *Mirrors of Fire (1996/2013)*

For cello octet & tabla  
Rohan de Saram, *cello leader*  
*The Griffith Cello Octet*  
Dheeraj Shrestha, *tabla*

Originally commissioned by classical guitar virtuoso Tim Kain in 1996, *Mirrors of Fire* was adapted for tabla and cello ensemble in 2000 as part of a community theatre work called ‘The Palais’ in Parramatta, NSW. The adaption was based on the many parallel cultures of Parramatta, one of which is a vibrant Indian culture.

Using the technique of simultaneity where two pieces of music are heard at the same time, the tabla player is required to improvise on the same pulse as the cello ensemble. The main rhythmic focus in the work is that the cello ensemble plays expanding and contracting sequences based on an octatonic scale functioning as a quasi drone, while the table player improvises with patterns based on tabla rhythms. The adaption explores the parallel placement of a western art musical genre based on notation with an Indian one based on improvisation.

Born in Melbourne in 1954, Richard Vella has been based at the University of Newcastle since 2007 as Chair and Professor of Music at the Conservatorium of Music. Since 20082 he has also been Head of School, Creative Arts there. Vella has enjoyed a career based on composition in film, popular music and art music, music publishing, music theatre production and tertiary education. His book Musical Environments (Currency Press 2000) has been republished by Boosey & Hawkes (2003) as Sounds in Space - Sounds in Time and is used in many institutions around the world.

**6. Group improvisation..... created from sketches by Nicholas NG (born 1979)**

Group improvisation exploring the twin traditions of string playing

- David Williams, *didgeridoo*
- Ramli Ibrahim, *dancer*
- Rohan de Saram, *cello solo*
- John Rodgers & other violinists
- The Griffith Cellos
- Peter Schaefer, *sitar*
- Nicholas Ng, *erhu*
- Aneesh Pradhan, *tabla*

**7. Ross EDWARDS (born 1943).....Water Spirit Song (2011)**

- For solo cello & live water sounds
- Rohan de Saram, *cello*
- Various percussionists, *water sounds*

This short work has been extracted from Koto Dreaming, a piece of music theatre featuring the Butoh dance Yumi Umiumare which was composed for the Asian Music and Dance Festival in Sydney in 2003. The dance was accompanied by an ensemble consisting of Japanese and European instruments: koto (Satsuki Odamura), shakuhachi (Riley Lee), cor anglais (Alexandre Oguey) and cello (John Napier). Water Spirit Song, played by the cello and accompanied by the sound of a waterfall, introduced the larger work.

- THE GRIFFITH CELLISTS:
- Isabella Ambrose, Megan Crooke, Cassandra Hansen, Lily Hubbard, Becky Kim, Rira Kong, Andrew Leask, Catherine Lee, Kelly Lee, Stephanie Li, Carla Mulligan, Glorgia Ostenfeld, Daniel Smith, Nicole Schneider

\*\* These composers will be present

THE DARBAR NIGHT SERIES  
*is presented in partnership with*



**Tunji Beier** (Australia) performs improvisations and compositions drawing on various traditions that have influenced him, especially South Indian, Yoruba and Middle Eastern traditions.

He grew up in New Guinea, Nigeria and Germany and now lives in Australia. At the age of 10 he began to study African Yoruba drumming in Nigeria. At 16 he went to Bangalore to study Karnatic (South Indian) percussion with T.A.S. Mani and stayed there for three years to receive the highest mark in the state exam for percussion. For several years he has been artistic director of the Bayreuth music festival "Grenzüberschreitungen" (Border Crossings).

**Ross Edwards** (Australia) is one of Australia's best known composers. He has created a unique sound world which seeks to reconnect music with elemental forces and restore its traditional association with ritual and dance. Intensely aware of his vocation since childhood, he has largely followed his own path, allowing the music to speak for itself. His music, universal in that it is concerned with age-old mysteries surrounding humanity, is at the same time deeply connected to its roots in Australia, whose cultural diversity it celebrates, and from whose natural environment it draws inspiration, especially birdsong and the mysterious patterns and drones of insects. As a composer living and working on the Pacific Rim, he is conscious of the exciting potential of this vast region. Based in Sydney and the Blue Mountains, he is married with two adult children.

