

When I first met tabla-vocal virtuoso Cassius Khan met at a local Penticton, BC nightspot in July 2005 neither of us knew that our musical lives were about to change. After his concert I invited him to visit my recording studio. Cassius noticed my tablas and suggested we play something together. I casually set up some mics and turned on my studio gear. We sat down to play and an hour later we had recorded two 25 minute improvisations in a new innovative style of world music, combining elements of Jazz, Indian Classical music, Ghazals and Blues. We were both dumbfounded with excitement. I wanted to release our first performances on a CD, but Cassius said “Let’s schedule a real recording session and we’ll make a much greater CD together, we can play even better!”

This album, “DARK CLOUDS”, recorded October 24 - 26, 2005 is the result. Cassius and myself are joined on tracks two and four by talented singer-songwriter Jennifer Lauren Goldberg. The album is recorded digitally both in high resolution stereo and in 5.0 surround sound. I arranged, produced, recorded and mixed.

1. RAGAMALA

“Ragamala”, or “Garland of Ragas”, in traditional Indian Classical music is a melodic mode which uses the notes from many ragas instead of only one. In this 21 minute plus improvisation I switch at will between multiple ragas on piano, sometimes suggesting Indian music, sometimes Western Classical, Jazz and even New Orleans influences (Hurricane Katrina had just occurred weeks before the session and was on my mind). Cassius artfully threads a delicate line between accompanist and virtuoso soloist on tabla. Together we weave a captivating, intense magical journey through many musical styles and cultures, matching each other step by step in an uncanny way.

2. RAIN

This Jennifer Lauren Goldberg original features her on vocals. Cassius sings background vocals while playing 3 different tunings of tablas. I play piano and percussion (Djembe, Udu Igbah, Klong Yaw, Shakers, Tambourine and Seed Pods).

3. KEHERWA

This traditional 8 beat rhythmic cycle features me on Frame Drum and Udu Igbah trading off with Cassius on 2 different tunings of tablas culminating with a spirited composition played together in unison.

4. DARK CLOUDS

The introduction features me on piano in Ragamala style with Cassius and Jennifer on vocals. Cassius sings in Hindi while Jennifer answers in English. Together they sing the sad story of two lovers lamenting their tragic breakup. Some passages have 12 vocal layers. After Cassius' climactic tabla solo tour de force (part two) we go into part three, which features Cassius singing and playing tabla at the same time. Jennifer's haunting vocals presage the end, then the clouds burst and the healing rain comes, washing all sadness away.

-- *Stu Goldberg, June 2006*