MUSICAL COMPOSITION IN AUSTRALIA IN THE PERIOD 1960-1970:
INDIVIDUAL TRIUMPH OR HISTORICAL INEVITABILITY?


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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that the thesis presented by me for the degree of Master of Music comprises only my original work except where due acknowledgement is made in the text to all other material used.

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ABSTRACT

An examination of oral records casts a fresh and first-hand light on the sudden flowering of Australian musical composition in the 1960-70 decade. Accepted accounts concerning the musical activity of this time are few and the composers who were involved in the new music world are cited rarely.

Building on the views and perceptions of Roger Covell, James Murdoch, Frank Callaway, David Tunley and Andrew McCredie, the impressions concerning this period from eight composers - those from the pre-1960 generation and those who came to prominence in the designated decade - are investigated, with a view to determining what caused the abrupt adoption of contemporary compositional practice from 1960 onwards; whether the surge in activity and the adoption of a new vocabulary resulted chiefly from individual efforts, or from the influence of individuals (administrators, bureaucrats, entrepreneurs), or through the pioneering work of certain organisations (International Society for Contemporary Music), or as the result of an inevitable if delayed historical process.

The investigation begins with a survey of the relevant available material still extant on this period, which serves the purpose as a support or contrast with the core of the thesis. This is the gleaning from interviews conducted by the writer or tapes made by the Australian Broadcasting Commission and other bodies of what the decade 1960-1970 meant to the composers themselves, the intention being to come to a clearer understanding of the significance of the years in question.
This investigation into Australian music during two significant decades resulted, albeit belatedly, from my very minor involvement as a composer and performer in contemporary music-making during those years. Being present at some of Melbourne and Sydney's musical events featuring contemporary compositions in the 1960s made for some exciting experiences, particularly for a student. As with many of the composers who came to prominence in the early 1960s, the impact of those concerts and the ferment caused in creative circles at that time have retained high significance in my memory. Those musicians that I was able to interview still recall their own exploits - and those of their collaborators and peers - with reassuring freshness and their encouragement played a most important part in the construction of the body of this thesis.

I am indebted to many people for encouragement, guidance and gently proffered correction: Dr. Kerry Murphy, Dr Jan Stockigt, Associate-Professor Brenton Broadstock and Dr. Cathy Falk - all from the University of Melbourne. Above all, my thanks go to the Dean of the University of Melbourne's Music Faculty, Professor Warren Bebbington, for his tolerance and considered directions for improvement during a lengthy term as supervisor of this thesis.

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CHAPTER 1

Background to Australian musical creative activity prior to the 1950s

Literature review with specific reference to the three major sources of information on Australian music in the 1960s

This thesis aims to investigate the nature of a significant change in the history of Australian music which bore its most obvious fruits during the decade of the 1960s. At this time, the creativity of certain figures central to the development of the country's musical art reached a highly fertile level; yet, more important than a heightened rate of productivity, these particular composers embraced techniques and aesthetics that had been current in Europe and America for decades. What caused this coming-of-age, the effect of its products and the possible rationales for the 'renaissance' occurring at that particular time are the central issues to be treated, particularly as seen with the benefit of hindsight as exercised by those who contributed to or participated in the heady years of compositional activity and performances of new works.

The central issue to be investigated is to what extent the fecundity of the 1960s was a result either of Australian music having come to a creative cul de sac - where the example set by English composers no longer availed as a justification for writing music, simply because of outdatedness - or of the persuasiveness, efforts and creative talents of specific individuals - composers, performers, promoters, academics.

In this chapter, it is intended to present a brief outline of the conditions that prevailed in Australian music in the years before World War 2, in an attempt to give the cultural
context out of which major schools and styles in twentieth-century composition abruptly became part of (or were potentially available to expand) the language of Australian musicians.

Delineating this abrupt development in Australia's serious musical activity, specifically the compositional aspect, should present fewer problems than attempting the same task with countries such as France or Russia; or so one would think, given that the historical processes and figures in European music have been (and continue to be) exhaustively catalogued, re-investigated and re-interpreted. Further, there is the significance of the time-span to be considered. The history 'proper' of Australia's serious music is of relatively recent date, compared to the artform's development in European or Slav cultures: it begins with the settlement of the continent by the British in 1788.

Compared to the documentation and academically rich field of European music, music of native Australians prior to white settlement of the continent presents a significantly different culture, one without convenient (or even known) divisions into periods and one which, because of the communal or clan nature of the Aboriginal song/dance/artefact, remains unpunctuated by the contributions of specific and identifiable individuals. Aboriginal art - verse, drawings, music, dance - has survived and remained alive in forms that show little advance on what presumably has preceded current modes of practice. For example, any Aboriginal visual art that has survived since the advent of European settlers (representing the current highly dominant culture) has done so in pockets - definable in terms of age, but meaningless in all but the geological sense of that term. The rock art to
be found in Central Australia is as impervious to categorization into schools - or identifiable as the work of specific artists - as the cave art of Lascaux. In similar fashion, Aboriginal music is without parallels or obvious connections with any other cultures in the world.¹

Pace the pre-existence of Aboriginal music as the original art of Australia, it is with the dominant culture - with post-First Fleet times - that this thesis is concerned, and with a deliberate focus on a specific part of that history. No matter that the country was occupied by a race comprising many diverse groups and languages; the history of developments in Australian music before Phillip landed at Farm Cove in 1788 is close to tabula rasa.

As one would expect, the history of Australian colonial-era music is a pale reflection of the state of the art in England, inevitable because of 'feelings of cultural inferiority inescapable in a neo-colonial or provincial society.'² With the early settlements being controlled from London, with an administration comprising English military personnel and with a growing population made up of members of the English army and navy, and a considerable section of the new Australian population being former inmates of British prisons, the political and economic hegemony exerted by England was inevitably reflected in the first stirrings of the penal colony's artistic development.


Any lack of individuality from the establishment of the colony was only to be expected. What surprises observers from the perspective of the late 20th century is the length of time that obtained before Australian art discovered other sources of inspiration than those imported from the mother country. With reference to music particularly, the delayed period of self-development can be ascribed to several causes. A leading rationale for the imitativeness of Australian music and the lack of development of individual voices is the essentially imported nature of all art and the cultural bases of reference that artists who arrived in the country brought with them. Faced with the inhospitable and unfamiliar nature of the country, it was understandable that artists retreated into what they knew, taking refuge and inspiration from their inheritance and allowing it to colour their creativity.

Certainly, there were musicians of skill and insight like Alfred Hill (1870-1960), Frank Hutchens (1892-1965), Edgar Bainton (1880-1956), who celebrated in their fashion those aspects of Australia that they understood. But the tongue employed was European, in no small measure due to the fact that most of this generation of composers were born outside Australia. Even the attempts by an enthusiastic Isaac Nathan to utilise Aboriginal material dressed it up in 19th century harmonic and rhythmic accoutrements straight from the conservatoria of England and Germany: 'the failure of one civilisation to understand anything essential in the musical character of another.'

1 Covell, op. cit., 69.
These same civilizing sources determined the pervasive system of musical instruction which took root in Australia when the modes of musical education set by British conservatoria were transplanted to Australia, formalised eventually through the universities in the state capitals, but then sometimes through independent initiative. The prevailing method of instruction remained British and the higher sources of teaching carried out in Australia were dominated by English academics; an unsurprising, obvious consequence of the nature of the colony's cultural inheritance.

As Peter Sculthorpe has noted, in the 19th and early 20th centuries the problem with inheriting the British tradition (or at least working to a contemporary British code of practice in music) was that the English school of composition at the time was not a particularly rich source of innovation or inspiration. We were not isolated long enough to establish certain traditions to withstand foreign influences.¹ Emphasis was placed on technical expertise and the perfection of a scholarly approach to creativity: laudable ends in themselves but tending towards pedantry rather than inspiration or free-flowing creativity.

It would seem that the progress of Australian music was to a large degree disrupted, even stultified by the British inheritance. England underwent a sudden burgeoning of compositional talent in Ralph Vaughan Williams, Gustav Holst, Frederick Delius, John Ireland, Rutland Boughton) in the decades turning into and following the advent of the

¹ Peter Sculthorpe, *Corroboree to Corroboree* Lecture, 2MBS FM, June 1981.
20th century. Australia followed timidly, at a limping distance of some years behind. While the Vaughan Williams/Holst folk-song revival occupied the opening years of this century, Australian composers were still writing in that style well into the 1940s and 1950s. As Europe accommodated itself to the twelve-tone revolution and the twists and turns that typified the career of Stravinsky, in Sydney and Melbourne the first traces of modernity were to be found in Antill's Corroboree - first performed in 1946, 33 years after Stravinsky's Rite of Spring and clearly a belated offshoot of the Russian composer's work, regardless of the Australian musician's disclaimers. Dodecaphonic writing was only in its Australian beginnings in the late 1950s - nearly 40 years after Schoenberg's first essays in that new harmonic system.

In the following decade, the 1960s, there came a period in the life of Australia's compositional history that saw local practice catch up abruptly with a welter of progressions that had taken place in Europe over the previous half-century; The sixties have indeed witnessed a remarkable burgeoning of Australian composition. It is probably overstating the case to claim that this reversal occurred overnight, but the awareness, adoption and acceptance of contemporary modes of composition occurred very quickly.

Investigating the specific material that has been written by historians, commentators and musicians to memorialise the period to be examined proves to be a matter of piecing

1 Patricia Brown, 'John Antill', in Frank Callaway and David Tunley (editors), Australian Composition in the Twentieth Century, (Oxford University Press, 1978), 49.

together information, rather than being able to find extended volumes or even chapters that have this period as a focus. There have been some attempts to deal with Australian composition as a sequential history and there are also sources that concentrate on the years in question. But the information to be gleaned is uneven in its allocation of consideration and, with one exception, avoids taking any view of the development of compositional life as an evolutionary process or a Great Leap Forward. Making the problem more difficult is the fact that the main sources of reference are now quite old, the most recently published of the three major references dating from 1978.

The work that makes the most serious attempt to cover the period of Australian music history under discussion, showing the musical life of the nation from a broad perspective, is Roger Covell's *Australia's Music: Themes of a New Society*. This volume was published in 1967 and remains unrevised. It is still the only work that gives, at substantial length, an outline of Australian compositional development in a cultural and historical setting, treating the creative musical energy in the middle of this century as part of a continuum rather than as discrete entries in a catalogue of composers, as its few successors did.

In fact, Covell avoids the path of producing a list of composers with a *catalogue raisonné* of their works. In a more broad-ranging undertaking, the author traces the history of musical performance and entrepreneurship, state and Federal administration, and treats to some degree the history of Australia's music education as well. However, despite its

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1 Covell, op. cit.
breadth of approach and the invaluable general picture that is achieved in a remarkably short space, the core of the history comes in its Chapter 7, 'Creative Development', which begins with the country's compositional founding father, Alfred Hill, and concludes with the names of Barry McKimm and Robert Rooney who were, at the time of Covell's writing, the leaders of avant-garde in Melbourne's compositional/improvisational music scene. In less than a hundred pages, Covell moves as inclusively as he can across the spectrum of Australian composition.

By the time Covell begins his discussion of the post-1945 era, he has given a weighty discussion to the impressive figure of Percy Grainger (Chapter 5) and has also given prominence to Aboriginal music (Chapter 4). But the core of the book is concerned with composers that Covell knew and encouraged as chief music critic on the Sydney Morning Herald from 1960 to the present day and in his position from 1966 as founding head of the Music Department at the University of New South Wales. He begins with an affable treatment of some of Alfred Hill's larger works and moves rapidly thereafter, glancing only through a set of composer-academics such as Edgar Bainton, William Lovelock (1899-1986), Eugene Goossens (1893-1962) and Miriam Hyde (b. 1913). More space is allocated to Robert Hughes (b. 1912), Clive Douglas (1903-1977) and Margaret Sutherland (1897-1984) before Antill is reached. From this point, names and estimative/evaluative omissions are few and rapidly accomplished. Roy Agnew (1891-1944), William James (1895-1977) and Horace Keats (1895-1945) are the last of the senior composers who appear and Covell treats them as minor figures, probably because of their indebtedness to the English pastoral school of composition.

The cusp of modernity in Australian composition is reached with Raymond Hanson
(1913-1976) and Dorian Le Gallienne (1915-1963). Trevor Jones (1932- ), Eric Gross (1926- ) and George English (1912-1980) lead into the modern school with about a page given to each. The focal point of the chapter comes by way of Malcolm Williamson (1931- ) and Don Banks (1923-1980), who precede Felix Werder (1922- ), George Dreyfus (1928- ), Larry Sitkay (1934- ); then, after a break in the chapter, Peter Sculthorpe (1929- ), Richard Meale (1932- ), Nigel Butterley (1935- ) are examined in some detail with regard to their ground-breaking works and their philosophies. Finally, Ross Edwards (1943- ), Ian Cugley (1945- ), Gillian Whitehead (1941- ), Anne Boyd (1946- ) and Helen Gifford (1935- ) are lumped into one final summation, each meriting a sentence or two.

The value of Covell's chapter for this thesis is that it examines, albeit in a rapid style, the most important works by some of these composers, with musical illustrations provided. As far as Covell is concerned, those names that merit attention, focus and praise are Williamson, Banks, Werder, Sitkay, Dreyfus, Sculthorpe, Meale and Butterley. His evaluations of the longevity of these composers and their contributions to the musical development of the country remain unobjectionable because no improbable claims are made. But the pre-eminence of the book itself and its standing as a fundamental and important source concerning this period are probably due to the volume's lack of competition more than its analytical depth or evaluative breadth.

A commensurately valuable source of detailed information is a series of publications sponsored by the Australian Government and published in 1969. These are a *Catalogue*
of 46 Australian Composers and Selected Works\(^1\) and Musical Composition in Australia, (Including Select Bibliography and Discography)\(^2\), both compiled by Andrew McCredie, and The Composers and Their Works\(^3\), which is a companion volume that focuses on ten specific composers and allows them to speak about their own compositions in some detail, the text also appearing on recordings with the extracts or complete works that are being discussed.

