

Zia Mohiuddin Dagar & Pandit Taranath

Live in Stockholm 1969

Country & Eastern (63 mins)

★★★★★

A masterclass from two greats



The *rudra veena* (or *bin*) player Zia Mohiuddin Dagar came from one of the oldest musical lineages in India, a family who had been under the patronage of the court at Udaipur until Independence. Zia Mohiuddin and his brother Zia Fariduddin are credited with bringing an austere *dhruvapad* style to a wider audience, not least via their extensive teaching and performances in the West. Pandit Taranath occupies a similar place in India's musical history, being a prolific teacher and one of the most important exponents of *tabla* and *pakhavaj* (barrel-shaped drum) playing of the mid-20th century.

It was on a return trip from the US that this recording was made, during a stopover in Sweden. The music heard here is not for those looking for fireworks: the virtuosity lies in its treatment of *raga* and *tala*, and especially the considered exposition of the initial *alap* section. Listening from beginning to end unveils an inexorable internal logic, culminating in the powerful entry of the *pakhavaj* at the start of the composition proper – the *gat* section in 'Raga Chandrakans'.
MARIA LORD

TRACK TO TRY *Alap*

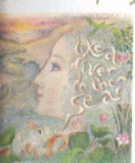
Jahnavi Harrison

Like a River to the Sea

Anthology (68 mins)

★★★★★

It's kirtans for you



Jahnavi Harrison grew up at Bhaktivedanta Manor in Hertfordshire, the UK's largest Hare Krishna temple, and her blend of acoustic guitar, violin, *tabla* and harmonium with religious chants displays plenty of influences from the movement she was raised in. This devotional music is perfectly pleasant, but somewhat unsurprising. Tracks are nothing and uncluttered, with Harrison's violin weaving in between Celtic and Karnatic strains as a congregation joins in for the famous strains of 'Hare Rama' and 'Hare Krishna'. It is to Harrison's credit that the album retains the feel of communal worship that is the backbone of *kirtan*

(call-and-response devotional chanting) – this music will be more readily appreciated as a means of contemplating the divine than as a particularly innovative arrangement.

The folksy title-track and the haunting 'Céili in Braj! (Hari Haraye)' are the most interesting pieces on the album, while the rest rely heavily on the *bansuri* (flute) and the immersive quality of *kirtan* to carry them – with the exception of the choral 'Mayapur Dawn (Gaurahari)', that is. The depth of feeling, sincerity and love that come through cannot be doubted, however, and it is in this that the album succeeds.

AMARDEEP DHILLON

TRACK TO TRY *Céili in Braj! (Hari Haraye)*

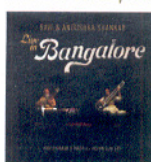
Ravi & Anoushka Shankar

Live in Bangalore

East Meets West (2 CDs, 105 mins; DVD, 146 mins)

★★★★★

Ravi's last farewell



Performing in Bangalore in February 2012 (around ten months before his death) Ravi

Shankar is on top form here, alongside his daughter Anoushka and an impressive array of accompanying musicians. His joy is evident and unfettered, notwithstanding the fact he could no longer sit in the traditional crossed-legged position on the floor for what turned out to be his swansong in the country of his birth. The first item, 'Raga Yaman Kalyan' is played in the *dhruvapad* (ancient classical vocal) style and it immediately sets the scene, reminding us why Ravi's *sitar* took the world by storm in those heady 1960s: with no compromise on the pure classical element, yet with maximum accessibility. He goes on to one of his own inventions, the enormously popular 'Raga Tilak Shyam' and he concludes with a *ragamala* (or 'garland of ragas') starting with 'Raga Khamaj' which segues into a medley of other ragas, folk tunes and favourite airs. For this final piece, Ravi explains that both he and Anoushka have placed a small piece of cloth on the bridge of their sitars to produce a more percussive effect, akin to a staccato.

While Indian classical music concerts usually make very poor-quality visual material, the expertly made accompanying DVD offers some truly unmissable visual moments.

JAMELA SIDDIQI

TRACK TO TRY *Raga Yaman Kalyan*



TOP OF THE WORLD
TRACK 10

Yuan Deng

The Mountain and the River

Felmay (50 mins)

★★★★★

The Chinese zither finds a home from home: in Italy



The Mountain and the River is the debut recording by Yuan Deng, an Italy-based

female virtuoso of the *guzheng* (21-string zither). This instrument has its origins in ancient China and has gradually evolved in its construction and technical range to become one of the primary solo instruments in Chinese traditional music. In spite of the instrument's antiquity, the majority of the pieces on this recording were composed or arranged in the 20th century, albeit based on themes derived from older repertoire. The sources of these arrangements are diverse, drawing from minority dance music, fisherman's songs and Tibetan folk, as well as more canonical Chinese string and wind music. The variety of intricate techniques and ornamentations available to the

performer beautifully serve the highly impressionistic nature of the material. One of the album's particular strengths is the presence of pieces originally composed for other instruments. 'High Mountains and Flowing Water' and 'Heroic Sisters on the Prairie' are taken respectively from the repertoire of the *guqin* (seven-string zither) and *pipa* (lute). This allows Yuan Deng the opportunity to show off the flexibility and range her instrument offers, from soft, aqueous pitch-bends to piercing tremolos. Yuan Deng's playing has an exuberance, maintains dynamism across this solo recording, and showcases a simultaneous delicacy and opulence to the *guzheng*. This recording serves as an impeccable introduction to this instrument and the unique sound-world it occupies.

CHARLIE CAWOOD

TRACK TO TRY *Dance of the Yao People*