

Peter Hope

composer & arranger

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Fortunately the arranging work soon built up and over the following years Peter worked extensively for Dutch TV. German radio, and also for Charles (Chuck) Gerhardt, the conductor who made many productions in this country for Readers Digest, often using large orchestras at a time when record companies were making do with smaller ensembles. In 1979 the Dutch record company Phillips asked him to arrange An Album of Tosti Songs for Jose Carreras, which was recorded with the English Chamber Orchestra under Eduardo M, ller. An Album of Neopolitan Songs, also with Carreras and the ECO, followed in the following year. So commercially successful were these that many albums have ensued over the last thirty years, noteworthy amongst these being Sacred Songs (for Jessye Norman and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra under Sir Alexander Gibson), The Spirit of Christmas (Christmas carols recorded by the John Alldis Choir and the London Symphony Orchestra under Sir Colin Davis, but originally intended for the Hollywood Bowl, and indeed subsequently performed with the Boston Symphony Orchestra), collections for Dennis O'Neill and Stuart Burrows (both these being oshoots from television programmes for which Peter was the main arranger), and orchestrations for Dame Kiri te Kanawa. Although Peter has not himself composed music for feature lms, other composers have relied on his consummate facility for scoring – these orchestrations include John Williams' score for Raiders of the Lost Ark and James Horner's score for Willow.

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Spanish group Meccano, whose star Nacho Cano has been responsible for yet more Hope arrangements (or rather compositions). On tunes provided by Nacho Cano Peter produced two large-scale scores. One for the wedding of the Crown Prince of Spain (2004) performed by the Orquesta Sinfonica de Madrid and one for the Spanish 2012 Olympic Bid recorded in this country at the Abbey Road studios in 2003. Despite his involvement with the commercial side of music, Peter Hope's real love has always been with more serious music, and he gave considerable help to his fellow composers as Chairman in 1969 and co-Chairman (with Anthony Hedges) in 1971 of the Composer's Guild of Great Britain. The impetus again came from Ernest Tomlinson, who wanted the Guild to make itself more professional and tighten up its admission procedures, and suggested a composer with commercial talents for that reason. Since 2000, when he became seventy, Peter Hope has concentrated more on his first love, original composition. Although the works he has produced in the last few years are more serious than his earlier light music, they are still in a readily accessible idiom, with great melodic charm, immaculate and grateful writing for the instruments, imaginative orchestration, and often complex but beguiling rhythmic tricks. Although the harmony breaks no ranks with tradition (he disparagingly refers to his works as using "the three chord trick") it is employed in a memorable and striking way. The influence of modern popular music is to be heard in the Bramall Hall Dances, (written for performance in a medieval/Elizabethan manor house near his home town of Stockport), the influence of blues and Latin American music in both the Concertino for bassoon harp and string orchestra and the Concerto for recorder harp and string orchestra, and the influence of Dowland and the Elizabethan lute composers in the delicious song cycle A Herrick Garland composed for and frequently performed by the countertenor James Bowman. Since 2000 most of the early Light Music works have been recorded thanks to the work of Philip Lane and the conductor Gavin Sutherland and both the Bassoon Concertino and the Recorder Concerto have been recently issued on C.D. Most of the chamber music will shortly be released on disc to celebrate his birthday this year.

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Peter Hope was born at 15 Cashmere Road, Edgeley, Stockport in 1930. His father and aunt (father's sister) owned a ladies and children's outters shop, trading under the name of "Clarke's", in Castle Street, the main shopping area of the district, which had been started by their mother. Castle Street was then a lively and diverse secondary shopping area of the town, hard by the station. Sadly today it is run down, with tattoo parlours, discount furniture shops and many 'to let' signs, a situation exacerbated by the pedestrianisation of the road and the proximity of a booming Morrisons supermaket. The family shop itself was demolished to make way for the roundabout by the Armoury.