The Catalogue has a brief biographical entry on each composer, followed in most cases by lists of works divided into categories (in which respect it is a precursor of the Callaway and Tunley volume) and provides bibliographies for further reference on each composer. The composers included show McCredie's fortunate ability to include names that have survived changes in fashion and altered perspectives over the last 30 years, as well as paying homage to composers whose music has a least a modest place in the history of Australian composition; for example, the names of Edgar Bainton, Alexander Burnard (1900 - ) and C. Edgar Ford (1881-1961) have not appeared on concert programs for many years now, although some of Bainton's works have recently been recorded on CD. A significant omission is that of the Melbourne composer Margaret Sutherland. Still, the other constituents of McCredie's 48 are either currently composing, if alive, or at least have one representative work to be heard, albeit irregularly, in these last years of the century.


As far as the bibliographical details of this Catalogue are concerned, what does emerge is the paucity of material that had been produced as contemporary chronicles up to the last year of that decade of vital activity in creativity in Australian music. Arundel Orchard's *Music in Australia*\(^1\) and Covell's *Australia's Music* recur in the bibliography repeatedly as do references to periodical articles and the 1954 *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*.

*The Composers and Their Work* is a remarkable production in that, given the limited space and obvious restrictions in terms of production, the composers are allowed to speak in clearly individual, unfiltered voices. Felix Werder's discussion of his String Quartet No. 6 expounds the composer's abstruse musical philosophy and world-view, expressed in idiosyncratic language that speaks volumes for the freedom given to the participants. Much the same could be said of the discussion by George Dreyfus of his *From Within Looking Out*, which follows the composer's well-established, garrulous mode of communication. The section on Alfred Hill, concerned with the setting of John Wheeler's poem *Green Water*, was written by McCredie and is largely biographical in content, with 14 lines only on the composition's nature. Noel Nickson treats Dorian Le Gallienne's settings of *Four Divine Poems of John Donne* and the *Sinfonietta* with more focus, at the same time giving an affectionate, non-hagiographic account of Le Gallienne's artistic journey, informed by biographical detail where appropriate.

But it is McCredie's *Musical Composition in Australia* that is, for the researcher, the most

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rewarding of the three publications. Within the short space of what is a large booklet, the author moves from the settlement of Sydney to the contemporary music world in Australia of the 1960s with facility and an inclusiveness that does not seem lopsided, as does Covell's treatment of the 'creative development' in the country. Certainly, there is a duplication of some material but the easing into the modern age does not come across as abruptly demarcated as it seems to be in Covell's work, where the composers who dominated Australian composition prior to the 1960s are viewed as products of a dead end in historical development.

The second substantial text that deals with the post-Corroboree era is James Murdoch's *Australian Contemporary Composers*, which appeared in 1972 and was reprinted three years later in paperback format.¹ Murdoch's approach was based on interviews. He singled out 33 composers, all but one of them still alive when the book was written and published. (The exception was Dorian le Gallienne, who died in 1963 and whose inclusion in Murdoch's collection is justifiable for his joint reputation as composer and encouraging critic of his peers and juniors, as well as the fact that Le Gallienne's death was untimely; but the space allotted to the Melbourne composer is small.)

*Australian Contemporary Composers* is notable for its outlines of various composers' philosophies and viewpoints. Murdoch gleaned a good deal of information from certain of his subjects concerning their perceptions about Australian music; in some cases, their opinions of others in the field. But the book is a definite product of the author/compiler's preferences, or else it shows a willingness to gamble on reputations that had, at that stage,

to stand up to any test of endurance. The young composer David Ahern is given more room than the senior figure of Antill, who produced a larger catalogue of works and was the subject of a greater number of recorded performances. Junior composers of the time like Ian Farr and Alison Bauld are given token representation; not much more is granted to Ian Bonington, Martin-Wesley-Smith, Peter Brideoake, David Lumsdaine or Dorian Le Gallienne. Even some of the senior figures are scantily treated; Clive Douglas, Raymond Hanson and Robert Hughes are given 'honourable mention' status but little more.

The composers on whom Murdoch focuses, in terms of space and depth of discussion, are Nigel Butterley, Keith Humble, Richard Meale, Peter Sculthorpe and Felix Werder. The career of each man is outlined; the important works are mentioned and described. But it is Meale who is given greatest room to expound his theories of composition and his worldview with reference to music. Indeed, it is in this encouragement of musicians to expatiate on their music and experiences that Murdoch's book achieves distinction.

At the same time, unlike the other two major texts and the three Government-sponsored monographs, Murdoch's book suffers from being unreliable; the author's dependence on the composers as sources of information about their own activities and output led to many discrepancies. Murdoch would take at face value a composer's information about some work in progress, a piece that was being considered or sketched at the time of interview but which eventually failed to materialise or turned into something else entirely. Hence, the work's practical value is questionable because many of the details are erroneous and some of the lists of works are faulty or misleading.

*Australian Composition in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Frank Callaway and David
Tunley, appeared in 1978 and completes a trilogy of texts that have given considerable treatment to composers active in the 1950s and 1960s. This compendium introduces a new name, that of John Exton, and treats certain musicians more lavishly than others in terms of allocation of space; for example, the most substantial chapter (and one of the more interesting) concerns Don Banks. Dorian Le Gallienne is here given equal length with Richard Meale.

Unlike the other volumes in this set of three books devoted to Australian music, the Callaway/Tunley work is a collective work; Tunley provided an introductory essay and Margaret Seares' concluding chapter includes many names familiar from Covell's work, as well as individuals who feature in Murdoch's volume.

Because of the various backgrounds and a wide variation in focus apparently permitted by the editors, this set of studies oscillates between music-focused discussions of individual works (Philip Bracanin on Don Banks) and appreciations couched in general terms (John Hopkins' contribution on Percy Grainger, and Maureen Thérèse Radic's account of the career to that point of Felix Werder). Its value partly resides in the various authors' lists of works and discographies related to their individual subjects, many of which are at odds with those supplied by Murdoch.

Apart from these books and Government-sponsored monographs, any other material dealing with the period 1945 to 1970 is confined to articles (both in musicological

1 Callaway and Tunley (editors), op. cit.
journals and the popular press) that deal with specific compositions or specific events, or to theses and treatises which also almost universally have a narrowed focus, such as specific compositions or stylistic practices. While the last 20 years has seen a sharp increase in research on various ethnomusicological themes and areas of research, studies in the field of contemporary Australian music have been limited to a few studies of individual composers and these - because the composers are still alive and productive - show signs of dating all too quickly. Beth Dean and Victor Carell produced an admiring biography in *Gentele Genius: a Life of John Antill* (1987)\(^1\); David Symons has produced a study of Margaret Sutherland (1997)\(^2\), and *The Oxford Companion to Australian Music* (1997)\(^3\) holds many references to the period of the 1960s, both to specific composers then active and to general movements, notably the section 'Composition in Australia, 2. 1961 to the Present' contributed by David Symons and Brenton Broadstock.

A most interesting if dated piece of research is Michael R. Best's *Australian Composers and Their Music* (1960)\(^4\) written as an examination piece for the Music III course at the University of Adelaide, and full of opinions and perceptions about composers in Australia. The author's observations are heavily coloured by the date of the lengthy

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essay's composition (1959), and the findings tend to be sympathetic to the traditionalists. But it is lively reading and the text pays attention to that period after World War 2 and in the 1950s which is even emptier of resource material than the 1960-1970 decade.

Best has little to say about the major figures about to make their presence felt in or about 1959 - Meale, Sculthorpe, Dreyfus and Werder - although some of them are mentioned, if chiefly as addenda to the main thrust which is weighted towards traditionalists and academically established characters. The whole thesis is a singular production, particularly as Best pronounces chiefly about music that he has heard in live performance or of which he has read the score. Most importantly, the author is almost alone in showing an interest in creative musical activity of his time.

J. D. Garretty's *Three Australian Composers*\(^1\) deals with Dorian Le Gallienne, Robert Hughes and Margaret Sutherland. its interests are certainly analytical, as has been the case with most theses on specific composers, but also the author attempted to place them in a more universalized perspective than is usually the case with academic treatises. There are introductory chapters on Australian art and literature before the musical life of the nation is examined. Garretty gives the three Melbourne composers themselves room to express their beliefs and their observations concerning musical practice and expertise, mainly the result of interviews that she carried out with each of her subjects. At the same time, there is a kind of unconscious naivety about the thesis which shows a lack of

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awareness of what constituted best compositional practice of the time. The sad fact is that, by the time Garretty was writing, the three composers were writing in styles and formats that were soon to become outdated even in Australia.

Some composers have attracted more interest than others as sources of academic study. Colin Brumby, a long-established Brisbane composer, has been the subject of analytical theses by Wendy Penny, Philippa Roylance, Sook Leng Tee and Catherine Flaherty.¹ These focus on specific works and tend to avoid placing Brumby into any kind of national context; rather, the aim is in each case an analytical one, dependent on the music's technical aspects. For instance, Philippa Roylance gives a substantial technical analysis of *Bring Out Your Christmas Masks* and *A Ballade for Saint Cecilia*; there, the interest of the work stands. An initial opening section concerns the relationship between the composer and his librettist, Thomas Shapcott. But there is no attempt to place Brumby in his own Queensland context, let alone that of the nation.

Penny Wood has written a thesis of grave intent with a level of analysis that is as precise


as that of the serialism-tracing writers for *Die Reihe*. She examines the *Purrrite, Fibonacci Variations* and String Quartet, which works represent Brumby's instrumental character during the 1960s. The author's comments on structure and its integral place in each work are illuminating but the analysis is inward-looking, intrigued by the constructional complexities of each work, rather than serving any wider musicological purpose.

Richard Meale has attracted great attention, not least for his stylistic somersault in the 1970s and consequent diminished interest in those works that brought his name to prominence. Perhaps because of the extreme nature of this change in his creative practice, there are very few serious studies of his music and none of his placement in the music of his times. Thomas Aitken's *Richard Meale: A Stylistic Survey* (1975) gives a rapid run-through of Meale's compositions, but its chief intention comes with an analysis of the 1971 piano work *Coruscations*, which is accomplished with dense, highly technical detail.¹ Nicholas Turner's *Richard Meale: Selected Works from the Adelaide Years 1969-1986* (1993) examines a crucial period in the compositional career of the composer but its content falls outside the focus of this thesis, beginning with the mature Meale rather than the pioneer bazing a new trail at the start of the 1960s.² A further exercise, Wendy Turner's *Richard Meale* (1970) describes the composer's achievements but does not give

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detailed explanations on the rationale behind his compositional progress.¹

Several other theses that have limited relevance to the topic concerning the pivotal years of the 1960–1970 decade take various other composers for treatment, the most popular of them being Peter Sculthorpe. Michael Hannan's contributions have been most helpful in offering supportive commentary on the thought processes through which the composer worked and providing a detailed examination of the nature of his accomplishments from the beginning of his career to the opera *Rites of Passage* (1972–3).² A later addition to the sources of information on Sculthorpe came in Deborah Hayes' *Peter Sculthorpe: a Bio-Bibliography* (1993) which outlines the composer's career, provides a catalogue of works, as well as references to and quotations from press reviews and articles of variable quality and interest.³ A further specialized study is Jacqueline Lim's *Peter Sculthorpe and Indonesian Musics: A Survey* (1994), treating the various adoptions and influences of Balinese music that can be traced in the composer's


music from the late 1960s. And an addition to this impact of Oriental music and culture on Australian musical practice is Melinda Sawers' *The Appropriation of Japanese Music and Culture by Australian Composers* (1995); again, of interest in following the compositional paths of some of the composers considered in later parts of this thesis but largely falling outside the focus of interest, which concerns the adoption of contemporary musical practice rather than its refinement by the adoption of Eastern musical forms and colours.

Sculthorpe also features in some joint subject examinations such as Hugh De Ferranti's *Gagaku and the Works of Richard Meale and Peter Sculthorpe*, and Jeannell Carrigan's *Towards an Australian Style*. Both studies examine the specific composers in certain lights. De Ferranti concerned with the impact of Japanese music on the composers, which in Sculthorpe's case began at the turn of the 1960-1970 decade, Carrigan concerned with vital characteristics in Sculthorpe's music that both predate and postdate the decade in question.

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George Dreyfus has been the subject of several theses, in particular the descriptive George Dreyfus by Kay Stevens (1970), and Stylistic Diversity and the 'Zelig' Principle in the Orchestral Works of George Dreyfus from the First to the Second Symphonies: 1967-1976 by George McClean (1994), in which the writer's interest stretches into areas and works that fall outside those of this writer.¹

Information on Nigel Butterley's early music is close to non-existent, apart from journal articles. Neither Sebastian Bonaccorso's Nigel Butterley: A Stylistic Overview nor Helen Hall's Nigel Butterley assignment are currently available.² Gwen Carbone's thesis on Helen Gifford's piano music stays close to an analysis of part of the Melbourne composer's oeuvre.³

An unexpected product of the 1990s appeared in two studies by Matthew Orlovich. The

¹ Kay Stevens, George Dreyfus, Music Literature 2 Assignment, University of Melbourne, 1970.


Helen Hall, Nigel Butterley, Music Literature 2 Assignment, University of Melbourne, 1970.

first concerns Clive Douglas\(^1\) and its core is an exhaustive bibliography, which is to some extent reproduced in the author's subsequent study of Robert Hughes \(^2\), one of the more lavishly presented studies in the literature. As with the Douglas thesis, the core is its exhaustive discography and bibliography; what it has to contribute to any perspective on Hughes or Douglas as considerable figures in Australian music's development is negligible.

The bulk of the material that is left after these volume-format sources are excluded comprises a welter of newspaper or journal articles on the composers (in the latter medium, often written by the composers themselves) or concerning their music. Few of these articles are of any length and in every case the application of an historical perspective is absent, possibly because the music being discussed or noted was too new (or even too old) in its language to be slotted into any category or sequence.

It seems an unavoidable necessity, before proceeding to the decade in question, to give an overview of the period from 1946 to 1960. This historical outline relies on written material, of course, but also - as in the main section - employs a large and untapped source of recorded material featuring the composers who were active during these years. This material has been chiefly compiled by the ABC, and the author has supplemented these tapes with interviews of some survivors of the period, especially the composers Peter Sculthorpe, Nigel Butterley, Helen Gifford and George Dreyfus.


The contradictions that come from any oral history reveal a great deal about the perceptions and prejudices of the speakers but even contrasting accounts of the same event have value in discerning not so much the truth of what happened but the value of the event itself. In this respect, for example, the impact of the premiere performance of Richard Meale's *Las Alboradas* takes on a different flavour when seen through the eyes of the composer's peer George Dreyfus, rather than when witnessed at second hand through the encomiums heaped on the work by Sydney critic Curt Prerauer.

