

impressive on the first track, 'Veena Diamonds', is overstated a little, recurring on tracks two and four. 'Veena Diamonds' uses a Hindustani-tinged *alap* on the first track before launching into fast *solkattu* and then an attractive composed section; it is one of the album's most successful tracks, alongside the rhythmically impressive 'Veena Pearls'.

There is a definite influence of rock music – 'Happy End', the third track, has a slightly Eric Clapton-like feel to it – and ambient sounds. I could have lived without the synth strings on 'Siddha' and on the rather obvious 'Veena Dreams'. There are no liner notes, which is a shame, as it would have been nice to know how he put the pieces together, and there is only a list of names to tell us anything about the other musicians. However, the playing is impeccable and Manet does at least deserve praise for attempting one of the hardest of all things in music: producing a satisfactory album that takes elements of contemporary musics, but without discarding the best of his tradition.

Maria Lord

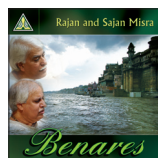
Rajan & Sajan Misra Benares

Sense World Music 120

Mid Price (2 CDs; 103 mins)

★★★★

Sunny songs from sibling singers



Singing duos are relatively rare in the *khayal* (imaginative, ornamental) vocal style of Hindustani classical music that

has traditionally been the stronghold of soloists. But the brothers Rajan and Sajan Misra, in a career spanning over three decades, have quite literally gone places with their *khayal*. They were born in Benares (also known as Varanasi), a holy city in which ancient water-side temples edge a metropolis that became a centre of high art. It has its own specific *gharana* (style) of *khayal*, *thumri* (light classical song), *kathak* dance and numerous instruments – most memorably the *shehnai* of the late maestro Bismillah Khan.

The first CD of this double album features a full recital of 'Raga Jaunpuri', with a short *alap* followed by a *vilambit* (slow tempo) recital and three faster compositions, including a *tarana* (a song form that uses syllables instead of lyrics). All convey a great spiritual depth, in keeping with the brothers' stated aim of singing only as an act of devotion to Saraswati, goddess of music and learning. Although Rajan and Sajan Misra have absorbed numerous classical influences, it would be no exaggeration to

say that this performance, recorded live at a densely packed morning concert at the Saptak Festival last year, is positively dripping with that flavoursome Benares essence. This is particularly evident on the second track on the second CD, where the sprightly 'Raga Brindabani Sarang' (the raga of noon, or early afternoon sunshine) lives up to its strong associations with lord Krishna's life in the forests of Vrindavan. Song texts composed in this raga usually highlight the more playful episodes from Krishna's life – in this instance, the besotted milkmaids of Vrindavan urge Krishna to refrain from toying with their feelings, since he already resides deep within their hearts. Highly recommended for sunny afternoon listening.

Jameela Siddiqi

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Acoustic World: India

Coro COR16070

Mid Price (79 mins)

★★★★

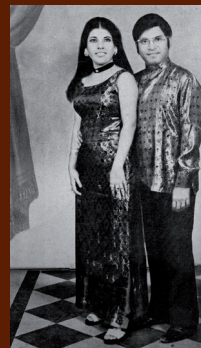
A good stab at a mammoth task



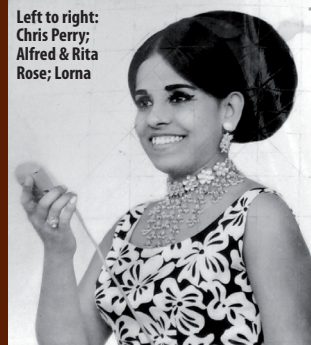
Often compilations that seek to introduce us to Indian classical music offer up a couple of gems amongst quite a bit of

padding. Given that a comprehensive introduction to Indian music, covering both Hindustani and Karnatic music, is pretty much impossible to do on a single CD, this disc makes a much better fist of it than most, and gives us a particularly fine array of performers. Only three out of the ten tracks are from South Indian musicians, but included among these is an excerpt of a performance of 'Raga Vasantapriya' by L Subramaniam on violin, and a work by Tyagaraja performed by N Ramani on flute. It is a shame that there are no vocal tracks among them, given that Karnatic music is, above all, a vocal tradition. However, for those tracks representing the north there is a wealth of vocalists, with performances by some of the greatest singers of the 20th century. Particularly welcomed are those by the female singers of *khayal* and *thumri* Girja Devi, Sulochana Brahaspati and Shruti Sadolikar, and there is a laudable attempt to present exponents of different *gharanas* (performance traditions) with the inclusion of Ghulam Mustafa Khan. The instrumental Hindustani tradition is represented by the great Imrat Khan and Hariprasada Chaurasia, and the selection is rounded off by the vital inclusion of a *dhrupad* by Uday Bhawalkar.

Maria Lord



Left to right: Chris Perry; Alfred & Rita Rose; Lorna



Konkani Songs: Music from Goa Made in Bombay

Trikont US0395

Full Price (76 mins)

★★★★★

A Goanese gumbo



Many Goan musicians were mainstays of the Indian mainstream jazz scene, but I was

unaware of a whole other scene of Goan music, one that flourished between the 1950s and 70s. Many of the performers on this disc made a vital contribution to the music of the burgeoning film industry in what was then Bombay – but the tracks here are from a different, if related, source. The songs, known as *cantaras*, are spin-offs from the Konkani Tiatr (theatre), which merged traditional Goan music, jazz and elements from Latin America to produce a slightly familiar but highly individual sound. The songs also served to help preserve the local language, Konkani, which was frowned upon and discouraged by the colonial power of the time, Portugal. Possibly the only name here that will be familiar to readers is that of Mohammed Rafi, the great playback singer, who performed songs written by Goan music directors for Bollywood. But the real stars here are the amazing husband-and-wife team Alfred and Rita Rose, the songwriter Chris Perry, his muse the singer Lorna and the jazz musician Frank Ferdinand. Highly evocative of its time, with some marvellous trumpet playing, accomplished singing and inventive arranging, this is music that deserves to be better known. What a fantastic disc.

Maria Lord

Korea: Music from the Land of the Clear Morning

Buda Musique 3017908

Budget Price (2 CDs; 144 mins)

★★★★★

'Intangible Cultural Properties'... and some songs



The standard place one goes to hear Korean court and professional folk genres is the National Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts. Since the early 1970s,

the centre has issued annual albums, building up a major collection of exemplary recordings that basically can't be obtained outside Korea. Although this Buda release never mentions it, these recordings are a gift from the centre's archives. They are mostly analogue, and some lack clarity and dynamic depth; no recording dates are given, though several of the soloists died 30 years ago or more. Overall, they make

excellent samplers. Don't expect dynamic fireworks or much emotion, which have no place in the Confucian decorum of the Korean court, and although the use of rhythmic cycles in faster pieces becomes quite jazzy, the ornamentation and strange modes may take some acclimatising to.

The first CD assembles excerpts of timeless orchestral genres now celebrated as 'Korean Intangible Cultural Properties', from ancient court rites to *literati* music, plus a couple of pieces played solo and in duet. The second CD concentrates on vocal genres, beginning with the slow, ethereal and serene *literati* traditions that sound

like nothing else on earth, then shifting to folk songs and samples of *p'ansori* – a genre of epic singing that has been designated a UNESCO Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage. Good notes by Song Hye-jin are spoiled by awkward romanisation. And the title, which translates a Korean term, should arguably read 'Land of the Morning Calm'.

Keith Howard ●

The slow, ethereal and serene literati traditions sound like nothing else on earth

Korea: Music from the Land of the Clear Morning