Peter's father died when he was still young, in 1935, and his mother had of necessity to take over his place in the shop, which she continued to run in partnership with her sister-in-law. Peter's mother was born in Toronto, Canada, and had come to England when she was sixteen to live with her mother and stepfather in Shaw Heath, Stockport. After her husband's early death she eventually took up with David Neave, a car mechanic by profession, but when the Stockport clothing business was sold in the mid 1950s they moved to Appleby, in Westmorland. In the early 1970s they sold up again and moved south to Wareham in Dorset, not too far from Peter's present home. This was Peter's happy introduction to the area where he now lives, and it was his inheritance from his mother that rst bought Peter and his wife Pamela a cottage in Dorset, which allowed him the peace and quiet to compose away from his busy schedule in London.

When Peter was growing up in Stockport in the 1930s, there was no piano in the house and his parents were not musical, but the young boy spent many hours in the local cinemas (there were two ea-palaces in Castle Street, the Alexandra and the Edgeley), whiling away the time before his mother came home from the shop, and so movie scores were an early inuence. His rst school was the local Edgeley Park Primary School, but at the age of seven he entered Cheadle Hulme School (then known as Warehousemen and Clerks') as a day boy, as had been his father's wish. A later entrant to the same school was the composer Gordon Crosse, whose parents also lived in Stockport. Music entered Peter's life in a big way only when, at the age of thirteen, he heard, and was transxed by, Schubert's Unnished Symphony, played by the teacher Miss Young (he's never forgotten her name) on a wind-up gramophone. In his enthusiasm he asked for piano lessons, and was able to practise on an old upright at his step-grandfather's house in Shaw Heath. One of the school's two peripatic piano teachers at the time, who gave him his rst lessons, was the celebrated Dora Gilson, who was on the sta of the Royal Manchester College of Music. He recalls her now as being an inspirational personality, who impressed him as much by her unconventional appearance (tall and elegant with a grand cloak, which she used to swirl around) as by her strong personality and musicality. He completed all the Associated Board piano exams by the time he reached the sixth form, and his gift for improvising at the piano led him to start composing. He remembers that his rst piece was performed in a school concert (very crude, he now says, mainly tonic/dominant in C Major). When he was in the sixth form he composed a "sort of piano concerto – a crib of Rachmaninov 2 and the Warsaw Concerto" and played this with the school orchestra. He won a County Scholarship on the basis of his examination results and, following in the footsteps of three older cousins, entered Manchester University. There he started on the three year Joint Course, run by the Department with the Royal Manchester College of Music. The University's full time music sta consisted of the professor, Humphrey Procter-Gregg, and Maurice Aitchison, a greatly gifted pianist, and there were only six students in Peter's year reading music. Of his contemporaries one of the most gifted was the Rossendale born Philip Lord, who later did doctoral research at Cambridge, where he was in The Footlights, became a Lecturer in Music at Aberdeen and Sheeld Universities, and was becoming known for his compositions before his early death in 1969.

Peter was much in demand for writing incidental music for University Drama productions, and his graduation work was a Quartet for ute and string trio, the whereabouts of which is now unknown. He was awarded a fourth year composition scholarship to study under Procter-Gregg, and deferred his air force service in order to take it up. In this year (1952) both Peter Maxwell Davies and Elgar Howarth joined the Department, and Peter was encouraged to start a Trumpet Concerto for Elgar Howarth, which subsequently received several performances including a broadcast by the HallÈ principal trumpet William Lang with the BBC Northern Orchestra. Another work written at this period

was a Quartet for ute oboe clarinet and bassoon, as well as a continuing profusion of incidental music.

On leaving the University in 1953 he was unexpectedly turned down for military service, and through the good offices of Ernest Tomlinson, a former student of Procter-Gregg at the University, who had effected the introduction, obtained work as a copyist at Mills Music in Great Pulteney Street (and later Denmark Street – tin-pan alley), London. These were the days before photocopiers, and so multiple instrumental parts all had to be written out by hand. The big name in Mills Music at that time was LeRoy Anderson, and Peter, during his first year with the firm, copied out hundreds of orchestral parts of his works. The Mills arranging department consisted of Ernest (as full time arranger), Pam Mellers (who later became the wife of Ernest's brother Fred), and Peter. When Ernest Tomlinson left Mills to pursue his aim of becoming a full-time composer (the impetus being a BBC commission for his operetta *Cinderella*), Peter left too (in 1954), as the prospect of preparing endless rescorings of LeRoy Anderson potboilers was not an appealing one.

