

Gunnar IDENSTAM

METAL ANGEL

FIFTEEN PIECES FOR SYMPHONIC ORGAN

Gunnar Idenstam
organ of Monaco Cathedral

FIRST RECORDING

GUNNAR IDENSTAM Metal Angel

Suite I

24:00

1 I Introduction	4:51
2 II Waiting for	2:21
3 III Gothic Garden	7:59
4 IV Toccata V	5:38
5 V Metal Angel	3:11

Suite II

20:02

6 I Angel's Theme	3:29
7 II Saga I	4:24
8 III Dark Angel	3:09
9 IV Elegy for an Absent Angel	6:50
10 V Falling Angel	4:10

Suite III

27:07

11 I Polina's Song	6:14
12 II Golden Angel	4:59
13 III Archangel	5:09
14 IV Black Angel	2:52
15 V Saga III: Epilogue	7:53

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TT 73:11

FIRST RECORDING

WHY METAL ANGEL?

by Gunnar Idenstam

Metal Angel (composed from 2013 to 2019) is a collection of eighteen pieces and one *Symphonic Sonata* for large modern symphonic organ, each piece associated with a different angel in a fantasy Gothic landscape; fifteen of them are recorded here. In this instance I have divided them up into three suites of five movements apiece, but it is my hope that other organists coming to this music will make their own selection from all nineteen pieces and present them as they see fit. The title refers both to the metal genre of rock music and to the organ, with its metal pipes and angel-like shape.

When my music comes to me, it usually starts with a beat and a rhythm, and then the structures and the harmonies gradually develop. I have always been fascinated by the heavy beat of metal and symphonic rock, and for many years I have thought of taking the organ into a complete rock environment. This idea took more practical shape when I shared it with Roger Norén, the director of Studio Acusticum Concert Hall in Piteå, in northern Sweden, and we planned a concert there with organ, electric bass, guitar and drums. Parts of *Metal Angel* are, to some extent, the solo version of this project, which may yet be realised as *Metal Angel II* at some point in the future.

As a composer, I am definitely aware that some events in the world, in my family, among close friends or inside me can result in music, and most of the time the process in which the music comes to me is without words. I think it comes from an inner source, a direct link to the Creator, and a pure, powerful source that unifies us as human beings. With my music I want to tap this source, and open myself up for all kinds of feelings. Most of all, though, my music comes from my deep inner feeling of sorrow, melancholy and loss. Even in the pure joy I can experience over a

beautiful natural scene, in a beautiful relationship or listening to beautiful music, I can suddenly feel that sorrow, to the point where it can move me to tears. I believe that we grow as humans by facing our inner fears, sorrows and joys.

The story of this album came to me gradually, as the music took shape. What if there are angels all around us, living in a parallel world, who try to communicate with us and guide us if we listen? The angels are the link between God/the Creator and us humans. There are both shining white angels and fallen black ones. The music on this recording reflects our own time – a time in which we have to deal with conflict and war, with climate change and now with worldwide disease. In such times it is more important than ever that we listen to the whispering of the good and light angels and not to the destructive dark ones.

My life as a touring concert organist is very exciting because each organ is different, and it is almost like getting to know a new personality with every new instrument. Organs can have personalities that are sometimes welcoming, and sometimes more difficult to get to know. But I manage to become friends with every organ, and in every concert or recording I challenge myself to make it sound better than ever. For this recording I chose the spectacular organ in Monaco Cathedral, built by the renowned Belgian organ factory Thomas. The voicing is a masterpiece signed by Dominique Thomas and Thomas Deserranno, who generously kept the organ in top shape during the whole recording period. This instrument has everything I want from an organ in general and for my music in particular: a very distinct and fast mechanical tracker action, poetic solo stops, clearly separated sections like the Positive organ behind the organist's back, a well-isolated, profound but clear bass section and a spectacular horizontal Chamade trumpet section pointing straight out into the cathedral under the main organ. The organ is so powerful that I can realise my wish to have one sound in my right hand and another in my left, even in the *fortissimo* parts. In these sections I think of the sound of a symphony orchestra, with its brass section in the middle of the sound palette.