The central task involving a review of the progress of compositional work in the specific period - a fruitful time, given the encouragement given to creativity throughout that time - is to re-examine the 1960s with significant use of the words of the principal composers, the chief compositional activists in three capital cities. While there is no intention to exclude activity in other cities from the thesis, it has to be recognized that the longevity of composers resident in those cities has been questionable. Even in Brisbane, the musical creativity as seen from the perspective of other, larger capital cities has been limited to the work of Colin Brumby. In this, the writer is simply following the path set by Covell, Murdoch, Callaway & Tunley, and McCredie.

The culmination or point of the thesis's investigations is to come to a conclusion concerning the cause(s) behind the burst of activity in the 1960s decade. While the sheer number of composers actively writing and producing music has increased since that time, the impact of their works has not generated as heated a partisanship, as keen an interest on the part of musicians or as large an audience as that which often greeted the output of Meale, Butterley and Sculthorpe in that decade. Was the 'revolution' achieved because it
was time for a change and historical forces had caught up with Australia? Or was it a lucky concurrence of circumstances that like-minded musicians began to exercise their craft at roughly the same time and produced works that seized the popular imagination?

Before this question can be answered, it is essential to understand the nature of the ground out of which this compositional world sprang and, to this extent, this thesis has to begin with an examination of the emergence of Antill's *Corroboree* and the largely accepted, conservative compositions (and composers) of the 1950s.
CHAPTER 2

The nature of Australian musical and cultural life in the Post-World War 2 years to the 1960s.

This section of the thesis is an attempt to outline the range and type of serious compositional activity that prevailed in Australian cultural centres prior to the 1960s, a decade which gave 'a totally new complexion to Australian music.' ¹ The following underlines certain qualities and characteristics that both indicated the tenor of what was to come and provided a backdrop against which the innovations of the crucial decade can now be seen in sharp relief.

As pointed out in the previous chapter, one characteristic that can be distinguished as seminal in the development of mid-twentieth-century Australian classical music would be the sudden displacement of the dominance of British influences - compositional, academic, aesthetic, even behavioural. However, prior to the launching by Australian composers in the 1960s into what was considered to be up-to-date European practice, there had been various attempts to strike both contemporary and self-consciously Australian notes in creative language, albeit in the latter case by the adoption of superficial instrumental colours, titles with local associations, along with artificial imitations (using orthodox instruments) of 'native' music (not much of which has survived any minor sensations caused by initial performances).

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¹ Callaway and Tunley (editors), op. cit., 3.
What is more damaging to the longevity of these artificial musical products than their lack of sincere or well-founded indebtedness and grounding in Aboriginal musical practice appears to be the embarrassment that comes through an increasing sensitivity to what constitutes 'native' Australian culture. Any justification for adapting Aboriginal culture, even attempts dating from the 1950s, would have to be questioned on the grounds of political suitability and artistic responsibility, notably in the current climate where accusations of exploitation of Aboriginal artists and unwitting or conscious exposure by whites of secret tribal ceremonies and practices have become the aesthetic world's equivalent controversies to the political arena's land rights and mandatory sentencing legislation. Looking back with the most benign attribution of intention, one finds it hard to countenance or sympathize with Clive Douglas's patronizing outline of those of his own compositional practices founded on indigenous chants and melodies.¹

Notwithstanding the attempts to find an individual and vernacular musical voice, no Australian composer emerged during the first half of this century in the art-form with, for example, the same abrupt burst as did William Dobell through his Portrait of Joshua Smith (1943), which at the very least brought Australian painting into public notice - even if the portrait itself did not signify a sudden, universal adoption throughout the centres of Australian culture of twentieth-century artistic practice.

Despite the initial success of Antill's Corroboree ballet, the trail blazed by the composer's work was not followed by other creative minds, a probable reason being

because the score sounded a pale echo of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* of thirty years previously, its echoing of which (no matter whether conscious or not) worked against its adoption by younger composers. A further probable cause for a lack of imitation could also have arisen because of the lack of inventiveness that the work displays. Finally, the work was another in a long chain of pieces, dating back to the previous century at least - to Isaac Nathan's experiments in Aboriginal music arrangements - taking its impetus from half-imbibed notions of an unfamiliar culture and therefore promising little solid basis for the establishment of a school of composition based on Aboriginal elements of instrumental colour, melodic shape or rhythm. A similar fate caused the foundering of Clive Douglas' attempts to create an idiom based on 'the mystical "dream-time" of antiquity'.

In drama, Ray Lawler's *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, which appeared in 1955, became a focal point of reference for Australian playwrights, if not a revolutionary change in their approach to their craft, by bringing the country's theatrical life into altered focus, as Britain's John Osborne was to accomplish the following year with *Look Back in Anger*. Part of the startling novelty of the play, as John Rickard proposes, was that it legitimized idiosyncratically Australian qualities of character and self-expression.

1 Covell, op. cit. 70.

2 An example of such is this composer's *Koorinda-Braia*, which Nathan claimed that he based on a song of Aboriginal provenance but which he arranged for vocal quintet in Victorian-era drawing-room style.

3 Douglas, op. cit., 81.
When The(sic) Summer of the Seventeenth Doll was first performed in 1956, the challenge to Australian actors of portraying cane-cutters and barmaids was met very much in terms of traditional 'character' accents. But as Australian plays became a staple part of the theatrical repertoire, actors and audiences adjusted to the wider realities of Australian speech.

Rickard seems to be suggesting that, in the world of theatre at least, Australians were finding how to be themselves and to show themselves without disguise or affectation.

In literature, the figure of Patrick White loomed large with The Aunt's Story (1948), The Tree of Man (1955), and Voss (1957) - each novel building on its predecessor to establish a formidable, one-man school of writing. Not that White came out of nowhere as a literary solitary; the development of Australian literature has featured some aberrations and more than its fair share of paths of exploration typified by detours into arcane experiments and unabashed derivativeness from European and American models, but its progress has been determined by British practice and ingrained habits of perception and expression, as in the lengthy novels of Henry Handel Richardson and even Marcus Clarke's For The Term of His Natural Life (1874).

Even so, despite the inescapable English bias, the actual content of Australian literature has often moved into the vernacular and given it brilliant, unabashed expression - even if in the process a new series of modes of perception was invented, as in the larrikinism of C. J. Dennis's The Songs of a Sentimental Bloke (1915) or the bush myths propagated by Patterson and Lawson to the status of almost universal adoption by Australians as

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1 John Rickard, Australia: A Cultural History; (Longman New York, 1988), 265.
exemplars of the national type or character -

...fraternalist groups...gutsy, game, loyal, materially generous, bibulously quarrelsome, woman-deserting, incapable of self-analysis or introspection, raucously mendacious and chronically resentful of hierarchy. ¹

Popular awareness in Australia of something approaching modern musical practice dates from Antill’s Corroboree, which today retains the historical importance of a seminal work, a watershed in the progress of music as a means of national reflectiveness; in some part due to its impact on unprepared Australian audiences, which was more dynamic in its effect than any other contemporary composition in this country; and also because of the proselytizing done for the work by Eugene Goossens in his role as conductor of the Sydney Symphony (coupled with a determination on his part to promote modern music of all kinds, home-grown or not). ²

If, as has been observed, the offshoots of Corroboree were non-existent or led into creative culs-de-sac, the actual practice of composition that, after Antill’s work, was given wide exposure stayed firmly entrenched in the British tradition. This was to be expected because, to some extent, the tried-and-true tradition is what Corroboree embodies: a civilized form of Aboriginality in which the difficult-to-annotate subtleties of melody and rhythm have been ironed out into 4-square phrase lengths and patterns.


Russell Braddon observes:

The fourth revolution of the legendary Sixties and Seventies was a cultural revolution. Its purpose was to winnow the prevailing culture until all the British and foreign muck had blown away and only a residue of mainstream Oz remained. This residue was then to be lavishly fertilised with a compost of leaves from the money tree until it produces [sic] a rich crop of Australian art, film, books, plays, dance and music.

So we winnowed like fanatic peasants until all the British and foreign muck had blown away, then found that there was nothing left. 1

Braddon's observations concerning the worth of cultural events in Australia during the following decades - the 1960s and 1970s - have a flavour of flippancy and dismissiveness, a wilful avoidance of fairness. He is here looking at Australia from the point-of-view of a historian who wishes to deconstruct the national myths of mateship, Gallipoli, the First Fleet, Ned Kelly and the other impedimenta that - as he perceives it - have given the nation a distorted, if not fundamentally untrue, view of itself. As the commentator is speaking as a populist, determined to make his point by reducing matters to a simple matter of true or false, the result he achieves is to over-simplify what was in fact a productive process. Still, the hyperbole has a core of truth and a certain relevance to the 'new music' of the 1960s: the British influence dissipated, although the 'foreign muck' enjoyed primacy of place, filling the vacuum that the displaced English pastoralist school left behind it.

In spite of the already noted achievements that emerged from various figures in

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Australia's musical world in the decades prior to the 1960s, there was little to be found - indeed, it is hard to find any premonitory sign, outside the world of experimental jazz¹, that gave any real indication of what was to come at the beginning of and throughout that decade: a sudden flowering, a burst of activity that was to lay new foundations for the country's cultural landscape in musical terms through the impact of specific works like Richard Meale's *Las Alboradas* (1963), Nigel Butterley's *Laudes* (1965) and George Dreyfus' *From Within Looking Out* (1962). At that point in the country's cultural development, the compositional sector of Australia's musical world had fallen well behind most other art forms in terms of awareness of current international practice and development. It is something of a historical truism that popularly accepted notions of modernity in mid-20th century Australia were conservative, both in relation to what was taking place in other art forms inside the country, and in terms of developments in overseas centres.

The Australian cultural world that was about to experience the first trail-blazing products of Richard Meale, George Dreyfus, Peter Sculthorpe and Nigel Butterley was an inward-looking, parochial and rather philistine arena; social commentators who attracted much attention by their incisive criticism of Australia's cultural life - Donald Horne, Humphrey McQueen, John Rickard, J.D Pringle - draw pictures that are far from optimistic. For instance, Horne evaluates literary Australian practice of the 1960s in a decidedly negative fashion:

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Criticisim of literature and the arts is poor, and some of it extremely cliqueish. There is a lot of 'knocking' and backbiting, sometimes reflecting in-group battles and sometimes perhaps a very real frustration about what to say.... Criticism is essentially a task for the intellect and the weaknesses of Australian criticism may be part of the general inability to pursue prolonged, subtle and exhaustive thought. Conversation about literature or the arts often shows the same characteristics: a few snap judgements, perhaps a bit of shouting, and then you pass on to the next topic. Conversation does not flourish in Australia. It is possible to find good conversation, but you have to know where to look.\(^1\)

Of course, there are many resonances with the current state of affairs in Horne's observations, which are not confined to the world of literature. Although the actual level of cultural activity has broadened and deepened, there are still trace elements of what A. Phillips labelled the 'cultural cringe' \(^2\) - the sense of inferiority that Patrick White mentioned to Robert Craft and Igor Stravinsky.\(^3\)

Singling out music for comment, Horne gives a layman's series of observations on the state-of-play in the mid-1960s - that stage at which the country's classical music creative renaissance was well under way:


Patrick White... A rugged figure with a craggy jaw and a hard stare... laments "the unofficial censorship in Australia, the provincialism that patronizes second-rate imports above first-rate locals, and the many intellectual deprivations of life in the antipodes." 
[Entry for November 21, 1961]
In music the boom in concert performances is now well established. In a year there are now almost a thousand public performances at professional level of serious music. Almost all of this is controlled by the Australian Broadcasting Commission. The A.B.C. controls all the permanent professional orchestras (two full size orchestras in Sydney and Melbourne and small orchestras in the other capitals) and engages almost all overseas musicians who tour Australia; it also provides the orchestras for the Elizabethan Trust opera seasons. The main criticism that is made of the A.B.C.'s concert policy is of its preference for the middlebrow. Australia is said to be isolated from live performances of contemporary music. In a kind of musical mateship the A.B.C. goes for the big numbers. There is no Third Programme, nor is there immediately likely to be. It has been estimated that at the most less than £2,000,000 a year of public money goes into the subsidy of music in Australia; its real patrons are the tens of thousands of Australians who pay to attend concerts.1

When viewed from a pan-Australian perspective, as in sociological studies like those of Horne and Rickard which examine the cultural milieu of the 1950s and 1960s, the arts in this country tend to be given back-handed encouragement, or encouragement by default because of the public profile events that they generate or because of the mimesis they offer of overseas experiences, as in this aperçu by Rickard.

In music composers have at last established a presence, often helped by universities providing them with a base. Even in opera, that most traditional of forms, a beginning has been made with Barry Conyngham's Flv (1984) . . . and Richard Meale's Voss (1986) . . . 2

What Rickard unconsciously achieves by the phrase 'at last' is a dismissiveness towards the initial activities of the generation that he mentions - of Meale and Conyngham, as well as of Peter Sculthorpe and George Dreyfus, Nigel Butterley and Colin Brumby, not to mention composers who were practising their craft in the years before the 60s - Larry

1 Horne, op. cit., 78.
2 Rickard, op. cit., 262.
Sitsky, Felix Werder, James Penberthy. And despite documented evidence of abundant musical activity, the popular perception as offered by Rickards is one of a sudden resurgence in the 80s, as exemplified by operatic compositions.

For those in the field of chronicling musical life, the heightened activity was present much earlier:

The decade of the sixties, however, saw the emergence of a repertoire coming from a group of composers who were to give a totally new complexion to Australian music. . . this period was notable for a growing awareness of music from the European avant-garde. . . organisations devoted to the propagation of contemporary music sprang up around the country. ¹

Reinforcing the vailidity of an abrupt growth in the standard of Australian composition relative to overseas activity, Murdoch in 1972 noted:

Within a decade or so Australian music has progressed from an uneasy provincialism to a precarious internationalism, not only in quality but also in recognition. ²

David Tunley sees an historic inevitability about the decade:

It would probably be true to say that the decade of the sixties has witnessed what was only theological, though rapid, expansion of trends evident for many years. . . What sets the decade apart from all others in the history of Australian music is that . . . a large responsibility towards composers was assumed by the Commonwealth government. ³

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¹ Callaway and Tunley (editors), op. cit., 3.
² Murdoch, op. cit., xi.
Indeed, what strikes one as a uniform observation from music historians and commentators - as opposed to the dismissiveness of generalist social critics - was that they perceived a sudden, unprecedented burst of activity of extraordinary variety and accomplishment, chiefly in Sydney and Melbourne, during the 1960s. More to the point, the music that was being generated and played was of a contemporary nature, full of techniques that mirrored developments in European music over the previous 20 years, composers adopting 12-tone and aleatoric techniques with enthusiasm and flair and promoting their works as based on contemporary European models rather than individual experiments or idiosyncracies like the experiments in 'free music' by Australian-born composer Percy Grainger (1882-1961).¹

It would be a brave undertaking, even forty years further on, to state definitively that a specific composer was the major force in directing Australian composition, or even to nominate two or three important figures and so to exclude others. At the time, however, the task was not shirked by observers and sympathisers. Critic Curt Prerauer had no difficulty in taking the plunge.