Lady Luck then played a part in his career, in that the BBC wanted new arrangers for their Concert Orchestra, and set up two sessions with a section of the orchestra to test out applicants. Peter, again through the suggestion of Ernest Tomlinson, was, with others, asked to submit two arrangements for the orchestra to play through, and he submitted *Flamingo* and one other (Peter cannot now recall which!) to the producer Charles Beardsall. These found favour with both orchestra and producer, and resulted in the commission of a few more arrangements for the Concert Orchestra, performed under Vilem Tausky. There then ensued a more formal agreement whereby he was retained on a yearly basis to produce a certain number of arrangements for the orchestra. As often as not these were, in his own words, "ashy openers" for pre-recorded broadcasts, and included several which have now become well-known – *Mexican Hat Dance*, *Marching Through Georgia*, *The Camptown Races*, and *La Cucharacha*. Arrangements these may have been, but Peter give full reign to his imagination in their preparation and scoring, and they can really be regarded as original compositions even if the thematic material was not his own. The works were published by the London publisher Josef Weinberger, who specialised in light music (indeed still do – they publish *Yanomamo* and other highly successful musicals by the Blackburn schoolteachers Pete Rose and Anne Conlon), and through the extensive connections of Joe Cohen the works went into the repertoire of light orchestras nationwide (at a time when such orchestras still existed). Indeed it was usually Joe Cohen who suggested the material that Peter might arrange, and it was his idea that Peter should write an original work – the *Momentum Suite* for string orchestra, recently recorded by the Northern Sinfonia under David Lloyd-Jones.

Joe Cohen left Weinbergers to set up his own publishing company, Mozart Edition, in the late fifties, and it was for them that Peter composed what is probably his best known piece – *Jaunting Car*, later to be joined by three other movements to form the *Ring of Kerry Suite*. It became extremely popular and won an Ivor Novello Award in 1968/9. This was the heyday of light music on the air and Peter's music was regularly broadcast not only by the BBC Concert Orchestra, but also by the BBC Midland Light Orchestra, the BBC West of England Light Orchestra, the BBC Welsh Orchestra, and others. In addition he was producing quantities of library music for both Weinbergers and Mozart Edition. Other original works from this period include *Irish Legend* (intended as a follow-up to the *Ring of Kerry Suite*), *Four French Dances*, *Kaleidoscope* (a mini-concerto for orchestra composed for the BBC's Festival of Light Music in 1970) and several shorter orchestral works including *Petit Point* and *Playful Scherzo*. He was asked by Weinbergers in 1968 to submit examples of title music for the BBC Television News. In fact he submitted "a whole sheaf" and fortunately one was chosen for regular use (thus following in the footsteps of another eminent Mancunian, Alan Rawsthorne, who in 1942 had composed the titles music for the BBC Radio Newsreel). It remained on air until 1980, and naturally became his most instantly recognisable music. Until the end of the sixties Peter had something broadcast on an almost daily basis, but things were to change drastically and very suddenly. Pirate radio stations such as Radio Caroline and other pop broadcasters forced a change in the BBC's attitude towards and treatment of light music, and the advent of Glock and Keller at the Third Programme meant that the genre fell between two very tall stools and suffered a catastrophic and near fatal decline. This sudden change coincided with a crisis in Peter's personal life; at the same time as his performing royalties were being decimated, his marriage was