The musical language of these pieces is virtuosic and influenced both by the French cathedral tradition of the mid-twentieth century and by symphonic rock and metal. When I compose, I tune in to the project I am working on at that moment, and then the



'This organ has [...] a spectacular horizontal Chamade trumpet section pointing straight out into the cathedral under the main organ.'

music comes to me easily, often as musical seeds when I play the piano. For example, ‘Golden Angel’ [12] was in fact a piano improvisation that I recorded and then arranged for the organ. Other pieces have come to me in the shape of a musical structure that I would like to work in, a tempo or groove. For instance, the Introduction [1] is, in terms of its groove, a Norwegian *gangar*, with its irregular triplets above a steady pulse.

Many pieces could most suitably be described as French toccatas. In Toccata V¹ a steady bass line and fast figures in the right hand create the backdrop to a melody with typical rock harmonies in the left hand [4]. In ‘Waiting for’ [2], ‘Saga I’ [7], the title track ‘Metal Angel’ [5], ‘Dark Angel’ [8] and ‘Archangel’ [13] I am inspired by the fast bass lines in metal music, but in form and structure they are still French toccatas. ‘Falling Angel’ [10] is a play with rhythm, time and structure. ‘Gothic Garden’ [3] and ‘Polina’s Song’ [11] can best be described as rock ballads in form, harmony and structure. In ‘Elegy for an Absent Angel’ [9] I express the feelings I had when, for a year, I had no contact with a dear close friend, to whom I dedicate this piece and the next one, ‘Polina’s Song’. When I composed this piece, I just thought of her personality and the melodies came to me rather easily. The penultimate pieces [13][14] describe the Archangel and the Black Angel – and ask which of them will triumph. But I am optimistic, after all, and so the album ends with a jubilant hymn *fortissimo* [15], in which a choir of angels praises our beautiful world and life. This last piece is in two parts, the first with obscure harmonies and the second with a happy-ending, hymn-like melody, with harmonies stolen from symphonic rock.

Suite I

[1] Introduction

A Gothic landscape unfolds in the sunset. The shadows get longer and longer. Am I seeing stones or creatures? Someone or something is lurking around the corner. Angels turn up and revel in breathtaking beauty against a blood-red sky....

¹ My first four toccatas are to be found in *Cathedral Music* (1995–96), a suite of fifteen pieces for symphonic organ, which I recorded on BIS-NL-CD-5018, released in 2002.

[2] Waiting for

What happens next? Who has the answer? Are there really any answers to the mysteries of life?

[3] Gothic Garden

Green, leafy plants hanging on the old walls of the cathedral. Death is always present, even in beauty and joy. Lush plants surround gravestones. Am I still alive or am I dead? Is this real? Do I dare to believe in this? Death and life are one. A choir of angels is praising life, in sorrow and joy. Everybody sings with the angels! Sunset in the Gothic landscape. This is somewhere I would like to return to.

[4] Toccata V

We are in the Gothic landscape. Speaking with angels, asking. Dancing with angels. Fluttering with angels... Do I dare to believe that angels help us? Do I dare to believe? Flying with angels! Yes, the angels help us and support us!

[5] Metal Angel

A shining metal angel. I didn't know something like this existed.... An angel for war. He flies through the air. Glorious. Dangerous. Protecting the good. Fighting for the good.

Suite II

[6] Angels' Theme

The song of all angels. The source of life. But we always have our sorrow. The sorrow of mankind. Our grief. But the angels carry all creatures up into the air. The song of angels carries the Earth.

[7] Saga I

Somebody needs help. The anxiety is heavy. Where is the light? Why am I abandoned? Please hear my prayer. Is there any help?



[8] Dark Angel

A beautiful angel's inner fight. Even angels doubt. On his way to fall. Our own inner struggle. Stay in the light or fall down, to darkness?

[9] Elegy for an Absent Angel

There are also angel-like persons among us. For in some periods of time, they are absent and we miss them. How are they now? And where? Will we ever meet again? What a great joy it would be to meet again! They are missed....

[10] Falling Angel

An angel is falling. Picked up by another angel. They are fighting. Tumbling around. Whirling upwards. Losing balance. Tumbling back. Regaining balance. Will the good win and the angel stay among the other angels? Perhaps the angel doesn't need to fall? Falling... and picked up?