A graduate of the Universities of Adelaide and Sydney, Ross Edwards studied with Peter Sculthorpe and Richard Meale, and in Adelaide and London with Peter Maxwell Davies. His compositions, which are performed worldwide, include five symphonies, concertos, choral, chamber and vocal music, children's music, film scores, a chamber opera and music for dance. Works designed for the concert hall sometimes require special lighting, movement, costume and visual accompaniment – notable examples are his Fourth Symphony, *Star Chant*, premiered by the Adelaide Symphony at the 2002 Adelaide Festival; the Oboe Concerto *Bird Spirit Dreaming*, which Diana Doherty premiered with the Sydney Symphony and Lorin Maazel, subsequently performing it with many other orchestras including the New York Philharmonic; and *The Heart of Night*, for shakuhachi and orchestra, composed especially for shakuhachi Grand Master Riley Lee and the Melbourne Symphony. Recently completed commissions include *Sacred Kingfisher Psalms* for The Song Company, *Ars Nova* Copenhagen and the Edinburgh Festival; a Piano Sonata for Bernadette Harvey; *Full Moon Dances*, a saxophone concerto for Amy Dickson and the Sydney Symphony and the Australian symphony orchestras; *Five Senses*, a song cycle to poems of Judith Wright and *The Laughing Moon* for the New Sydney Wind Quintet. He is currently working on a ballet score for Stanton Welch and the Houston Ballet and a string quartet for the Kelemen Kvartett commissioned by Kim Williams for *Musica Viva Australia*.

**Rohan de Saram** (UK) is well known both for his advocacy of contemporary music and for his nearly three decades (1977-2005) with that bastion for new music, the Arditti Quartet. While Rohan has, since the 1960s, been active in performing contemporary music, he has hardly neglected more traditional fare: his repertoire, from Baroque to present day, is enormous. More than 40 works have been dedicated to him, most of these he has premiered. Among the many works that have been dedicated to him is Berio's *Sequenza XIV*, written in 2002, which he premiered and recorded for Mode Records, New York.

As a member of the Arditti Quartet, Rohan made well over 30 recordings, and has made many other recordings as a soloist and freelance musician. During his Arditti Quartet years he also maintained a busy schedule of solo and chamber music concerts.

Born in Sheffield in 1939 to Sri Lankan parents, Rohan de Saram showed extraordinary promise as a cellist from early childhood. From the age of 11, he studied with Gaspar Cassadó in Italy. With the *Guilhermina Suggia Prize* awarded at the age of sixteen, he was able to study with Pablo Casals, who said of him, "There are few of his generation that have such gifts".

In 1960, the 21-year-old Rohan made his North American debut at Carnegie Hall, playing Khachaturian's Cello Concerto with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, at the invitation of Dimitri Mitropoulos. He has played with many of the other major orchestras of the world, in UK, Europe, Canada, USA, Australia and in the former USSR.

Since leaving the Arditti Quartet in 2005, Rohan has remained active both as a concert performer and teacher. Formerly, he taught at the Trinity College of Music in London and has regularly taught and performed at the Darmstadt Summer School; New Music Festival in Rueschlikon, Switzerland; and in major venues across Europe, the Americas, and Asia.



**Ramli Ibrahim** (Kuala Lumpur) is a household name in his native Malaysia, a cultural icon who has performed on international stages for more than three decades. Founder and Artistic Director of the Sutra Dance Theatre, and current Chair of the Sutra Foundation, Ramli has choreographed stunning works and nurtured some of the brightest dance talents in Malaysia. In recent years he has been instrumental in transforming the dance scenario in that country by boldly charting new paths and single-handedly establishing Odissi as a widely appreciated dance form.

Also accomplished in ballet, modern, and Indian classical dance, Ramli has steered a highly successful International Odissi Festival, *Stirring Odissi '08*, in Kuala Lumpur; led *Sutra* at Carnegie Hall, New York '08 and was featured at the International Dance Festival presented by ICCR (Indian Council for Cultural Relations) in New Delhi, 2010.

Ramli is well known to a generation of Australian dance aficionados for his part in the early years of Graeme Murphy's stewardship of the Sydney Dance Company (1977-1982). Upon returning to Malaysia in 1983, he formed the Sutra Dance Theatre, widely regarded as the premier dance company in Malaysia today. In February 2013, for his services to dance in his country, Ramli was conferred the title 'Datuk' (equivalent of a British knighthood) by the King of Malaysia.

**Rajesh Mehta** (Singapore) is an internationally renowned hybrid trumpet player, educator, engineer and artist. He is also the founder and director of ORKA-M Pty. Ltd. Singapore.

Born in Calcutta in 1964, and raised in New Jersey, Rajesh began trumpet studies at the age of 10. In the early 1980s, he became an Engineering student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), but by then music had already gained a strong grip on him. In parallel, he took courses in the History of Ideas at the University of California, Berkeley. His mentors in music include MIT-based jazz trumpeter /bandleader Mark Harvey, the iconoclastic saxophonist/composer Anthony Braxton, and celebrated Carnatic vocalist Aruna Sairam.