disintegrating in some acrimony, and at the age of forty he still had two young children to maintain. For two years he lived alone in London, with no heart for either composition or arrangement – in his own words “doing nothing”; in any event there was nothing to do as the work had dried up. In 1971, at a friend’s party, he met his second wife (to be), Pamela Zinnemann, a poet whose parents had been forced to flee Nazi Germany. Her father, Prof. Kurt Zinnemann of Leeds University had been interned on the Isle of Man with a congenial group of German and Austrian intellectuals including Hans G-l, Franz Reizenstein, members of the Amadeus Quartet and others. Peter’s relationship with Pam resulted in a determination to rekindle his career, but this time perforce merely as an arranger. Fortunately the arranging work soon built up and over the following years Peter worked extensively for Dutch TV, German radio, and also for Charles (Chuck) Gerhardt, the conductor who made many productions in this country for Readers Digest, often using large orchestras at a time when record companies were making do with smaller ensembles. In 1979 the Dutch record company Phillips asked him to arrange An Album of Tosti Songs for Jose Carreras, which was recorded with the English Chamber Orchestra under Eduardo M, ller. An Album of Neopolitan Songs, also with Carreras and the ECO, followed in the following year. So commercially successful were these that many albums have ensued over the last thirty years, noteworthy amongst these being Sacred Songs (for Jessye Norman and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra under Sir Alexander Gibson), The Spirit of Christmas (Christmas carols recorded by the John Alldis Choir and the London Symphony Orchestra under Sir Colin Davis, but originally intended for the Hollywood Bowl, and indeed subsequently performed with the Boston Symphony Orchestra), collections for Dennis O’Neill and Stuart Burrows (both these being oshoots from television programmes for which Peter was the main arranger), and orchestrations for Dame Kiri te Kanawa. Although Peter has not himself composed music for feature films, other composers have relied on his consummate facility for scoring – these orchestrations include John Williams’ score for Raiders of the Lost Ark and James Horner’s score for Willow.

The Carreras connection has led to regular commissions for arrangements of Spanish traditional material and popular hits to be performed and recorded by both the Orquestra Sinfonica de Tenerife and the Orquestra Sinfonica de Galicia. These arrangements included orchestral settings of a pop tunes by the Spanish group Meccano, whose star Nacho Cano has been responsible for yet more Hope arrangements (or rather compositions). On tunes provided by Nacho Cano Peter produced two large-scale scores. One for the wedding of the Crown Prince of Spain (2004) performed by the Orquesta Sinfonica de Madrid and one for the Spanish 2012 Olympic Bid recorded in this country at the Abbey Road studios in 2003. Despite his involvement with the commercial side of music, Peter Hope’s real love has always been with more serious music, and he gave considerable help to his fellow composers as Chairman in 1969 and co-Chairman (with Anthony Hedges) in 1971 of the Composer’s Guild of Great Britain. The impetus again came from Ernest Tomlinson, who wanted the Guild to make itself more professional and tighten up its admission procedures, and suggested a composer with commercial talents for that reason.

Since 2000, when he became seventy, Peter Hope has concentrated more on his first love, original composition. Although the works he has produced in the last few years are more serious than his earlier light music, they are still in a readily accessible idiom, with great melodic charm, immaculate and grateful writing for the instruments, imaginative orchestration, and often complex but beguiling rhythmic tricks. Although the harmony breaks no ranks with tradition (he disparagingly refers to his works as using “the three chord trick”) it is employed in a memorable and striking way. The influence of modern popular music is to be heard in the Bramall Hall Dances, (written for performance in a medieval/Elizabethan manor house near his home town of Stockport), the influence of blues and Latin American music in both the Concertino for bassoon harp and string orchestra and the Concerto for recorder harp and string orchestra, and the influence of Dowland and the Elizabethan lute composers in the delicious song cycle A Herrick Garland composed for and frequently performed by the countertenor James Bowman. Since 2000 most of the early Light Music works have been recorded thanks to the work of Philip Lane and the conductor Gavin Sutherland and both the Bassoon Concertino and the Recorder Concerto have been recently issued on C.D. Most of the chamber music will shortly be released on disc to celebrate his birthday this year.