

This is Yehudi Menuhin speaking  
for the Album No. 2 that  
Monsieur Picard is bringing out

Reçu de M. Picard  
(Album International)  
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It is good to hear the voices of distant children, the voices of the world's future, of promise and fulfilment if, indeed, owing to our stupidity, fear and cupidity they are not to be the silenced voices of the murdered. It is good to hear the sounds of the past, of civilizations steeped in that slow, primeval cauldron of time, to hear music which speaks to us of ancient societies, the carriers of our destiny to which we owe our very existence and which inevitably stir within us the eternal echoes of longing, ecstasy, mystery and reverence which have always attended the human condition.

What is this album if not a minute repository of human imagination, fantasy and beauty, a fragment of that collective memory we each embody; individual expressions of realities and dreams and nightmares; of prayers which speak to us of eternal hope and of anguish, as of faith and of desperation; of love and anti-love. The appeal of this album, the second in a distinguished series and the first to include an oral contribution, resides in its dual commitment to beauty and to compassion. Together these give meaning and purpose to a future which, bereft of beauty and compassion, can only hold terror. You will hear the various voices of love and mirth, of play and abandon, which however unaccustomed and strange their idiom, touch us to the core, for theirs is a common, a fundamental experience which all of life shares, including life not human.

Perhaps in a future album the musical voices of whale, lark, monkey and with the new audio-visual records, perhaps also the gesture and dance of the lyre bird, the bee, the play of the dolphin, perhaps these might be included as well. For, what is still lacking in our human ethos is the conception of sharing life with our cohabitants on this planet. We still think too readily of our own life as separate, unique and strictly competitive, whereas the experience of the ages should have concurrently strengthened and multiplied human links with this our life-giving earth and all its creatures and plants.



But instead our advance in knowledge and technology has increased our arrogance, our exclusivity, our greed, our self-deception of being the one and only, the supreme in time and place, owing nothing to past, present or future. Even the most primitive civilizations established dimensions for infinity, eternity and continuity. Every action was judged in the light of import, meaning and symbol far removed from the actual and apparent. Today we call this ignorant superstition and no doubt superstition did play a large part in the interpretation of actions. But today, when our fears have invaded our own very hearts, when from having been projected on to an eternal screen we, the shadow players, have become possessed of these very fears; when psychiatry and drugs cannot divest nor exorcise us of ourselves, as it were, is it not time to cultivate anew, perhaps in a more enlightened and less superstitious way, that humility and dedication born of a sense of belonging; belonging to the African child whose voice you will hear on this recording, to the Indian mystic; belonging to the longer and the greater than what is only here, now and us.

It is thus with the feeling of communion that I speak to each one of you who have bought this album and are listening to my voice, to that part of you which is making an offering of thought, time and money; that I speak to you with a longing to hear your own reply, your own voice in answer to mine. As a musician I am accustomed to generating oral vibrations which are transformed into feelings, thoughts and reactions, which may in their turn radiate and irradiate humanity with that fragment of infinity we all carry within us. Perhaps I may receive the exceptional personal response, a letter from one of you, but in the main an artist listens for that faint echo in the human soul and in the soul of humanity by which he learns that his message of faith, hope and charity, as of wisdom and humility, is kept ringing in humanity's ears.



Now, may I introduce my fellow-artists on this disc; two of the world's greatest musicians: Ravi Shankar, plucking with such bewildering virtuosity the many strings of his sitar, and Alla Rakha, whose fingers coax the myriad unfathomable rhythms of creation from his tablas. By nature, their music is traditional, that is, classical, therefore highly disciplined, yet this music of India is supremely improvisational. Unlike our music which is a human construction in imitation of nature, this music of India conveys the sensation of being cradled in the infinite sea, subject to the interplay of myriad random waves, each unique, unpredictable and improvised, if you wish, yet the total motion of which is governed by inexorable law. The effects of Indian classical performance are nothing if not gradual. When this music is played in the most authentic way, that is to an Indian audience in India, the notes of the raga, that is of the particular scale chosen, one out of many hundreds, emerge gradually and singly, are literally each one born, take shape out of the generating process of tuning. This tuning is of a rigour and precision unknown to western music for it is strictly non-tempered, the intervals of fifth, fourth and octave remaining absolutely true. Their ears are not as with us, attuned to compromise.

Each raga corresponds to a given moment of the day or night, the season, a special occasion or a special human condition. In the construction of an Indian raga the first section is totally without rhythm, as we remember that in the beginning there was only the Word intoned out of chaos. Then again, after the notes of the raga have been fully exposed, explained, commented upon, again very gradually, the stirrings of rhythmic pulse are almost subconsciously perceived. Gradually these elements crystallize into a fully-fledged musical work, which can extend for hours in its native land, in which rhythm and melody are shared in both instruments, for even the percussive tabla is melodic. However, the sitar generally maintains its initiative in propounding melody and even in spurring the rhythm onwards. The degree of cross-rhythm complexity defies our instant intellectual grasp and raises the incredible mathematics of an Indian



performance to an intuitive level of computation which we in the West have never known. Similarly, the convolutions and involutions of melodic contour revel in a more than Baroque ornamentation, which is so characteristic of Indian representation and design.

The twists and expressions of the human body are infinite. An Indian melody takes infinite sensual delight in embellishment, explanation and revelation. Here it is pertinent to speak of its utter child-like innocence. The young boy touching a woman; the child holding and fondling a stone. Everything happens for the first time in wonder, ecstasy and dedication. Thus the untrained voices of children on the other side of this record are not unrelated to the highly evolved, incredibly complex and refined music of India. They too are a reminder of that constant process of formation, a process which forms ephemeral clouds and continuous yet almost equally ephemeral life. But that process which is seared into the very substance, the very destiny of the inorganic.

I believe that life's greatest contest and challenge is not with or from other life but is with the inorganic; it is the chemistry of winds, waters and sands which must yield to all of life and not destroy it.