In 1991 Rajesh was invited to Switzerland for his first professional music tour. The rest, as he says, is history; this tour launched an international professional career, playing, recording, composing, and producing music. From his initial base in Amsterdam, Rajesh made extensive tours with modern dance companies in France and musical projects in unusual acoustical spaces in the Czech Republic. This was followed by a period in Berlin (1998-2005) with awards leading him to Cork and Chennai and then a move with his family to Mumbai in 2006, and finally to Singapore in 2009.

Today, Rajesh performs principally on 'the hybrid trumpet'. This extended instrument, his own invention, has opened up dramatic new percussive and sonic possibilities. He also performs on his new microtonal slide-trumpet innovation, the ORKA-M naga phoenix which has an additional trombone-like slide for bending notes and which he employs in collaborations involving microtonal musics such as Carnatic music. His inter cultural music making ensembles include Trio ORKA-M, with Rohan de Saram, and others.

With a view towards inter-disciplinary and inter-cultural collaboration, Rajesh has worked on a series of what he called 'imaginational maps' and the Australian Aboriginal-Indian inspired paintings 'songlines' jewels' which make use of musical notations as an art form.

In 2005, his ongoing music-architecture-film project *sounding buildings* had its live world premiere at the Glucksman Modern Art Gallery in Cork, where he transformed the entire building into a resonant instrument, using live music, projected still and moving images.

All Rajesh's ideas are inspired by architecture, technology, dance, film and the visual arts and the three primary musical streams that have instilled in him his musical voice- jazz, contemporary composed music and Carnatic music.

**Aneesh Pradhan** (India) is one of the leading members of the younger generation of tabla players whose skill, artistry and scholarship show promise of maturing into mastery. A disciple of Pandit Nikhil Ghosh, Aneesh has inherited from his guru a considerable repertoire of traditional tabla solo compositions from different styles: Delhi, Ajrada, Lucknow, Farrukhabad and Punjab gharanas.

Greatly appreciated by both connoisseurs and lay listeners as a soloist and accompanist, Aneesh Pradhan is the recipient of several major awards. A popular performer at many prestigious concerts and festivals throughout India, he has travelled widely and performed overseas at major events. He has recorded widely for national and international record labels, accompanying a host of vocalists and instrumentalists. His first tabla solo album *Tabla: the solo tradition* was recorded in concert in 1997 and released in 2004, was followed by *Tabla solo: a continuing tradition*, a studio recording made in 2006.

Apart from his work with classical Indian music, Aneesh Pradhan is also a frequent participant in cross-cultural musical collaborations as both performer and composer. Drawn equally towards melody and rhythm, Aneesh's compositions range from pieces composed for tabla solo to melodic and text-based compositions that are based on traditional vocal and instrumental forms of North Indian classical music. Through his compositions for film, television, theatre and dance projects, he is keen to expand the boundaries of musical genres in experimenting with sound and music.

Aneesh has been a keen researcher of trends in performance, music education and patronage that unfolded in the late 19th and early 20th century, a period that continues to fascinate him. He writes frequently on music for newspapers, journals and other publications in India and elsewhere and is also deeply involved in creating and developing educational material related to Indian music.

Aneesh is the Director of Underscore Records Pvt. Ltd, an independent online record label that he established with vocalist Shubha Mudgal. With Shubha, he also co-curates an international music festival called Baajaa Gaajaa: Music from 21st Century India.

**John Rodgers** (Australia) is a Brisbane-based Australian composer, improviser, violinist, pianist and guitarist.

Rodgers had an early background in classical music. He was the leader of the Australian Youth Orchestra, the Queensland Theatre Orchestra, and the Hunter Orchestra. With these and other orchestras, he toured Europe and Asia, often appearing as a soloist on violin. He graduated with a Bachelor of Music from the Queensland Conservatorium of Music in 1984.

Rodgers chose not to follow the path that led to a career in classical music, instead forming controversial sex-and-death cult rock band Madam Bones Brothel with Pearly Black and later playing improvised music in ensembles such as The John Rodgers Trio and Artisan's Workshop.

Rodgers is a founding member of the Australian Art Orchestra and was its Associate Artistic Director in 2005. He has worked with the New York performance artist Penny Arcade (Vienna Festival 1997), the Robyn Archer band and many of Australia's leading musicians and artists. He has performed solo concerts in the Adelaide Festival and the Melbourne Summer Music Festival.

Rodgers is highly regarded for his creative genius as a composer and has produced many works in fields including music theatre and new media.