A concert which should go down in musical history was given by the International Society of Contemporary Music in the Cell Block Theatre on May 31 [1963]. For the first time a new work by an Australian composer played into insignificance all others on the programme - and the others were some of the foremost contemporary names, Messiaen, Dallapiccola, Petassi - as well as Menotti, that popular composer-businessman of today with both eyes on the box-office. This was perhaps one of the most exciting concerts Sydney can ever have witnessed. The work, Las Alboradas by Richard Meale, is a piano-quartet in three movements.

Meale has the inventiveness and forcefulness of the great men of the past and of today. There is also in this quartet a youthful fire, an inspiration.

a vitality lifting it into the sphere where music loses the temporal significance of the local product and becomes internationally important. ¹

This is not exactly shutting the church door and admitting no others but in this encomium Prerauer had unequivocally nailed his colours to the mast by making lavish claims for Meale, his protegé.

In part because of his adoption as a cause by critics of the calibre of Curt Prerauer and Roger Covell, and also through his position as federal planning and program manager for orchestral music with the the Australian Broadcasting Commission, Meale became a most influential figure in the Australian avant-garde at the start of the 1960s; Meale's scores held a sophistication of organisation and technique that mirrored what was being learned by interested parties of the current European and American schools and that anticipated, if not by much, the products of his peers.

The leaders of the contemporary movements at the time were also deeply involved in making music themselves. Meale and Butterley were also pianists who performed each other's music, but also proselytised for significant figures in the worlds of European and American composition. Dreyfus was an established professional, playing bassoon up to 1965 with the Victorian Symphony Orchestra (renamed the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra in that year). Werder has taught music for most of his life, as well as performing in his own ensemble, *Australia Felix*. Sculthorpe, although not a notable executant of his own or other composers' music, studied piano at the University of Melbourne.

Apart from the predominance of practitioners of music, there was an involvement by each of the significant composers in organizing music-making events, if not participating in them as performers. Such a level of engagement in their art ensured that, for many of the artists, the main concerns in their lives were centred on their own compositions - their gestation and performance.

Nevertheless, before giving voices to some representative composers whose work came to prominence in the years after 1960, it is instructive to observe the milieu (albeit that of Melbourne only) in which music of an established nature operated in the years directly preceding the sudden explosion of creative musical activity, particularly as the two composers concerned - Dorian Le Gallienne and Robert Hughes - were producing music at the same time as the generation that brought contemporary practices onto the Australian scene. Both men to some extent share the situation of their younger contemporaries in confronting the challenge of the new.
CHAPTER 3

Two Individualistic Predecessors - Dorian Le Gallienne and Robert Hughes

The composers who came to prominence in the 1960s took a good deal of the focus away from their predecessors. This resulted in a sense of division and no little bitterness at the Hobart Composers' Conference in 1963 (as adverted to later by Peter Sculthorpe). While some of the older composers tried to accommodate the rise in Australian musical life of advances such as chance operations applied to music and the various techniques of dynamic, timbral, pitch and rhythmic organisation available through serialism, others rejected such trends by which they were confronted at the Conference.

The careers of composers who reached prominence in the post-1945 era were not as attention-grabbing as those that followed, but there are some parallels to be observed. It is not improbable that the problems faced by the senior composers could have been harbingers of those faced by their successors; the experiences of two of the generation of Melbourne composers whose careers were well established before the 1960s might shed some light on the question that this thesis raises. Both held positions of some importance in the musical community and hence loomed large in the environments of some of the younger composers.

Whatever one considers of their music, both encouraged - in their own ways - the development of musical activity in Australia even if their interests and vocabularies were quite different. Like the Sydney and Melbourne composers grouped in Chapter 4,
Robert Hughes and Dorian Le Gallienne were colleagues. They were also composers without manifestos but typical for their era. Their observations on their own paths in their compositional lives, their expressed idiosyncracies on the musical life of their maturity, their observations on their peers and performance practices, all serve the salutary purpose of showing that the burgeoning of activity in the 1960s did not emanate from a vacuum; there was clearly a degree of compositional activity in operation during the 1940s and 1950s and it contributed to the climate of the coming decades, even if the attitudes of later and younger composers to their seniors was dismissive.

DORIAN LE GALLIENNE

Le Gallienne did not form a part of Australia’s 1960s contemporary music world in the strictest sense. His activities as a critic to some extent overshadowed his compositional career in that it gave him a wide audience for his writing, much more so than for his musical works. Indeed, the stylistic practices of the school of composition that he warmly embraced and remained comfortable with were offshoots of the conservative English pastoral school of several decades before his own productive years; he demonstrated that an Australian composer could write skilful, tuneful and fine-nerved music within the international commonplaces of a relatively backward-looking musical vocabulary. ¹

Born in Melbourne (1915), the composer first studied at the University of Melbourne

¹ Covell, op cit., 162.
Conservatorium. Subsequently he undertook further studies in England, both before and after World War 2; during the second of these visits, Le Gallienne was taught by Gordon Jacob. From 1954 until his death (1963), he was music critic for *The Age*, in which post he gained the reputation of an unusually receptive and encouraging reviewer of new music, even if the emotional and textural climates of the music he heard were alien to his own temperament and sympathies.

In fact, as far as younger composers (Butterley, Dreyfus, Gifford, Sculthorpe) were concerned, Le Gallienne the critic was of more significance (and, of course, utility) than Le Gallienne the composer. Even sympathetic voices such as the musicologist Adrian Thomas see that his influence lies in his critical writings and his advocacy as a writer for the *Argus* and *The Age.* ¹ As for his music, some works can still be heard on FM radio programs but rarely in the concert or recital halls. Thomas further observed that his music is 'varily popular', like the Sinfonietta of 1956 (see Figure 1), which Covell perceives as being 'in some ways, the work of a born minor composer.' ² Le Gallienne said of himself: 'I'm thoroughly Romantic...I like music to be be cut down to just as many notes as it can be and then no more.' ³ The last movement of this Sinfonietta underlines the neatness and clarity of his musical expression, even if the content is

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² Covell, op. cit., 162.

³ *ABC Composer Profile.*
unassuming as the Hindemith-type melody for piccolo in Figure 7.\textsuperscript{1} The harmonic language is toying with bitonality in the violin pizzicato accompaniment but Le Gallienne precedes this with a clear B-flat major cadence. The orchestral dispositions and doublings give evidence of the composer's concern for clarity, the realisation of his wish to 'cut down to just as many notes as it can be.' In this transparency of texture and simplicity of expression, Le Gallienne demonstrates his individual compositional voice.

In some respects it appeared that Le Gallienne himself, perennially ill with a heart condition and hence conscious of his own mortality, felt insecure about the worth of his music. In his position as critic, he would have been conscious of the latest movements in 20th century art and would have had the insight to discern his increasingly irrelevant place in Australian music as a composer. However, musicologist Thérèse Radic observes that he 'was impatient of the new direction composition was taking, preferring to write in an outmoded tonal idiom.'\textsuperscript{2}

There was an ambivalence in him - sardonic - something almost 'damaged'... for example, in the way he didn't write a decent program note about his own *Symphony* at its premiere... or later.\textsuperscript{3}

Thomas saw in Le Gallienne a black side. He despained about the importance of music in Australia. He was very sensitive to criticism and operated a defence mechanism by not saying too much... There were paradoxes in him: light and dark sides, trivial and weighty musics.

One factor Thomas emphasizes was the amiable integrity of the composer's character.

\textsuperscript{1} Noel Nickson, 'Dorian Le Gallienne', in Callaway and Tunley (editors), *op. cit.*, 68. Other composers referred to as influences on the work include Poulenc, Bartok, Shostakovich and Vaughan Williams.

\textsuperscript{2} Thérèse Radic, 'Dorian Le Gallienne', in Bebbington (ed.), *op. cit.*, 333.

\textsuperscript{3} Adrian Thomas in *ABC Composer Profile*. 
Figure 1: Extract from *Sinfonietta* by Dorian Le Gallienne
He was a totally 'good' figure, obsessed with music. He loved Australia's natural richness, its native flora and fauna.

Le Gallienne was an Australian composer ... but he felt the need to toe the line as set down by England ... He was proud to be Australian, but he was depressed by the culture and its lack of support for artists. His heart was both here and in England.¹

In the company of Dreyfus, Meale and Butterley, Le Gallienne's vocabulary and craft sound remote, from a bygone age. Prior to his second visit to London, the composer's level of creativity gave few signs of individuality; Thomas notes that, at this stage, Le Gallienne 'had the imagination' but not the 'oneness of style'; as well, he avoided responsibility for the bass in his works of this time.

As far as an impetus into mature creativity, Le Gallienne's studies with Gordon Jacob spurred him to produce his most substantial and enduring works - the Overture in E Flat (1952), Symphony in E (1953), Sinfonietta (1956) and Duo for violin and viola (1956). In this regard, he differed markedly from many of the other composers that followed him in having and acknowledging a mentor.

He...represents the developing point of the new music and not the direction in which it was going. He did not forge an art - he responded to it.²

Although obviously not taking part in any of the new movements in composition that were occupying the attention of the contemporary music scene at the time of his death, Le Gallienne was not unaware of the activity in overseas centres; he may not have approved

¹ Adrian Thomas in ABC Composer Profile.

² Murdoch, op. cit., 134.
of or wanted to participate in them but his reactions were not extreme. His colleague, Robert Hughes, presents a different case.

ROBERT HUGHES

The last among the group of distinguished and prominent Australian composers of his generation, Robert Hughes (born 1912) is still alive at the time of writing. His contemporaries (Raymond Hanson, Dorian Le Gallienne, James Penberthy) and even many of his juniors (Don Banks, Keith Humble, David Ahern, Ian Bonighton) have died, leaving behind legacies of variable memorability. But Hughes remains a reminder of the force in Australian music - in particular, musical administration through the ABC - that was confronted with the new music of Meale, Sculthorpe and Dreyfus; Hughes made little accommodation with the serial or aleatoric schools due to a deep-rooted dislike for a form of the art that meant nothing to him; finally, inevitably, his own art was superseded.

Following the conclusion to his thirty years' association with the ABC as a senior officer with extraordinary power, his output decreased and his name disappeared from orchestral programs rapidly. *Sea Spell* of 1973 received its premiere at the Red Series presented by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, followed nearly ten years later by *Essay II* (1982) for orchestra; what have followed have been works on a smaller scale. Even given the dates of composition of these later works, it is clear, on hearing them, that Hughes' aesthetic clearly belonged to an earlier time.

As will be pointed out by Helen Gifford and George Dreyfus in these pages, Hughes
occupied a significant role in the organisational ranks of the ABC. He was a music editor, orchestrator and arranger for that body from 1946 to 1976. Through his work, he came to an appreciation of the necessary and essential function of the Australian Performing Rights Association, of which he became chairman. In this position, he was able to promote the rights of Australian composers as a vital principle of fairness in Australian society, even if the actual music he had to champion was far from palatable to his taste.

Preceding the later set of ‘migrant composers’ like Werder, Sitsky and Dreyfus, Hughes came to Australia from Fifeshire, Scotland, when he was 17, after having been exposed to many concerts and having heard a good deal of music, which inspired him to such an extent that he began to compose. Indicative of his future career, he was ‘fascinated by the multiplicity of sound’ in the orchestral concerts he attended. By comparison, Melbourne in 1929 was a desert, and the artistic climate was shortly to worsen even more, due to the onset of the Great Depression.

At this stage he did not feel that he had a career as a musician, a composer; such people were ‘all in gowns at universities.’ To make a living, he got a job in an office and continued to write music because it was his absorbing interest. At the same time, he attended every possible concert he could in Melbourne; Bernard Heinze and Fritz Hart put on regular programs. Encouragement came from Hart when Hughes had his first

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2 ‘Robert Hughes in Interview’ with Christopher Symons, ABC FM, October 1988.
interview with him in 1932.\textsuperscript{1} The conductor was very kind about the work he showed: 'the best untutored stuff he had ever seen.'\textsuperscript{2} But Hart wanted to know why Hughes had come to Australia when everybody else went the opposite way. The composer himself stated that, even though Hart had kind words to say about the young composer's music, there was also an undercurrent of discouragement; Hughes should have stayed back home in Fifeshire.\textsuperscript{3}

His compositional practice and knowledge were gained through his own efforts. There was no teacher with whom he could communicate or from whom he could seek guidance. As for his belief about the essential praxis of music, he had

always been a great believer in the necessity for a theme...a line of character that can expand, become something else... That is the basic belief in my mind: there has to be some kind of characteristic phrase or idea that is worth developing.

In this respect he admired the constructive and developmental powers of Sibelius, whose works first became familiar to him through

Schneevoight \textsuperscript{4} [who] conducted here and introduced us to Sibelius... in those early days just after the war... It [Sibelius' music] was all very

\textsuperscript{1} Murdoch, op. cit., 116.
\textsuperscript{2} Symons Interview.
\textsuperscript{3} \textit{ABC Composer Profile}.
\textsuperscript{4} Georg Schneevoight, Finnish conductor and cellist (1872-1947); post-war guest artist for the ABC.
understandable, not complex. ¹

Apart from mentioning the encouragement he was given by a local organist in Scotland, and interaction with Hart in Melbourne, Hughes was reticent about the influences on his work but the singling out of Sibelius was a kind of admission, borne out by his own works which aspired to the unadorned grandeur of Sibelius.

The nature of musical life in the early 1930s was dominated by the semi-professional; for example, the bulk of the Victorian Symphony Orchestra was made up (until 1934) of amateurs. Compensating for the lack of professionalism, 'We heard a lot of music very cheaply.' ² The professional orchestras were to be found in theatres playing for opera, ballet, etc., and these bodies were, according to Hughes' standard of comparison, very good. Hughes did not hear his own work until 1935, although he had continued composing since his arrival in Melbourne without the stimulus of public performance. When the Centenary of the City of Melbourne was celebrated in 1932, the ABC instituted a composer's competition for the occasion; Hughes could not participate because he had not been an Australian resident long enough to qualify.