Suite III

[11] Polina's Song

A song for an angelic person, dedicated to my dear friend Polina. Melancholic. Dreaming. Beautiful. An angel appears by her side. Will it help her? Doubts, difficulties and troubles... May the light inside her win. But there is hope! The angel is helping her! The angel lifts her up, carries her and flies with her. The light will win. Rest in the bosom of the angel.

[12] Golden Angel

The most sensitive and beautiful angel. Shimmering in gold. Takes care of children. A choir of angels and children. Rest in the embrace of the angel.

[13] Archangel

The strongest and most powerful angel. His word is law. He is loving and caring. He is wise. He has a sense of humour. He fights against evil. He always wins. He is hard but fair. Always wins!

[14] Black Angel

The strong, the black, the dangerous. The Archangel's black equivalent. Pulling my soul. Pulling our souls. He cheats. He is smart. He wants to conquer all the Earth. He wants the destruction of the Earth. Apocalypse. He punches like a giant hammer. Triumphant.

[15] Saga III: Epilogue

A slow breeze of suspense... Who will win the fight for the Earth? Unwise, heartless and soulless people? Or the wise, loving and warm, who care for the Earth, our only home? The angels charge up for the final battle for our hearts and souls. The battle of the Earth. Shall the Earth prematurely decline because of our stupidity? Light and strong angels are near. Angels whirling upwards. Charging up. Fighting with all their power. Fanfares for the good. The good wins! A choir of angels praising the beauty of the Earth and of life!



Gunnar Idenstam, concert organist, composer and folk musician, is known throughout the world for his virtuosic playing, stunning improvisations and untraditional and original take on organ music. He aims to expand his audience's appreciation of the organ and to transcend the limitations of genre. He comes from a religious background in classical music, but has always had a 'distant love relationship' with the folk and symphonic rock of the 1970s. Now he has brought these influences into the context of organ music when he builds bridges between the French cathedral tradition, symphonic rock and Swedish folk-music.

He studied at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm, with Anders Bondeman, Rune Ångsö and Torvald Torén, and then studied the virtuoso French tradition in Paris, with Marie-Claire Alain and Jacques Taddei. He achieved the highest honours in both countries. In 1984 he was the first – and, to date, the only – musician from northern Europe to win the prestigious international competition in improvisation, the 'Grand Prix de Chartres'. Since 1986 he has pursued an international career as a concert organist, with recitals in (for example) the Berlin Philharmonie, Svetlanov Hall in Moscow, the Luxembourg Philharmonie, Suntory Hall in Tokyo, Spivey Hall in Atlanta, the Spreckels Organ series in San Diego and in many European cathedrals. He is a frequent guest performer in the Mariinsky Concert Hall in St Petersburg and in the Zaryadye Concert Hall in Moscow.

In 2012 he was awarded the 'Interpreter of the Year' prize by the Royal Academy of Music in Stockholm for his renewal of the art of the organ at the highest international level. The prize was presented to him by His Majesty King Carl XVI Gustav of Sweden. In June 2013 he received the Litteris et Artibus – a royal medal for recognition of eminent skills in the arts.

Gunnar Idenstam has been a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music since May 2013. His music and arrangements are published by Le Chant du Monde, London and Paris, and by Gehrmans Musikförlag, Stockholm.

This is his second appearance in a Toccata recording: with the nyckelharpa player Erik Rydvall he performs folk-music from the Nordic and Baltic countries on the album *Northern Dances* (TOCN 0004), one of the first releases on the Toccata Next label.

THE THOMAS ORGAN OF MONACO CATHEDRAL¹

by Jean-Louis Coignet

The present Cathedral of Monaco was consecrated in 1911; exactly one hundred years later, on 8 December 2011, the Archbishop of Monaco proceeded with the blessing of the new organ, the fourth since the consecration of the building. The first organ, attributed to François Mader, was located near the high altar; it proved to be insufficient and the need for a larger organ was rapidly felt. Charles Mutin, the successor to Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, turned it into a 50-stop instrument that he installed in two parts, placed on either side of the gallery; Emile Bourdon, the titular organist, inaugurated it on 8 April 1922. After fifty years of service, this organ showed signs of wear, and was replaced by a 60-stop instrument built by Boisseau; Pierre Cochereau played the opening concert on 10 October 1976. Further work was undertaken by Tamburini in 1987, but the results were not entirely satisfactory, and the appointment in 2006 of a new organist, Olivier Vernet, gave the impetus to consider a complete rebuild. Following an international competition, the Belgian organ-building company Thomas² was entrusted with the work. It was a challenging undertaking since the specifications required not only the re-use of most of the existing pipes but also the re-creation of their original voicing, so as to conserve the soul of the former instrument in a new body.