**Peter Schaefer** has studied sitar in India, USA and Australia, with Krishna Chakravarty (disciple of Ravi Shankar); sarode master the late Ali Akbar Khan; his disciple the late Ashok Roy, and sitarist the late Dr Chandrakant Sardeshmukh (disciple of Ravi Shankar) and composition with Peter Sculthorpe. His music has been performed, recorded and broadcast in Australia and overseas both by his ensemble and such classical performers as the Seymour Group; Petra, Gagliano and Elektra String Quartets; and State Symphony Orchestras.

He presently plays a hemen sitar, in performance using various signal processing and synthesizer modules to produce a wide timbral range from pure acoustic sitar, to mixing with electronic effects and midi-triggered timbres for extended 'horn' sustain ... this is appropriate to the stylistic range of his performance style, which mirrors a broad experience of eastern and western musics, from traditional North Indian to contemporary/ jazz/world music styles, and incorporating influences from Ravi Shankar to John McLaughlin to Jan Garbarek, among many others.

**Dheeraj Shrestha** is an internationally acclaimed tabla percussionist who is recognized as the foremost Nepalese born tabla percussionist in Australia. An irrepressible creativity, tremendous clarity and exciting rhythmic improvisation are his stylistic hallmarks and this has established him, worldwide, as one of the finest exponents of tabla. His easy flowing style of playing tabla, sets him apart from other players of international renown. Dheeraj has been actively touring around the world every year. He is now teaching at the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University. Dheeraj is also a core member of the Dya Singh World Music Group.





# DARBAR NIGHT SERIES

The DARBAR headline series of evening concert focuses on the constituent parts of music - rhythm, melody, texture - with illustrations from Western and Indian traditions, as well as new fusions of the two. Special attention is directed towards Western (and particularly Australian) composers who have drawn inspiration from Indian Music, and vice versa. The series culminates with two concerts that celebrate the essence of all music tradition. In THE ENSEMBLE we celebrate the centuries-old tradition of communities making sound and music together. In THE GURU, we celebrate the leaders or gurus who by their stature and achievement stand as models for future generations of creators/composers and practitioners/performers.

## **7.30pm, Monday 13 May: THE DRUM**

Drumming from India, California and Australia will pulsate through the opening DARBAR concert, as Aneesh Pradhan demonstrates the poise and virtuosity of a North Indian tabla solo, while Queensland artists Tunji Beijer represents the South. Special tribute will be paid to Terry Riley, the American guru-composer who drew our ears and imaginations to the intricate glories of Indian music. Iconic works will be introduced by the composer himself in a video conversation, and then performed by Topology and every percussionist at the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University.

## **7.30pm, Tuesday 14 May: THE VOICE**

Glorious melodies from several traditions and eras soar through the second DARBAR concert, with soprano superstar Patricia Rozario joined by Indian dhrupad singer Ritwik Sanyal, khyal star Shubha Mudgal, and much loved Brisbane singers Heather Lee and Margaret Schindler.

## **7.30pm, Wednesday 15 May: THE DRONE**

That 'prince of the cello' Rohan de Saram is the central figure of the third DARBAR concert, as he leads the sumptuous sound of a cello orchestra. Our 'carpet of cellos' will perform music from India, London and Australia, much of it especially written for Rohan. Into this we add a tanpura, a sitar, a dancer and from Australia the didgeridoo, the oldest known drone in the history of sound.

## **7.30pm, Thursday 16 May: THE ENSEMBLE**

Two leading ensembles representing the twin traditions of Indian music present the fourth DARBAR concert. From the north (Hindustani) come the khyal singer Shubha Mudgal and her ensemble, and from the south (Carnatic) come the venerable Guru Kaaraikkudi Mani and his musicians. In separate halves of this historic evening, they represent both traditions at their most magnificent, with breath-taking spontaneous improvisations intersecting with moments of profound introspection.

## **7.30pm, Friday 17 May: THE GURU**

The final DARBAR concert celebrates our 'guru', the Australian composer Peggy Glanville-Hicks in her centenary year (she was born in Melbourne in 1912 and died in Sydney in 1990). In a male-dominated composing world, Peggy styled herself "PGH" and her music encompassed the traditions of ancient Greece and India, as well as that of post-war New York City. With slides and film and an array of live performances, including several world premieres, two close friends from her final years in Sydney, guest composer Ross Edwards and artistic director Vincent Plush share their repertoire of "PGH-stories" and introduce a sampling of the extraordinary breadth of her music.

Presented in partnerships with the Queensland Performing Arts Centre, the DARBAR series brings together the twin traditions of India, as well as its diaspora on both sides of the Pacific.

**ENCOUNTERS: INDIA**

13 - 19 May, South Bank Brisbane  
[encountersfestival.com.au](http://encountersfestival.com.au)

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