Chances improved in 1937, when Hughes took some pieces to the ABC and he was given a workshop tryout of one-and-a-half hours or so, specifically a Suite for Strings, conducted by Percy Code. On an occasion when Joseph Post came to Melbourne,

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¹ ABC Composer Profile.

² Symons Interview.
Hughes submitted a piece and Post performed it. 'I knew then that, if I wrote the works.... I would hear them.' ¹ All these performances did not get any further than the studio. As Hughes recalls the practice of the times, an Australian composer's work being played at one of the celebrity concerts was a very doubtful proposition; only Alfred Hill had sufficient weight as a known name to be given a public airing of that kind.

At this period, no other organisation except the ABC was interested in, or had the resources for taking on orchestral scores. J. C. Williamson's, the theatre entrepreneurs, could not (or would not) take a risk on staging an Australian work. Of course, for smaller-framed pieces - chamber music, song cycles - one could always find an audience in clubs and small societies, just as the British Music Society which would find room on a program for an Australian piece, as Dreyfus found out in later years. But as for composition as a career, there was 'no money, no living in it whatever.' ²

William James, at that stage Federal Director of Music for the ABC, wrote to Hughes (on war service in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands), asking if he had any spare time to make some small arrangements for ensembles. 'I thought it was a bit of a joke; I hadn't written anything for several years.' ³ But, at the end of the war, he came back to Melbourne and in 1946 began his career with the ABC.

¹ Symons Interview.
² Ibid.
³ Ibid.
His work - editing or arranging - in most cases involved scaling down scores, 'cueing the instruments down', as Hughes expresses it. For example, in a score asking for quadruple wind, it was his 'tricky job to fill in the missing parts of the instruments you didn't have into the ones you did.' ¹ Nevertheless, the result of this cutting and pasting was eventually its own reward since a large number of works were performed that otherwise might not have been heard; as well, Hughes was given plenty of scope for sharpening his skills as an orchestrator.

In somewhat stark contrast with many composers who came to prominence in the 1960s, Hughes and his colleagues were very close - comparing notes, allied in their work, seeing each other frequently. In a mirroring of the Meale/Butterley association of 17 years later, Dorian Le Gallienne worked at the ABC for a time with Hughes as a 'balance officer' before he took up his post as music critic for the Argus. Hughes helped him 'quite a lot'; for example, he orchestrated most of Le Gallienne's 1947 ballet *Contes Heraldiqus* from a two-piano score by the composer. 'We were interested in each other's work'. He also did orchestrations for Margaret Sutherland; 'she wasn't good at it, a bit mucky'. Even so, Hughes believed that '(Clive) Douglas was the best orchestrator of all of us.' ²

There was little room for self-indulgence in his career as if he wanted to carry on with his own composing, it had to be done in the midst of his ABC responsibilities. "I may have

¹ Symons Interview.

² Ibid.
been asked to write a work for a specific occasion/performance/group; you simply had to fit the composition in to whatever time was available - evenings, weekends. You thought about it in your travels, during lunch.'

After his appointment to the ABC position, Hughes' composition catalogue began in earnest as the corporation sponsored performances of his music. He withdrew most of his music before 1950, apart from a *Festival Overture* (1948) and the *Farrago Suite* (1949, revised 1965). It was during the 1950s that he produced those works by which he will most probably be remembered: *Symphony No. I* (1951, revised 1971), *Essay* for orchestra (1953), the *Xanadu* ballet suite (1954) and the *Sinfonietta* (1957).

During the 1960s decade, the list of productions reads sparsely, with only a handful of orchestral works - *The Forbidden Rite* (1961) dance drama for television, *Fantasia* (1963, revised 1968), *Flourish* (1968) and *Synthesis* (1969) - surviving; the latter three comprise barely nineteen minutes of music in all. This compares starkly with the products of the previous ten years, most of which were performed to significantly large audiences. Nearly all Hughes' output is for orchestra and his reputation as a superlative orchestrator, despite his own self-effacement in giving the palm to Douglas, stands firm.

The *Sinfonietta* was recorded twice, as was the *Symphony* - the latter once by Willem van Otterloo in Melbourne, the other in Sydney by Nikolai Malko. Hughes believed that

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1 Symons Interview.
Malko had no sympathy with the work; van Otterloo had. A solid craftsman with unruffled command over whatever he put down on score, his opinions on interpretations of his own works and the differences between them command more than usual attention.

As with several of his other works (*Farrago, Fantasia, Serenade*), Hughes revised the *Symphony*. When he began this work in 1951, it was in response to a Commonwealth Jubilee Competition held in that year. The Australian composers of some reputation at the time - Antill, Sutherland, Le Gallienne - were annoyed at the structure of the competition: its musical part was thrown open to all comers from everywhere in the British Commonwealth - Canada, the U.K., New Zealand. In other arts, like painting, the prize was confined to Australians.

Boycotting the event was mooted, but 'Most of us wrote a symphony. Mine was a bit wild in places, I must say'. Having only 10 weeks to finish it, Hughes put the score together very quickly. A local committee vetted the submitted compositions and those that survived this adjudication were sent to London to be judged by a central committee - Sir Arnold Bax, (1883-1953, at this time Master of the King's Musick), Sir John Barbirolli (1899-1970, conductor of the Halle Orchestra), and Sir Eugene Goossens. Hughes won the 'consolation prize' of £250 - a special one for Australian entrants - and his colleague Clive Douglas also received a 'consolation award' of £100.

When the winning work was played in Sydney and Melbourne and those by Hughes and

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1 Symons interview.

2 *ABC Composer Profile.*
Douglas, the consensus according to Hughes was that he had been robbed of first prize; the *Symphony*, he admits, had crudities, but 'vitality'. Niggling in his mind in later years was his own judgement that the work had a lot of good material that could be salvaged; it was worth revising and the revision twenty years later represented what he was 'thinking earlier on but didn't have time to get down.'  

He himself regarded the *Symphony* as his major work.

Composers are strange critics of their own works; they're not always right. In this instance I'm going on the words of musicians whom I regard highly.

It was the third symphony I had written; the other two were discarded. I wouldn't tackle another symphony. From my experience, to write a symphony and expect performances, you are taking a big gamble. As well, a symphony takes up a lot of program space for a composer of my standard.

Overseas conductors had advised him in this regard; still, they would be prepared to perform a shorter work and give it the full treatment.'

The closest Hughes came to another symphony was with his *Sinfonietta*. The invitation to write this came from Barbirolli whose instructions were brief: 'Write a work up to 20 minutes.' Hughes worked closely with the visiting conductor in editing some of the works to be performed in Barbirolli's Australian tour. Joseph Post alerted Barbirolli to Hughes' compositions. When Barbirolli asked to see something, Hughes showed him the *Symphony,* but the conductor could not remember the score from his time as jury

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1 *ABC Composer Profile*.

2 Symons interview.
member on the Commonwealth Jubilee Competition. He apologized to Hughes and agreed that the Australian's *Symphony* should have been the winner, offering to program the work at the Cheltenham Festival.  

The invitation duly came but Hughes was still mulling the Symphony around in his head and, as far as he was concerned, it wasn't satisfactory. So it was not heard at the Festival. But Barbirolli invited him to write a work for the Halle Orchestra's Centenary and this resulted in the *Sinfonietta*. The fact that it was being performed 'over there' (Manchester) made him 'very careful and critical' about what he was writing down.  

One of the characteristics of the composer's music that has gained currency is its Oriental flavour; Covell has written of a 'fondness for fleeting exoticism - though the exoticism is rather that of a young Scot reading a romance about Arabia or the South Seas.' Hughes knew what this meant in terms of colouring judgements about his music but was quite content for it to be seen as a distinguishing factor; he always liked the exotic. Musicians would come to him 'after a work and say, "It's you, all right; no one else writes that kind of music."' The Oriental 'feel comes from...the use of a lot of close intervals...semitones- close-knit melodies are characteristic.' The kind of exoticism can be illustrated by the harmonic ambiguities in the second movement of the *Sinfonietta*

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1 Symons interview.

2 Ibid.

3 *ABC Composer Profile.*

4 Covell, op. cit. p., 149.

5 *ABC Composer Profile.*
where the weaving of chromatic figures round a central node is a notable factor in the piece's construction (see Figure 2). The violin melody's slow ascent by means of elongated mordents to sustained notes at the start of each bar, a minor third higher in each case; the modal suggestions in the phrase's rise; the tune's return to its opening note; the underpinning provided by a steady, calm bass line - all these elements give an illustration of Covell's observation concerning an adopted exoticism, but one that is achieved without excessive colour or musical cliches suggesting Orientalism.

Even in his most atmospheric, colourful moments (Xanadu, the Intermezzo of the Sinfonietta), Hughes did not move into anything like the 'authentic' Asian sound-world of, for example, Sculthorpe's Sua Music III. He acknowledged that modern composers were searching for new sounds all the time, much more than 'we' did. 'I'm constantly puzzled by what I hear...how did the composer put this together?' In his view, although he maintained a constant vocabulary throughout his composing life, 'I wouldn't have done that consciously.' Inspiration was to 'simply write what's coming.' If it happened to be going in a certain direction, composers should 'let it take them that way'.

Although he wrote many film scores for documentaries and much incidental music for radio and television, 'I have never lost my love of the opera house. To this end, I think all of my writing tended that way. That may be why there is that colourful exoticism in the music.' When the 1960s struck and he heard the new music of Boulez and Stockhausen, for his group of older composers it was 'unbelievable, a new world. We had

1 ABC Composer Profile.

2 Symons Interview.
Figure 2: Extract from *Sinfonietta* by Robert Hughes

difficulty in reading the scores; they were 'very complex'. ¹ In his experience to that time, based in Melbourne, very few modern works had been played in concerts; one depended on radio broadcasts to learn about contemporary music. As Butterley also recalled, Goossens introduced Australian audiences to modern music - what Hughes calls 'the great composers'. For example, he heard, through Goossens, extracts from Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron*. 'Castro ² gave us the first Melbourne performance of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* in 1952/53. He also introduced us to Hindemith - *Die Harmonie der Welt*.'

Hughes made few accommodations with anything that came from Europe in the early 1960s, maintaining his own set means of composition, although he claimed that his *Fantasia* (1963) had a 12-tone theme;

> the whole of that composition is based upon these notes as they spread, become single-line figures or become extended steps. I enjoyed doing that; but it was not for me. My serialism is governed by lyricism; it's not an exercise. ³

To a large degree, Hughes believed that he and his colleague composers were victims of the Australian 'cultural cringe' towards Britain, an attitude that undervalued local work in all spheres. 'It hurt me in some instances. Audiences weren't happy with us.' ⁴ By 'us', Hughes meant Sutherland, Douglas and Le Gallienne, as well as himself. In the view of

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¹ *ABC Composer Profile.*

² Juan Jose Castro, South American conductor and composer; conductor of the Victorian Symphony Orchestra 1951-1953.

³ *ABC Composer Profile.*

⁴ Ibid.
one observer, 'With Sutherland and Le Gallienne, he [Hughes] made Melbourne the centre of creative activity in [post-war] Australia.' Yet Hughes recalled these years as difficult as far as gaining an audience; Melbourne concert-goers felt that their music was 'too new' - a far cry from the praise lavished on the succeeding generation.

There was a reaction by the audiences...against much of the Australian music they have heard. But I think this applies to music anywhere. If you look to overseas, the standard works are almost the whole of their repertoire. The number of modern works that sneak into programs are very few. Audiences don't want to understand or needn't understand.

In a reflection that could be echoed by the generation that succeeded his own, Hughes considered with pessimism his present position as an honoured name in the annals of Australian music.

I get a bit hurt sometimes that the sense of history seems to be lacking. ... Nothing's any good unless it's being written now or tomorrow.... We have a fair bit of history in this century... Alfred Hill, etc. not that we're forgotten, but that the best of our work is being ignored.

Not that Hughes was unused to having his music ignored.

At one time, we used to have Sunday afternoon free concerts. The few professional composers were all urged... to write lighter melodic, rhythmic, attractive works that could be slotted in to these concerts - an outlet for Australian music. A number of us agreed to write 'light music' - of 'quality'. We wrote; they ignored. Samples of this were my Serenade, Farrago Suite, Forbidden Rue ballet - all attractive enough to take their places in a program.

1 Murdoch, op cit., 117.

2 Symons Interview.

3 *ABC Composer Profile.*
But they were never used.\footnote{Symons Interview.}

Although his music slipped into neglect as the 1960s moved forward, Hughes moved with great impact and seriousness into an offshoot of the music profession that hardly attracted many of his younger successors. As well as being of assistance to his friends Sutherland and Le Gallienne, he also became 'a friendly avuncular figure to many younger composers'\footnote{Murdoch, op. cit., 117.} not least for his work as a member in the Fellowship of Australian Composers and both as member and office-bearer in the Australasian Performing Rights Association (APRA).

Hughes went overseas in 1967, in the early days of the International Rostrum of Composers at UNESCO, to promote the work of Australians in Paris. To such meetings, all the national or educational broadcasting networks send representatives with samples of works that have been performed over their networks in the previous 12 months which they consider may be of interest to the participants in the conference.

Your work is heard, you speak to the conference about the music, the delegates listen and select one or two of your pieces and then exchange tapes - orders for tapes, that is. We have been able to place lots of work in this forum.

At this time, the representative had to be a member of the ABC Music Department. UNESCO and the ABC supplied some of the costs for me to go over there.\footnote{ABC Composer Profile.}

APRA also contributed, wanting Hughes to do a run-around of the national broadcasters.
I was given a stack of records from APRA and I had to go to various appointments. Very tiring, but a good experience; I can't remember how much success I had out of it.

The Rome man said, 'We don't want to hear an Australian orchestra trying to play "The Barber of Seville" or "La Gazza Ladra"; we want to hear your stuff.' We were silly, sending Beethoven records to Germany. So I came back and told them what the other delegates wanted - and they did nothing about it. We still send people to the Rostrum and we place some material. 1

With this aspect of the composer's life, Hughes felt disappointed both in and for himself.

