

# GRAMOPHONE

MARCH 2010

## 'Off the Map'

**G Frank** *Ritmos Anchinós* **Golijov** *Air to Air* **Lam**  
*Empty Mountain, Spirit Rain* **Ziporyn** *Sulvasutra*  
**The Silk Road Ensemble**  
**World Village** © 468095 (63' • DDD)

**Here be monsters: trans-ethnic collaborations take the listener beyond**



The Silk Road Ensemble, which appeared at the Proms last season, was founded by Yo-Yo Ma in 1998 “to connect the world’s neighbourhoods by bringing together artists and audiences around the globe”. These high-profile American composers and performers fuse Eastern and Western traditions. Three of the four works include a string quartet along with various Eastern instruments and the celebrated pipa-player Wu Man is in three pieces. This trans-ethnic tradition was pioneered by Henry Cowell and more recently by Lou Harrison, whose *Concerto for Pipa and Strings* has been recorded by Wu Man (*Mode*, 7/08).

*Ritmos Anchinós* by Gabriela Lena Frank features the sheng, a Chinese mouth organ, as well as the pipa, a Chinese lute, and integrates these instruments effectively with the string quartet. The two movements of *Empty Mountain, Spirit Rain* by Angel Lam, with shakuhachi, are more contemplative, with a story about a five-year-old girl’s mystical encounter with her grandmother when she fails to realise that the old lady has died. *Sulvasutra* by Bang on a Can clarinetist Evan Ziporyn is Indian in influence with the tabla and traditional rhythmic structures.

Golijov is closer to folk than classical in his *Air to Air*, which employs the largest ensemble here. There’s a Galician bagpiper, an arrangement of an Arab melody, an incorporated Mexican field-recording and finally a Sardinian protest song. It’s a heady mix and Golijov knows how to package it for maximum impact. The CD booklet contains interviews but no biographies. **Peter Dickinson**