

celestial harmonies

aurora
michael atherton &
james ashley franklin
celestial harmonies 13236-2
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the artists

As a performer, composer and educator, Michael Atherton has made a sustained contribution to Australian music over many years. One of his outstanding characteristics is that his creative output is not limited to a single genre or style.

He was Founding Head of The School of Contemporary Arts, and in 2003 took a secondment as Director of Research in the College of Arts, Education and Social Sciences at the University of Western Sydney. His creative work has been extensive in music, music theatre, artistic direction and touring.

Also active in the field of higher education is composer and *shakuhachi* Master (*shihan*), James Ashley Franklin, with whom Atherton collaborates on this and their previous recording *ABUNDANCE* (13192-2). From 1994 to 2003, Franklin was Lecturer and subsequently Senior Lecturer in Music Technology at the University of Western Sydney.

Franklin started playing piano at the age of nine. Later, he studied Western art music together with ethnomusicology at the University of Sydney, and trained as a composer.

He has developed a musical career bridging a wide range of styles, from classical Western music to electronic, and to traditional and modern music for the *shakuhachi* winning numerous awards in Australia and overseas.

the project

The music of *AURORA* is, in a number of respects, a piece of sonic research, an experiment, the outcomes of which are tested in sound. One aspect of the experiment is that of space and spatiality. Apart from the usual technical process whereby instruments recorded in a relatively lifeless studio are artificially placed in a reverberant space, an attempt has here been made to explore the placement of sounds in somewhat unusual spaces.

In addition to pieces such as *Blue Globe Saltarello*, which use a relatively conventional approach to panoramic placement of the instruments, we find *At the Rising of the Dawn*, in which the listener is presented with the instruments from a possibly unfamiliar position: that of the performer. *Caverns* and *Again the Stars* are, at one level, spatial fantasies. Within the framework of the stereo recording medium, these pieces construct spaces by analogy with their sound sources. The ruined piano, which forms a major textural layer of *Caverns*, becomes a space through which the *shakuhachi* travels.

The music of *AURORA* is also an experiment in cultural interaction. Two of the instruments employed, the *shakuhachi* and *koto*, derive from traditional Japanese musical culture. They interact here with instruments from western cultures: piano (albeit in a ruined state), guitars, marimba, double bass.

In summary and as a totality, *Celestial Harmonies* offer the results of these researches in sound, in their various facets, as an enrichment of the source traditions on which Atherton and Franklin have drawn—Eastern and Western.

