

Mp3 John Billing - Turlough O'carolan



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The inimitable tunes of the Irish harp-bard in baroque arrangements for modern lyres. 20 MP3 Songs

CLASSICAL: Baroque, FOLK: Gentle Show all album songs: Turlough O'Carolan Songs Details: John was born in 1952 at Pond Hall in Hadleigh, Suffolk, UK. His father gave him a guitar for his 15th birthday in 1967; just in time for the Summer of Love! In 1968 John began a Foundation Year at the Medway College of Art in Rochester. He taught himself some folk and blues, played rhythm for friends playing lead but soon advanced to improvising his own lead by co-opting his sister to play interminable 12 bar blues for him. Over the next few years it became obvious he was a 'natural' and he was the toast of Maidstone Folk Club for a while. By 1973 he moved to more serious guitar playing after borrowing a friend's tape of Bach's Brandenburg Concertos, which he listened to while painting his attic flat in Southampton. This 'Damascene moment' prompted him to teach himself to read and write music and to learn some classical playing. He re-learnt classical guitar playing several times, once with the help of Simon Kunath. John shared life in a student hostel in Winchester with, amongst other people, Johannes Steuck. They were both at Art College there and were also in a band together. (The band had some small success after John and Johannes had left!). Through Johannes, John knew about the Camphill Movement and in 1976 he first met the modern lyre at Thornbury. While at Thornbury John gradually moved from carer to music teacher and director. John's first instrument was still the guitar, the lyre remaining an anthroposophical accessory for some years. In the early '80s John studied music therapy in Berlin and also gave guitar and other music lessons. One day on his way to Kreuzberg on the U-Bahn, John was absorbed in composing music and only on his arrival did he realise that he had left his guitar on Nollendorf Platz, never to see it again. He had developed a daily practice routine of playing scales first thing in the morning and so, to avoid music-withdrawal symptoms, the next morning he did his practice on an old second-hand lyre. He

was hooked! John moved to Australia in 1984, initially teaching music at Mount Barker Waldorf School and, in the first two years there, feeling the lack of music composed specifically for the lyre, he composed his 24 Preludes, a turning point in his compositional career. Between 1989 and 1993 John studied Composition and Music Theory at La Trobe University in Melbourne. To his great good fortune, Graham Leake began a Performance Art unit during this time, which enabled John to learn, in a university context, skills such as the organisation and planning of performance, relating to audiences and so on. Soon after completing his BA(Mus) John decided to launch his full-time career as a touring musician. At the time his main lyre was a Gaertner from Berlin, but on hearing his plans Peter Biffen, luthier, musician and good friend, said he would make John a special lyre. As good as his word, he designed and built John's magnificent concert lyre. Since then John has toured extensively in Europe, Australia, Japan and the USA, and continues to do so from his home base in Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK. Between 1997 and 2006 John lived in Northern Ireland working in various Camphill Communities as music teacher. In that time the Celtic Lyre Orchestra, of which John is the conductor, grew into being. The orchestra is made up of people with disabilities playing stringed instruments (which John designed) and coworkers/carers from the Camphill Communities and local people playing lyres, flutes, violins, guitars etc. Professional musicians and other groups are invited to perform with the orchestra for special concerts like the Karl Koenig Centenary concert in Dublin's Concert Hall in 2002. Sheet music of John's compositions and arrangements are available from Maria Hollander: mhollander@web.de

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