In fact, the result is a completely new organ, with the exception of some pipes that have been carefully restored (many reeds had been cut too short). The frames, case, wind-chests,

¹ An earlier version of this article appeared as 'The Great Organ of the Cathedral of Monaco', *The Diapason*, Vol. 103, No. 6, June 2012, pp. 20–21 (with thanks to the current editor, Stephen Schnurr, for allowing it to be republished here).

² The workshop of Manufacture d'orgues Thomas was founded in 1965 by André Thomas in Ster-Francorchamps, in the province of Liège, in south-eastern Belgium. André's son, Dominique, took over the management of the company in 2000, and Dominique has since been joined by his own son, Jean-Sébastien. The company currently employs sixteen people, has built over 140 new instruments in over 50 years, and restored some 125 organs dating from the seventeenth century onwards. Their website can be found at www.orgues-thomas.com.

blowers, console, transmissions and electronic systems are new. The organ-builders and architects made the bold decision to remove the organ from the gallery alcove where it was located, and to use innovative lighting as an architectural element in its own right. As Dominique Thomas explained, 'We created a resolutely contemporary façade, which plays on lightness, transparency and light, blending harmoniously with the architecture of the Cathedral while appearing as an original work of art'.³

The instrument has 77 speaking stops (105 ranks), with 106 stops at the console (the chamades 8' and 4' being playable on all keyboards and pedal at different ranges). Manuals I (Positif de Dos), II (Grand-Orgue) and III (Récit expressif) all have 58 notes (C1–A5). Manual IV (Dessus de Récit) has 41 notes (F2–A5) and the Pédale 32 notes (C1–G3). The key action is mechanical for manuals and pedal; the stop action is electric and assisted by a combination action of 30,000 combinations. The couplers are electric, but there is also a mechanical Positif/Grand-Orgue coupler so that the organist can re-create the typical 'old feeling' when interpreting music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Dominique Thomas clearly explains the advantage of the electric coupling:

When playing symphonic or modern organ music, electrical couplers are not a drawback to the touch of the organist and have the advantage of not obliging excessive reduction of the touch. When using Barker levers for coupling in instruments of much smaller size, Cavaillé-Coll already considered the full opening of the pallet when the organist's finger was still only halfway down to be an advantage.⁴

There is also a playback system that enables organists to listen to their own playing from the nave.

The wind supply is particularly well designed: two Ventus blowers, 140mm and 160mm water column respectively, feed primary reservoirs that provide wind to wedge bellows for the Positif, Grand-Orgue and Dessus de Récit. The Récit expressif, in turn, receives its wind from two reservoirs that feed the bass and treble separately, ensuring

³ Quoted in the *Brochure d'inauguration de l'orgue de la cathédrale de Monaco*, autumn 2011.

⁴ *Ibid.*

perfectly stable wind, and the wedge bellows give some flexibility for playing the classic repertoire. The wind pressures used are:

Chamades – 91mm

Positif de Dos – 78mm

Grand-Orgue – 91mm

Récit expressif – 106mm

Dessus de Récit – 91mm

Petite Pédale – 112mm

Grande Pédale – 134mm.

Dominique Thomas describes the tonal architecture as ‘primarily a French classical organ, opening toward the symphonic style.’⁵ This organ falls in the French Neo-Classical organ tradition with its three traditional divisions, large symphonic Récit and the well-furnished Pédale. This concept was first highly prized in the 1930s to the 1950s, then severely criticised in the 1960s and 1970s. But it was, in fact, above all the modifying of existing instruments, both classical and symphonic, that was the subject of vehement condemnations.⁶ What matters most, after all, is the resulting sound, and there is no denying that the Thomas organ of Monaco is an amazing musical instrument. As Olivier Vernet quite rightly wrote: ‘As a synthesis of the past with the most elaborate contemporary technology, this wonderful instrument, thanks to the huge variety of its tonal palette, is an inexhaustible source of inspiration.’⁷