I ought to have worked harder. In a sense, my ability to negotiate the business side of a composer's problems and represent composers - which I did for so many years - took away much of the time and energy I ought to have put into writing my own music. Halfway through my career of being the front man for drafting committees, and fronting committees, I used to say that it was 'high time for me to stay home and someone else to take it.' The others would say, 'We couldn't do it,' to which my response was 'How do you think I did it?'

In Hughes' view, 'The next generation took all the benefits and none of the responsibilities.' In other words, the composers who followed him did not invest in APRA or any of the Fellowships and Guilds anything like the time that he himself did. 'At my age, I regret having had to spend so much time out of a sense of duty... when I should have said "No". 2

As for the social situation that a composer finds him/herself in,

The public decides in the long run. Tastes change. In my time, I've seen lots of change in classical writers. We only heard a handful of Mozart pieces when I was young. Now you can hear everything he wrote. You can hear now in a week what it would have taken you a whole year to get to hear.

1  ABC Composer Profile.

2  Ibid.
80 years ago. We live in an age of technological wonder and we can hear works that we would not have heard.¹

There is much that is inspiring and also dispirited about Hughes' view of what has happened in a field on which he once played a highly significant role. While one can expect that he would be unsympathetic to electronic music and the aesthetic of much music that is performed today, the composer maintains a somewhat jaundiced view of the Australia Council and the younger generation's lack of participation and responsibility for musical affairs and progress. While this attitude is the prerogative of a composer who has worked hard at this craft and for his peers, it still casts a pall over what has been an eventful period in this specific art form.

Not surprisingly, those composers active during the ferment of the 1960s who are still producing music have vivid memories of the decade itself and these make a vivid contrast with the memories of Hughes. Obviously, the differences can be attributed to the situations in which the composers found themselves - their stars in the ascendant while the older composers were being superseded - as well as to differing perceptions of the progress of music and their situations in it as the scene-setters on the Australian scene. For the most part, their careers have been overlaid with successes, acceptance and collaboration both during and following the 1960-1970 decade: a gradual transformation of the one-time avant garde into latterday establishment figures. In the next chapter, several of the composers whose paths were determined by their success and rise to prominence in the 1960s give their impressions of that decade. Many of their

¹ Symons interview.
observations (like those of Le Gallienne and Hughes) are blinkered - by geographical situation, by aesthetic isolation, by personality, by a defensive posture - but their reminiscences may serve to explain in some way why this particular era in Australian musical endeavour acquired the aura that it still maintains.
CHAPTER 4

The Voices of Australian Composers of the 1960s:

Colin Brumby, George Dreyfus,
Helen Gifford, Peter Sculthorpe,
Richard Meale and Nigel Butterley

Although there is a danger of receiving purely partisan accounts of past events, hearing first-hand accounts of the years with which this thesis is concerned and what led up to them from some of the composers who featured prominently in the 1960s on the Australian music scene must be an essential contributing factor to determining where the emphasis of this thesis should fall. The intention of this chapter is to give a voice to and to glean from seven musicians their insights and impressions of the significance of the 1960s in personal, individual terms. The outcome may be that these composers may see their progress as artists as due to their own efforts; or they may see their particular roles in the development of Australian music as being as much (or even more) determined by outside influences as by their own talents.

The composers discussed in this chapter are a varied group; despite the world of Australian composition being a small one, none of the men and women who feature in these pages formed a school, although there were several friendships generated between some of them.

There has been no attempt at even-handedness on the grounds of state representation or justification by population density; nor has any composer's popularity or longevity been of any importance in determining representation or inclusion. Two of the composers are,
and always have been, Melbourne-based: Helen Gifford and George Dreyfus are friends, Dreyfus organising the premieres of certain of Gifford's works in the early part of the 1960s decade. Richard Meale, Peter Sculthorpe and Nigel Butterley were all Sydney composers during this decade; Butterley and Meale were particularly close as colleagues in the ABC and as exponents of each other's music. Colin Brumby was born, educated and began his composing career in Melbourne but transposed himself to Brisbane in the late 1950s and has become an integral part of the musical life in that city for close to 40 years.

The sole criterion in choosing these particular composers has been ready availability of material. What has become increasingly apparent throughout the course of research for this chapter is that the 1950s and 1960s attracted a good deal of verbal attention during the years themselves but, looking back after 30 years, documentation is remarkably sparse and much of it (particularly connected with the Sydney trio of Meale, Sculthorpe and Butterley) is repetitious.

Compared to the other five composers who speak in the following pages, Brumby is an isolated figure, although a notable promoter and proselytizer for contemporary music, both Australian and from overseas. Educated first in Australian institutions, then in Spain and Britain during the 1960s, the path that his career took during that decade meant that he missed out on the collegiate reinforcement available to composers in Sydney and Melbourne. Whatever the case, this chapter treats him as an individual case.
COLIN BRUMBY

One of the most prolific figures in the 'renaissance' of Australian music during the 1960s was Colin Brumby. Although born (1933) and educated in Melbourne, his career has been based since the mid-1960s in Brisbane and he has become the most significant composer living in, and inextricably identified with, that city over the past four decades.

Brumby's acknowledged compositional activity dates from the 1950s, when he was a student of Verdon Williams at the University of Melbourne Conservatorium and a private student of Robert Hughes.1 In that scholarly climate and with conservative teachers, his language was orthodox and firmly tonal. As he recalls it, his initial musical perceptions were shaped early by 'Gregorian Chant, Victoria, Palestrina from the St. Pat's [St Patrick's] Cathedral broadcasts on Sunday mornings in 3LO in Melbourne when I was a student.' 2

This points to his career-long preoccupation with religious music, the catalogue of his sacred choral works making the most substantial component in a recent list of compositions. 3

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During his student years in Melbourne, Brumby received some lessons in composition from Dorian Le Gallienne, as well as those from Williams and Hughes, but he 'didn't want to learn.' His real teachers have been 'the Beethovens and Mozarts of this world' because he played piano arrangements of their works; at that stage, then, he developed his individual style independently of his teachers. This state of affairs lasted until Brumby went to London in 1962 to study with Alexander Goehr, which experience was clearly pivotal, a revelation for the composer since it 'had the effect of extending me as I had thought impossible previously.'

Be that as it may, Brumby's participation in the modern school of Australian composition has been found by one authority to date from before his time of study with Alexander Goehr. Philip Bracanin notes that, following Brumby's settling in Queensland in 1959, he took it upon himself to make a thorough study of the twelve-note method as employed by Schoenberg and Berg, and... composed a small number of dodecaphonic works. The first substantial work of this type was *Partite for clarinet and strings* (1961). The evidence is clear that, as far as familiarity with what then passed for advanced musical language in Australia, Brumby was self-taught. In this regard, he showed a similarity to many other composers in the country at roughly the same time, although Brumby has some claims to pre-dating others whose music at the time received greater attention.

'Sandy Goehr first taught me composition: a hard taskmaster.' Apart from the rigour of

1 *ABC Composer Profile*

2 Murdoch, op. cit., 38.

3 Callaway and Tunley (editors), op. cit., 173.

4 *ABC Composer Profile.*
his teaching, one of the more lasting impacts that his teacher had on Brumby was Goehr's imparting of information about the Fibonacci series; Brumby 'played with that', producing 'the best of the 12-tone works I wrote' \(^1\) - the *Fibonacci Variations* of 1963.

By 1964, as well as the *Fibonacci Variations*, the Piano Variations, Wind Quintet and *Antitheses* gave indications of his alignment with serial modes of composition and techniques. He had never heard any Schoenberg before his time at the Melbourne Conservatorium, and he recalls violinist Paul McDermott's String Quartet providing the fulcrum for a performance of the *Ode to Napoleon Bonaparte*. But the impact of exposure to serial compositional practice during his London studies was intense, something that he clearly regards in later years with some bemusement. For instance, his chief recollection of the 12-tone process of creating music meant that 'You didn't have to address the harmonic parameter. Twelve-tone composition is very good if you don't care about the harmonic parameter.' \(^2\)

In 1968, he wrote *The Art of Prolonging the Musical Tone*, which coincided with the composition of another major work, *Entradas*. This production of an educational text marked a significant difference between Brumby and his contemporaries in that it illustrated his pedagogic training and tendencies by expressing 'the importance that Brumby places on the relationship between the analysis of relevant works and the

\(^1\) *ABC Composer Profile.*

\(^2\) Ibid.
composition process.' 1 This discipline and a field of activity have hardly been investigated by any other Australian composer of Brumby's stature, although at the same time teaching has provided supplementary careers for many Australian musicians and creative artists.

'Melody is critical; perhaps the most important parameter for me.' As did many composers both in Australia and overseas, Brumby eventually abandoned the 12-tone system in his orchestral work *The Phoenix and the Turtle* (1974), composed after studies in Rome with Evangelisti 2 during 1972-3.

I found that I was organizing my material increasingly tonally. I was quite involved with amateur performers, and amateur choristers could not get around the sort of intervals that I was asking of them. ... The problem with a lot of contemporary music is not with the professionals, but how does the amateur cope? 3

While he came to prominence three decades ago as the most progressive composer writing in Brisbane, he appears to have been an isolate - having an impact on his students, of course, but, during the late 1960s and early 1970s, his was the solitary voice to emerge from Brisbane and to have continued producing after the heyday of Australian modernism.

'We ought to feel free, not restricted when you write music; if you feel restricted, go into

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1 Callaway and Tunley (editors.), *op. cit.*, 174.

2 Franco Evangelisti (born 1926), Italian composer who participated in the first experimental movements in electronic music, eventually rejecting all schools (serial, aleatoric) for an open form style of improvisation.

3 *ABC Composer Profile*. 

another career." 1 And, to that end, Brumby's catalogue of works is a lengthy witness to both his compositional breadth, in terms of the various styles and genres he has investigated and mastered, and his facility. A recent selective catalogue of his works (up to 1996) includes 20 orchestral works, 20 concertos, over 40 chamber works, 6 completed operas, 4 ballets, 8 operettas for children, over 100 scared choral compositions, an equal number of secular solo and choral songs, as well as 10 works for brass band and about 40 solo instrumental pieces. The works that first brought him to attention have not been greeted with universal acclaim; concerning his Wind Quintet (1964), Covell observed that it 'sounds merely laborious' and further that his works of this time have 'a conscientious, not to say dogged, twentieth century sound.' 2

An example of the clean craftsmanship and lucid technique can be found in the String Quartet of 1968 which shows facility in handling motivic cells, a keen ear for textural changes and an awareness of what is comfortable for the performers (see Figure 3). The retrograde of the first part of the extract that operates from Letter $N$ is as correctly worked through as any architecturally solid musical construct in this genre of composition, even to the point where, by simple retracing of the melodic line, one can detect printing errors in the cello and viola parts during the last two bars of the page. While a sample of structural soundness, the page also serves as an instance of Brumby's mixture of precision with lyricism; in spite of the acidity of the sevenths and seconds that permeate each instrumental line, brief melodies filter through the aggressive harmonic texture.

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1 Ibid.

2 Covell, op. cit., 233.
Figure 3: Excerpt from String Quartet by Colin Brumby


bars 81-98
What is of importance is the substantiation of Brumby's self-taught status - not in the field of composition itself, as a craft, but more in terms of the generally unexplored variety of schools and voices heard in the first half of the century in Europe which rarely moved to this country. In this composer's situation, his career in composition appears to have generated from the natural investigative urge that comes with an inquiring mind, a determination to expand his own horizons as well as those of his students and certainly some awareness of what musical activity was being conducted in other parts of the globe. It was an individual move, unspurred by any colleagues or outside sources, that brought Brumby to travel overseas, there to study with Goehr, subsequently returning to Australia and becoming involved in this country's avant-garde compositional activity in the 1960s.

GEORGE DREYFUS

George Dreyfus was one of several composers who found a new voice in the early 1960s. In the discovery of the potentialities of the new music, none was more vocal about his discoveries. Born in Wuppertal, Germany (1928), Dreyfus migrated to Australia aged 11, went through a normal secondary school education, attempted a university degree, then became a professional bassoonist, eventually occupying a desk for 12 years with the Victorian Symphony Orchestra. In 1965, by a combination of force majeure and predilection, he became a full-time composer and has remained so to the present day, earning a living by many commissions, a large number for the commercial world - advertisements, films and television series.

1 Murdoch, op. cit., 37.
Dreyfus was responsible for the establishment in 1961 of the New Music Ensemble, which provided a platform for...local composers. ¹ This was eventually superseded in 1965 by a Melbourne branch of the International Society of Contemporary Music, of which Dreyfus was an initial committee member and the organiser and conductor of the chamber music produced for (and by) this body.

Dreyfus attracted a group of composers, too individual of voice to be grouped as a school but thankful to be given a forum chiefly through his efforts. Helen Gifford and George Tibbits are among the significant members of this set of composers, both of whom persisted with composition well after Dreyfus' promotional activities were channelled into advancing the cause of his own music.

Some years before the explosion of Richard Meale's 'new' works, which revealed a sophistication in technical construction and emotional expressiveness relative to his peers, Dreyfus had composed *Music in the Air* (1961), his response to exposure to the score and recording of Boulez's *Le Marteau sans maître*. This was followed by a string of works - *From Within Looking Out* (1962), *The Seasons* (1963), *Quintet for Wind* (1965) and the opera *Garni Sands* (1966) - that revealed a voice of individuality capable of imbibing contemporary European influences and merging these influences with an innately expressive vocabulary.

So it is both as a proselytiser for others (and these included composers who were ideologically and aesthetically removed from Dreyfus' interests and taste) and as a

¹ Murdoch, op. cit., 82.
composer of high professionalism that Dreyfus made his mark in the 1960s. Like Brumby, he had been active as a composer in the 1950s but his pronounced public profile was launched in the following decade. Also in the Brumby pattern, Dreyfus eventually eschewed serial and twelve-tone techniques of composition after the composition of *Garni Sands* but went several steps further than his colleagues in that he actively sought success in the commercial musical world and has continued to create his works according to the demands of the market-place.

As Dreyfus himself admits, both in print ¹ and in interview, he was removed from the Victorian Symphony Orchestra in 1964 at the instigation of Clive Douglas. This abrupt dismissal, which he courted to a large extent, brought him to the stage where his career options were straitened and at this particular point he set himself up as a full-time composer.