Jean-Louis Coignet worked in scientific research until 1980 while at the same time learning organ-building. He was appointed Artistic and Tonal Director of the Canadian organ-builders Casavant Frères in 1981, holding the position until 2004. Also in 1981 he was appointed Expert-organier of the City of Paris, and in 1966 Technicien-conseil for the French Ministry of Culture, positions that he held until 2005. He is the acknowledged authority on the work of Aristide Cavaillé-Coll. Though now retired, he is still active in the organ world, working as a consultant on a benevolent basis (as in Le Barroux Abbey, for example), writing his memoirs, painting and photographing.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Cf. Jean-Louis Coignet, ‘Is the French Neo-Classic organ a failure?’, *The Organ Yearbook*, Volume IV, 1973, pp. 52–66.

⁷ Brochure d’inauguration, loc. cit.

I Positif de Dos (C-a''')

Montre 8
 Principal 8
 Bourdon 8
 Salicional 8
 Prestant 4
 Flûte à cheminée 4
 Nazard 2½
 Doublette 2
 Tierce 1⅓
 Larigot 1½
 Tiercelette ⅔-1⅓
 Fourniture III
 Cymbale IV
 Trompette 8
 Cromorne 8
 Clairon 4
 Chamades:
 Trompette 16 (tr Tromp 8)
 Trompette 8
 Clairon 8 (tr Clairon 4)
 Clairon 4

II Grand-Orgue (C-a''')

Bourdon 32 (c°-a''')
 Montre 16
 Bourdon 16
 Montre 8
 Dessus de Montre 8
 Flûte Harmonique 8
 Gambe 8
 Bourdon 8
 Prestant 4
 Flûte 4
 Doublette 2
 Quarte 2
 Grosse Tierce 3⅓
 Nazard 2½
 Tierce 1⅓
 Grosse Fourniture III
 Fourniture V
 Cymbale IV
 Cornet V (f°-a''')
 Bombarde 16
 Trompette 8
 Clairon 4
 Chamades:
 Trompette 16 (tr Tromp 8)
 Trompette 8
 Clairon 8 (tr Clairon 4)
 Clairon 4

III Récit expressif (C-a''')

Bourdon 16
 Diapason 8
 Salicional 8
 Voix céleste 8
 Cor de Nuit 8
 Flûte Harmonique 8
 Prestant 4
 Flûte Octaviane 4
 Octavin 2
 Piccolo 1
 Fourniture III-V
 Cornet III
 Bombarde 16
 Trompette 8
 Clairon 4
 Voix Humaine 8
 Hautbois 8
 Chamades:
 Trompette 16 (tr Tromp 8)
 Trompette 8
 Clairon 8 (tr Clairon 4)
 Clairon 4
 Clairon 8 (tr Clairon 4)
 Clairon 4

V Pedal (C–g’):

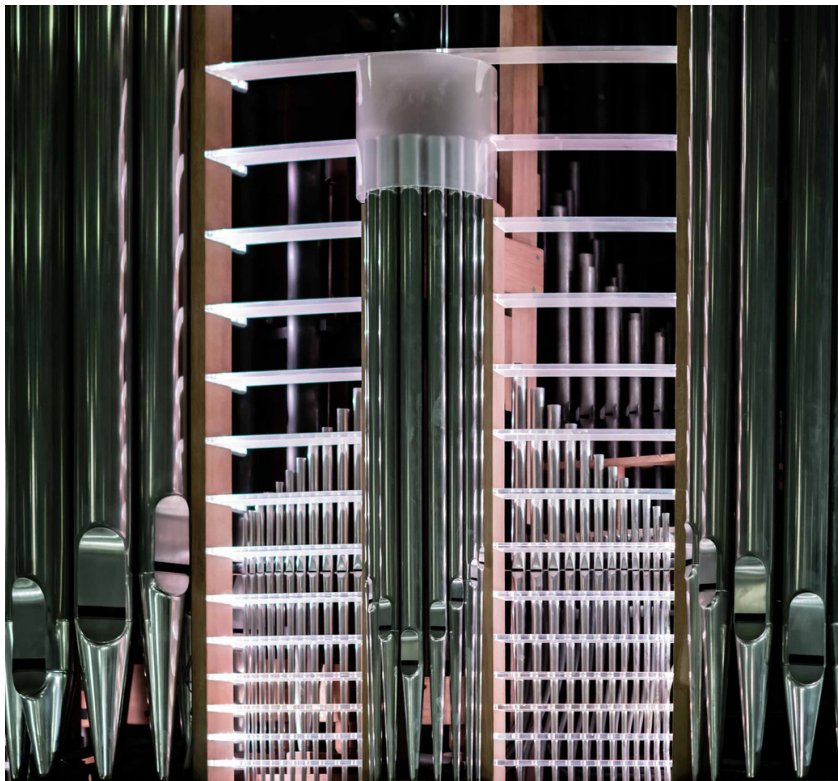
Bourdon 32
 Soubasse 16
 Principal 16
 Flûte 8
 Bourdon 8
 Quinte 10 $\frac{2}{3}$
 Tierce 6 $\frac{2}{3}$
 Flûte 4
 Mixture V
 Contre-Bombarde 32
 Bombarde 16
 Basson 16
 Trompette 8
 Clairon 4
 Transmission:
 Montre 16 (tr M16 GO)
 Bourdon Expr 16 (tr B16 Réc)
 Diapason Expr 8 (tr D8 Réc)
 Chamades:
 Trompette 16 (tr Tromp 8)
 Trompette 8
 Clairon 8 (tr Clairon 4)
 Clairon 4
 Clairon 2 (tr Clairon 4)

III/I
 IV/I
 I/II
 I/II mécanique
 III/II
 IV/II
 IV/III
 I/I 16
 III/III 16’
 III/III 4’
 III/I 16’
 I/II 16’
 III/II 16’
 III/II 4’
 I/P
 II/P
 III/P
 I/P 4’
 III/P 4’
 IV/P 2’
 Tremblant Positif
 Tremblant G.O.
 Tremolo Récit
 On every keyboard:
 Sostenuto
 Cancel
 Crescendo 1
 Crescendo 2
 General cancel
 30,000 combinations
 Replay function

IV Dessus de Récit (f°–a’’’):

Bourdon 8
 Flûte 4
 Nazard 2 $\frac{2}{3}$
 Doublette 2
 Tierce 1 $\frac{3}{5}$
 Trompette 8
 Chamades:
 Trompette 16 (tr Tromp 8)
 Trompette 8
 Clairon 8 (tr Clairon 4)
 Clairon 4







Recorded on 4–7 February 2020 in the Cathédrale de Notre-Dame-Immaculée, Monaco

Producer-engineer: Hans Kipfer

Recording equipment: Neumann and DPA microphones: 1 bass mic Neumann in the pedal section, 2 Neumann just in front of the Swell section, 2 Neumann on the Positive organ, 2 Neumann for close-up of the Chamade trumpets, 2 main microphones DPA and 2 Neumann far away for the acoustics.

RME Octamic XTC preamps and converter

Magix Sequoia workstation; B&W speakers; Sennheiser headphones

Special thanks to my friend and inspiring colleague Olivier Vernet, Organiste titulaire of Monaco Cathedral, who generously made this recording possible; and to my friend, the organ-builder Thomas Deserranno, who generously kept the organ in perfect shape during the recording period.



Gouvernement Princier
PRINCIPAUTÉ DE MONACO



DIOCÈSE
DE MONACO

An immense thank-you to Emmanuelle Xhrouet, Department of Cultural Affairs, Monaco, for the practical organisation of the recording; to Daniel Deltreuil, Curé of Monaco Cathedral, and to his Cathedral and its lovely crew, for letting us spend the nights in that immensely beautiful space; to the Diocese of Monaco; to The Government of Monaco; and to Mme Françoise Gamerding, Director of the Department of Cultural Affairs, Monaco

Thanks to Jean-Christophe Aurnague, Organiste titulaire of the Église du Sacré Cœur de Monaco, for organising places for me to rehearse; to my coach Christine Löfgren, who can take me to a higher performing level, even at a distance; to my chiropractor Stefan Kantzy, who generously keeps my spine in top shape; and to the organist Marcello Formenti, for his generous assistance in Monaco

Finally, special thanks to my dear friend, the photographer AnnaReet Gillblad, for her inspiring photo art.

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Album photography: AnnaReet Gillblad

Cover design: David M. Baker (david@notneverknow.com)

Typesetting and lay-out: Kerrypress, St Albans

Executive Producer: Martin Anderson

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