He was able to do this through writing film scores. 'I sustained myself through Tim Burstall, through films.' ² In 1967, he gained the ANU Creative Arts Fellowship in Canberra - before the Australia Council was set up for the support of artists in Dreyfus' position and with a similarly prominent public profile. Following his time in the national capital, Dreyfus returned to Melbourne and undertook a series of overseas journeys that involved a U.S. State Department grant in 1969; several other grants and awards followed in the 1970s.

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Also following his Canberra fellowship came work for the Commonwealth Film Unit, writing music for documentary films throughout the late 1960s and into the following decade. 'You had to be pragmatic in those days. You couldn't compose your own way, or refuse to write what the director wanted.'

But before this decision to write for the marketplace, catering to the dictates of others, Dreyfus had put together an impressive body of work that came to grips with the sounds and techniques of contemporary music as it was being practised at the time in America and Europe. The most long-lived of these pieces (chiefly due to a well-publicised recording) dates from 1963 - *From Within Looking Out*. The composer's own evaluation of the work is as fair as any other: 'Terribly interesting. It was something; there was no music like that written in Melbourne.' As has always been the case with similar enterprises, Dreyfus had to call upon the goodwill of freelance musicians, students, and his colleagues at the Victorian Symphony Orchestra to present this work, along with those of his friends and colleagues, at concerts given by the New Music Ensemble which he founded in 1961. 'I ran the new music of Melbourne, and I ran it out of the VSO, giving 4 concerts a year for about 6 years.'

As Dreyfus recalls it, 'Overnight I became a New Music composer.' He dates this

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1 *ABC Composer Profile.*

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.
conversion' from the visit of Stravinsky to Melbourne in 1961, during which the composer conducted the Victorian Symphony Orchestra, in which Dreyfus was still temporarily first bassoon; Tom Wightman [the usual first bassoonist] was away. I had the Boulez/Stockhausen record....All of us had a piece that saw us move from one to another - from the old style to the new style.  

He spoke at length to Robert Craft, the Russian composer's secretary/amanuensis; everybody else in the orchestra wanted to talk to Stravinsky himself. As well as the stimulus of performing under the direction of one of the seminal figures in twentieth-century music, Dreyfus on this occasion also had the opportunity to find out more of what was happening in the world of contemporary music from one of that world's most able participants in Craft, an encyclopaedically-informed source and director of the Boulez/Stockhausen record mentioned above. Those pieces impressed me immensely. I did this (composing new music) out of a void. There was no real environment in Melbourne for new music, new art.

As far as he was concerned, From Within Looking Out sounded completely different to anything that had been heard in Melbourne before in its blend of structured twelve-tone passages with diatonic interpolations. In the composer's view, 'People realized that

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The 'Boulez/Stockhausen' recording was issued by CBS in 1958 and contained Le Marteau sans maître by Pierre Boulez and Nr. 5 Zeitmasse by Karlheinz Stockhausen, both directed by Robert Craft.

2 ABC Composer Profile.
George was doing something different to other people...out of nothing, really.' Was he, then, the home-grown discoverer of modernism? 'I was a neo-classical composer. I was in the orchestra and so I wrote the sort of music I heard.' Apart from that, there were 'no teachers here.' At the time that this ferment was going on with Dreyfus' approach to writing music, he was involved in writing an opera and progress had stalled. 'I realized I couldn't go on with the Casanova opera; it was the wrong music. I stopped in the middle.' ¹

For all the assumption of a mantle as First Citizen of the new music world, the composer also has no illusions about the worth of what he was producing. With a typical pricking of any perceived bubbles of his own significance, he exposes the worth of his first essay in serial music. As well as the Craft recording, 'I had the scores of the Manteau and Zeitmasse. I wrote them out in half-time, with longer note-values. That's Music in the Air!' ²

Another means of assistance in getting himself and his colleagues established was through promotion by, and support from, critics. 'In those days, Dorian Le Gallienne [critic for The Age] and John Sinclair [critic for the Herald] came to the concerts I gave; if it was interesting, they would come. That's how I got established. Now that's all gone; no more reviewing.' ²

This use of critics as promotional middle-men persisted well into the 1960s and included

¹ *ABC Composer Profile.*

Sydney critics. Curt [Prerauer, 1901-67, music critic for Nation and the Sydney Sun] kept on name-dropping me in his reviews. Why? Because Roger [Covell] had taken on the task of pushing Peter Sculthorpe and Curt’s favoured composer was Richard Meale, so they dropped their names on a weekly basis. But both critics used me in Sydney, [writing, for instance] ”Also on the program was a work by George Dreyfus from Melbourne, which was interesting.” 1

When asked about what, in the early 1960s, actually made the difference to the state of play for composers in Australia, what was responsible for the sudden leap into awareness of contemporary practice, Dreyfus gives a slight twist to the expected response of a sudden and faster access to new material in a better format - recordings and scores.

The big thing as far as learning about the new music was the 707 aeroplane, the Boeing 707. There were daily flights to London and the USA. You no longer had to wait for delivery of scores and recordings. Goody’s, the huge mail order record shop in America, was easily accessible.” 2

It was no longer compulsory for one to have to go overseas to get a musical education; at least, Dreyfus didn’t, in his first moves into writing modern music.

Was the cause of public awareness and an upsurge of creativity and support for modern music due to any encouraging individual on the Melbourne scene, like Donald Peart’s establishment of a forum for new music in Sydney? As Dreyfus views the state of affairs,

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1 Writer’s Interview.

2 Ibid.
'Some people say that it was due to John Hopkins [conductor and administrator, appointed the ABC's federal music director in 1963] but he wasn't in Melbourne until 1964.'

For all the broadening of musical parameters and introduction to new techniques of putting scores together, for Dreyfus 'Composing didn't come easy - except in films where you had to do it quickly if you wanted to keep your job.' And then again, on his part there was never a whole-scale adoption of the serial system or even a devotion to a specific mode of composition. 'Nigel [Butterley] and Richard [Meale] were both more "modern" than I was. I was really the epitome of a neo-classical composer.'

The social musical situation into which Dreyfus was introduced as a young composer in the 1950s was a mainstream one where experimentation was given little place. If you were seeking for more than the usual run of ABC subscription concerts or anything to amplify the experience of established musical practice, then there were some limited opportunities. 'Clubs were the mainstay of the musical thinking life - like the one Nancy Weir had, and the British Music Society. John Sinclair and Dorian Le Gallienne thought that they were important. Every year I did [played/presented music at] one of those music clubs.'

1 Writer's interview.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

The British Music Society, founded in 1921 by Louise Dyer, still presents recitals, encourages performances by Melbourne musicians and, through its Dorian Le Gallienne Award, encourages Melbourne composers. Nancy Weir's 'club' was probably an offshoot of the Australian Musical Association that the pianist helped to initiate in London in 1952.
The purpose in taking on the limited exposure that these clubs gave to Dreyfus was a self-regarding one. 'I got the reviews, whereas Clive Douglas [ABC staff conductor, and composer] didn't.'\footnote{Writer's Interview.} What Dreyfus means is that, even though the orchestra recorded the music of Douglas and the resultant tapes were broadcast on ABC radio, the performances were not live and therefore were not the subject of critical comment in the daily press, which confined itself to concerts and recitals.

In this sense, Dreyfus felt that he was progressing in his career by actual participation on his own merits as a member of the Melbourne musical world; as for his seniors, he remains less than complimentary.

We [the Victorian Symphony Orchestra] never played a piece of Werder's [Felix Werder, Melbourne composer] all the time I was in the orchestra . . . . More to the point, Felix taught me what not to do as a composer. [Margaret] Sutherland got played at MSO concerts and reviewed; she was a committee member of the Lyceum Club.\footnote{An organisation with a certain political weight and importance, restricted at that time to women with university degrees.} Dorian [Le Gallienne] was recorded under sufferance - because he was a music critic.

Still a matter of disgust to Dreyfus, even if the outcome was minimal press coverage, was the fact that

every piece by Clive Douglas and every piece by Robert Hughes is on record . . . . Their [Hughes's and Douglas's] music was music of bank-clerks. Clive Douglas would bribe the orchestra; let them go early. He was the epitome of soullessness.\footnote{Writer's Interview.}
More than many of these colleagues, Dreyfus was involved in the business of making music on a full-time basis, as a career. After starting his association with the Victorian Symphony Orchestra in 1953, his daily life was ‘being in the orchestra. The other life was being a composer, perhaps out of boredom.’ The progression to serious composition was initiated in part by conductor Kurt Woess who told him (in 1958, during Dreyfus’s second stint with the Victorian Symphony Orchestra, after Dreyfus showed him some of his neo-classical scores) to get a German magazine (Melos) and scores - to keep up, to find out what was really going on in the world of music.

Dreyfus used the restitution money that his mother received from the post-War German Government to buy scores from Bärenreiter. Of all the material that he imported, however, one made a great impact, his record - the afore-mentioned Zeitmasse/Marteau record. But having the record to listen to was only half the story. Having the scores was important; you couldn’t take down the music from the records….not *Le Marteau* and *Zeitmasse*.

Even before Dreyfus began his modern works in the early 1960s, he claims that

I knew of my incompetence as a composer because of the Hindemith pieces we were playing in the orchestra. We played *Petrouchka* in the pit [Her Majesty’s Theatre, where Dreyfus played bassoon before moving to the Victorian Symphony Orchestra] night after night in 1951. We also played Walton’s *Facade* a lot. Then I had Eimert’s book [Herbert Eimert, *Lehrbuch der Zwölftontechnik*, Wiesbaden 1950] of 12-tone music which taught you how to write it. If you want to see what to do with a tone-row, to find an appropriate tone-row, look at *The Seasons* [trio by Dreyfus, composed 1963] - Webern-type rows.

I stopped writing ‘big’ music. Then I wrote in the evening - and it was always

1 *ABC Composer Profile.*
what I was playing in the orchestra, e.g. the Hindemith *Symphonic Metamorphosis* is in the film music for *Sebastian the Fox* (The Pirates).  

At the beginning of the 1960s, Dreyfus was introduced to film-score composition by Dorian Le Gallienne who recommended him to the attention of Burstall and the Eltham Films company, for whom Le Gallienne himself had been writing film music.

As well as the film music, Dreyfus was also creating three scores that made his reputation as Melbourne's most prominent contemporary-music composer. He wrote three 'crossover' pieces before leaving the Victorian Symphony Orchestra.

*Music in the Air* (1961) for baritone, flute, viola and percussion, is a setting of a text by Ronald McCuaig. Dorian Le Gallienne said about *Music in the Air*, when it was played at the British Music Society, 'George used to write such lovely music.' This piece of new music was negatively viewed not only by the critic; Dreyfus was told by the Society organisers that he 'couldn't come' any more; they didn't want his music.

*From Within Looking Out* (1962) for soprano, flute, viola, cello and vibraphone was chosen as Australia's musical entry for the 1965 Italia Prize. This succeeded in communicating an emotionally limpid atmosphere, showing a feeling for instrumental colour, a textural lightness and a lyricism in its treatment of the voice that are highly individual and rare in Australian compositional circles of the time (see Figure 4).

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1 Writer's Interview.

2 Ibid.
Figure 4: Extract from *From Within Looking Out* by George Dreyfus


FL.

CEL.

VIB.

SOP.

VLA.

FL.

CEL.

VIB.

SOP.

VLA.
The third of these three pivotal works was *The Seasons* (1963), a chamber work for flute, viola and percussion, extracted from a film score that Dreyfus wrote to illustrate the works of Australian artist Clifton Pugh.

Following these transitional pieces that gave evidence of his new compositional voice came the composition of Dreyfus' opera, *Gurni Sands* (1965-6). While attempting to find a mode of composition for this work, 'I started copying Henze. I was having difficulty making my music look contemporary. I had my own ideas but I wanted them to look contemporary; so I used Henze's method of writing scores.'

In 1964, when Dreyfus was dismissed from the Victorian Symphony Orchestra, according to his own account, the reason for his being given notice was 'dumb insolence.' His present-day response is to look on this debacle as a blessing-in-disguise.

I didn't have the courage to leave the orchestra; it was just luck that they threw me out.

Clive Douglas didn't just want to get rid of me from the orchestra but also to ensure that I ceased to exist as a composer. First thing, I took all his films from Film Australia. James McCarthy was the new Music Officer

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1 Writer's Interview.

Hans Werner Henze, German composer, born 1926, dominated the operatic composition world in the 1950s and 60s with *Der Prinz von Homburg* (1958), *Elegy for Young Lovers* (1959-61) and *Der Junge Lord* (1964). Henze first embraced Schoenbergian serialism, then abandoned it for the sake of richness in vocal and instrumental writing.

2 Dreyfus, *op cit.*, 65.
at Film Australia and he was stuck for a composer; Moneta Eagles had left. ¹ I was smart and knew how to use the new technology; I was coerced to use it - the company had no money so I had to make the orchestra sound big by interfering with the mixing etc. And I knew how to do it. When Clive Douglas and Bob Hughes were in charge, they had no idea of mixing. My scores sounded "new" because I went to the cinema. I listened to John Barry's scores. ²

As for a historical assessment of what resulted from the ferment of the 1960s, Dreyfus has determined opinions.

None of the golden boys [from the 1960s] have made it onto the world music scene or into the history books. We don't rate on a day-to-day basis in Europe. Japan definitely had the same development as we did in the 1960s with new music. We all, all periphery countries, discovered Webern at the same time... in the 1960s - not like Stockhausen whose early works show Webern's influence in the late 1940s, or Rene Leibowitz and his first students in 1945.

I did an ISCM³ concert and played the music of Sydney's contemporary composers; they never played mine... I was smart. I went to Sydney and did things... and I always went and saw Curt [Prerauer]. He was a long-lost father figure/friend.

All of this activity in both Sydney and Melbourne was generated by Professor Peart. ⁴ He pushed me - a great influence. He gave me that scholarship [UNESCO, 1966] by putting me forward. I happened to get

¹ Moneta Eagles (born 1924) was musical director of the Commonwealth Film Unit from 1957 to 1964.

² Writer's Interview.


⁴ Donald Richard Peart, 1909-1981, musicologist and foundation professor of music at the University of Sydney.
it because it was accidental; they decided to give it to an Australian because the country had been paying its United Nations dues since 1949, and the time was ripe for a recognition of its international good citizenship.

Adelaide Festival ISCM Festival programs were determined by Peart in Sydney (1960).

In 1962, I did something in Adelaide at the ISCM concerts. In 1964, Douglas wouldn't let me go, wouldn't give me leave from the MSO. David Cubbin did From Within Looking Out without me. In 1966, we did Zeitmasse.

Peart wanted to get the ISCM to be real. It couldn't be because it wasn't a national body: it was a Sydney body. Peart wanted to show that the ISCM wasn't just Sydney. But I said, 'I don't need to do this: I've got my New Music Ensemble.' Eventually, in 1965, I went with the ISCM idea because it was me wanting to show that the orchestra hadn't 'got' me. ¹

Dreyfus mulls over the past still, although he insists on the primacy of the present and the primacy of place he currently gives to fleshing out his own stature as a compositional figure. But clearly, his passions can still be roused by recollections of the days of the New Music Ensemble and Melbourne's branch of the ISCM, along with the personalities of the preceding generation and Australian music's elder figures during the 1960s - Clive Douglas, Robert Hughes, Roger Covell, Donald Peart, Dorian Le Gallienne - all of whom are still fresh in his mind.

Through all the rhetoric and the unabashed partisan writing and conversation, however, it is clear that Dreyfus was, like Brumby, a largely self-made contemporary composer but, unlike Brumby, one who studied with nobody. Because of his employment as a pit musician and his two periods playing for the Victorian Symphony Orchestra, as well as his later career as a composer for films, there were many musicians in Australia that he knew but

¹ Writer's Interview.
he admits to learning how to compose from none of them. He credits the change in his path from a marching-in-step neo-classicism to twelve-tone composition as being indebted to several causes - the availability of LP recordings, a contraction of travel time between Australia and Europe, the impact of familiarity with a specific pair of scores and performances, his own inborn desire to be a modern composer and a driving compulsion to be an active musician, to be involved in making new music and performing it.

As well as his importance in illustrating the situation of the self-taught composer, he was also important to his peers - both in Melbourne and throughout the country - in giving their works a place in the many concerts that he organised in the 1960s, thereby establishing a camaraderie with several of them, none more than Helen Gifford.

HELEN GIFFORD

Born in Melbourne in 1935, Helen Gifford rose to prominence in the ranks of Australian composers during the 1960s with a series of chamber works that revealed a highly refined and mature voice. With Anne Boyd, Gifford has the distinction of being one of two female composers of their generation who continued to write music and attract interest and commissions well after the heyday of the 1960s and 1970s.

Gifford studied harmony at the University of Melbourne with Dorian Le Gallienne who 'was able to suggest to her a wider horizon, encouraging her to attempt original work'.

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1 Murdoch, op. cit., 96.
As with so many Australian composers of her time, however, Gifford did not follow a course of composition study with any one teacher. She travelled to Europe in 1962 and gained first-hand experience of contemporary music practice and composition.

In 1966 she was working at the Preston Institute of Technology where she was asked to 'write up' a Japanese Music course; she wound up teaching it. This preceded a visit to India in 1967 and then to Indonesia in 1971, both of which 'brought the increasing influence of Asian music into her work' 1 - a trait that she shared with her contemporaries Sculthorpe, Meale and Boyd.

She recalls her position at the time, having to earn a living at the same time as composing. 'George Dreyfus used to say that "composing was something you did on weekends or at night." 2 Dreyfus and his group of friends who played in the Victorian Symphony Orchestra (as he did) provided the best - and only - outlet for composers since these people would actually play music that Gifford, Dreyfus and his composer friends wrote.

In her younger years, she was 'very impressed by French music', especially Ravel. But as the 1960s progressed, she acquired long-playing recordings issued by UNESCO of world music - music from South America, Africa, Japan, India, Afghanistan. Along with the visits to Asia, That educated me on the music of the world. I don't sound Asian to myself. But it changed me.' 3 For instance, she found that she loved the melancholy of Arabian

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1 Thérèse Radic, 'Helen Gifford', in W. Bebbington (ed.), op. cit., 238.


3 Ibid.
music. To be introduced to the music of the world lit up her own music.

Richard Meale and Nigel Butterley, because of their employment at the ABC, would hear the latest music from overseas before other composers in Australia; as programming officers, tapes from foreign broadcasting companies and organisations were submitted to them for consideration, as well as any scores that accompanied new music. Gifford felt very envious of them but the situation encouraged her to choose a career in librarianship: so that she too could have access to and buy scores and records. Her first if indirect contact with modern music came through a position she held in an architectural library. In the course of her daily round, she came across pictures of the Philips Pavilion, which had allegedly been built by Le Corbusier; in fact, the building had been designed by one of the French architect’s pupils who also happened to be a composer of contemporary music: Iannis Xenakis.

Also in the early 1960s, Gifford came into contact with James Murdoch who had returned to Australia after working in various musical fields in England and Europe and seemed knowledgeable about contemporary music and art. Murdoch’s meeting with Gifford came about through architecture; he was interested in expanding the horizons of Melbourne’s architects by playing modern music to them - an enterprise that he pursued for some time. Concurrently, in his efforts to promulgate modern music, he was also trying to educate (musically) the painters in Melbourne.
In Murdoch's Melbourne activities can be seen the hand of Donald Peart (as George Dreyfus also found). Peart revived the Sydney branch of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) after a long period of dormancy (it dated back to 1928). Peart himself was appointed to the University of Sydney's Music Faculty in 1948. For all his pioneering work carried out for Australian contemporary music, his academic speciality was as a medievalist.

Peart involved James Murdoch in the modern music surge and he (Murdoch) came to Melbourne circa 1964/65 to start up the ISCM here. 'None of us had any sense that it was worth anything. For instance, nobody was interested in taking photos.' ¹ The first President of the Melbourne branch of the ISCM was a lawyer, Peter Brusey who, with his wife Dorothy, was enthusiastic about the arts. Others involved with the ISCM were George Tibbits (who brought in 'a literary eloquence that was entirely absent' ² from the music scene), Dreyfus, Gifford herself, Felix Werder and his students. Murdoch also added to the society's ranks a range of non-musical performers.

As Dreyfus had found before her, apart from limited avenues provided by small organisations like the ISCM and Dreyfus' own New Music Ensemble, achieving performances of one's music was a difficult process. One person was given responsibility for endorsing scores for ABC performance: Robert Hughes. Gifford, aware of Hughes' antipathy for contemporary music, by-passed him and went directly to

¹ Writer's interview with Helen Gifford, 28/7/1998.
² Ibid.
conductor Patrick Thomas. Thanks to Thomas' efforts, *Chimera* (1967) - Gifford's first work for full orchestra - went onto an ABC tape-recording in 1969, as did *Canzone* and *Phantasma* in 1968 (both also conducted by Thomas).

Gifford knew that, at this time, it wasn't just Australian composers who discovered Asian music - not just Meale and Sculthorpe and herself, for instance. Other composers whom she admired were discovering its possibilities and adapting it for their own specific purposes; for example, Britten's gamelan sounds during *The Prince of the Pagodas* ballet (1956) and later for the opera *Death in Venice* (1973). Such a process of assimilation and learning, she believes, never stops: Luciano Berio, a particular star in Gifford's admired firmament, has 'just discovered' African music (1998). Gifford has also detected African influence in the scores of Steve Reich.

The influences that came to bear on composers of Gifford's generation, she proposes, were so rich that they over-ruled national schools. Earlier Australian composers who had studied with English musicians felt more weighed down by their tradition; 'our lot weren't....We were desperately wanting to know what was going in Darmstadt and Donaueschingen; we wanted to prove ourselves in their terms.' ¹ An example of Gifford's response to the serial school can be seen in such pieces as *Catalysis* (1964) which has resonances of the Webern Variations for Piano Op. 27 and even traces of the oscillations of dynamic and attack in Boulez's piano works of the 1950s and 60s like *Structures II* and the Piano Sonata No. 3 (see Figure 5). The extract also helps to

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¹ *ABC Composer Profile.*
Figure 5: Extract from *Catalysis* by Helen Gifford

(Red House Editions, Melbourne, 1997): bars 13-24
illustrate, if on a small scale, Gifford's sense of dramatic ebb and flow with the spiky
tearing of bars 13 to 19 leading to a line of constricting two-part counterpoint before the
dynamic calm and overlapping chords of bars 22 to 24.

Gifford agrees with the experience of Meale and Dreyfus in that she believes that the
advent of the long-playing record had a remarkable effect on composers, probably more
than any teachers did. 'They [recordings] were a tremendous influence on my generation;
a pervading, prevailing influence. We were educated by LP records.'

Gifford's output, like that of Meale, flowered in the 1960s. Beginning in orthodox
manner with a Piano Sonata (1960), she composed a Septet, Skiagram, Phantasma (see
Figure 4) for string orchestra and a setting of Christopher Brennan's The Wanderer in
1963, Red Autumn in Valvins in 1964, a String Quartet in 1965, Cantillation in 1966,
Chimaera in 1967, Myriad and The Glass Castle in 1968, Imperium in 1969, then taking
up a position attached to the Melbourne Theatre Company as provider of incidental
music. Some of the suggestive titles - Phantasma, Catalysis, Cantillation, Chimaera -
were '60s titles' and 'reflected a certain edge to that time', according to Gifford as if she
were 'feeling the glow of the world she was composing into'.

But among the composers who found their compositional skills in that decade, Gifford
stands as one of the most fertile. By her own admission, the leap from other-influenced
work to speaking in an individual voice came about by exposure to new musics - the

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1 ABC Composer Profile.
2 Ibid.
traditional music of Asia and Africa - accomplished on her own, rather than as a directed course of study at a specific institution or with a particular teacher. In some respects, Gifford makes a suitable companion for Peter Sculthorpe whose imbibing and utilisation of world music has been more geographically limited than Gifford's experience, but who has contrived in a similar fashion to utilise such influence, working them into his music with more picturesque effect than Gifford but also finding inspiration from the music of other countries rather than working with a teacher-composer.

PETER SCULTHORPE

When George Dreyfus speaks dismissively of the 'golden boys' of the 1960s, he refers to a group that was given plenty of encouragement by official organisations and the musical community at large, and exposure through bodies like the International Society for Contemporary Music or the Australian Broadcasting Commission, but eventually did not deliver on its promise. However, one composer who did produce popular, durable and acclaimed works - one who did deliver - was Peter Sculthorpe, who has the highest public profile of any of the group that came to prominence in the 1960s, although fortunate in that his career had already become well-publicised earlier than that decade.

Born in Tasmania (1929) and educated at the Conservatorium of Music in the University of Melbourne, he began composing in his student years. Progress in finding a voice was not easy; nor was gaining access to contemporary music.

It was hard because there were few recordings to find out what was going on. One was limited to the Oxford History of Music in Sound, e.g. Varese's Octandre. A friend of mine who was in the army in England got me the
Krenek book [Studies in Counterpoint]. I lent the book to George [Dreyfus] and that's when he decided to become a composer.¹

Sculthorpe was obliged to give in to economic imperatives after his graduation, and in 1952 ran (in partnership with his brother) a sporting goods shop in Launceston. He continued composing, for a time influenced by the Krenek book.

I soon grew out of the book because I could see that it was useful for European composers who were reinventing their culture, but it didn't have any meaning for me.²

Reviewing his Conservatorium years of the late 1940s and early 1950s, Sculthorpe recalls:

I did feel alone...everyone else seemed to want to write in an international style...that seemed rather foolish to me...Quite early I wanted to write a music that would in some way be associated with this country...on its lowest level.³

While following his retail career, he continued composing (The Loneliness of Bunjil (1954), Sonatina for Piano (1954); music for revues, drama, radio and television) and was drawn to the music of the Tasmanian Aborigines (heard on wax cylinders). The Sonatina attracted attention because of its inclusion at an International Contemporary Music Festival the following year. This was particularly encouraging because of what Sculthorpe found to be a severe lack of performance opportunities in Australia.


This information about Krenek's book [Studies in Counterpoint, New York, 1940] is at odds with Dreyfus' version of events in which the book concerned was by Eimert and Dreyfus lent it to Sculthorpe. In fact, it is more than probable that both books were used by both composers.

² Writer's Interview.

In 1958, Sculthorpe began studies at Oxford.

I didn't go overseas specifically to study with a composer. I went over to Oxford to satisfy my father because he didn't understand what I was doing and I thought that a doctorate from Oxford would please him.¹

From the geographical transposition to Britain he was able to view Australian culture (such as he knew it) from a new perspective. 'Our cultural future lay not with Europe but the Near North.' ² This identification with Australia-in-Asia, viewing Australia as part of the Asian landscape (in musical terms), constituted the most important step during his time in Oxford in Sculthorpe's self-perception and in his awareness of the intellectual and ethnic siting of his music. The composer himself attributes much of this broadening impact on his thought to British musicologist Wilfrid Mellers, who 'introduced me to music that I'd never had an opportunity to hear...I came to feel less alone. It was clear that there were other composers who didn't need the traditions of Western Europe.'³

Sculthorpe has written that he believes 'that Australia is what one might call a visual country.'⁴ Put another way and a thought imputed to him by an interviewer, 'We function more in terms of what we see than what we hear.'⁵

¹ Writer's Interview.
² ABC Radio Program.
³ Peter Sculthorpe, Sun Music, (ABC Books Sydney, 1999), 57.
⁴ Peter Sculthorpe, 'Sculthorpe on Sculthorpe', Music Now 1, (February 7 1969), 10.
⁵ ABC Radio Program.
*Irakanda IV* (1961), written as an elegy on his father's death, was a particularly effective work to mark his return to Australia. Sculthorpe believes that it is one of his best works.

Even so, 'It became clear that I couldn't continue in this way. Expressionistic influences were starting to take over' his compositional thinking, which was a strange progression because 'I don't think we [Australians] are an expressionistic people...we are impressionistic.'

Observing Sculthorpe's complete oeuvre, Anne Boyd notes the lack of an intensely expressionistic element, or one that would be indebted to turn-of-the-century German composers.

I don't think the Sculthorpe works are born out of angst. It is a more constrained feeling... constricted... an almost obsessive need to repeat himself [in his work]... Even when you find him experimenting, there's still this sense of obsessive repetition. Although the surface is diverse, the underlying structures are very much alike.

Ian Cugley - composer, academic and one of Sculthorpe's students - notes that, by about the middle of the 1960s, Sculthorpe considered the possibility of reverting to serialism in his compositions, a reversion to his Krenek-influenced days. In *String Quartet No. 6* (1964-5), he had reached the end of what Cugley typifies as the 'Irakanda idiom.'

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1 *ABC Radio Program.*

2 Ibid.

3 Sculthorpe wrote four works bearing this title, 'an Aboriginal word of uncertain origin which I found in the early 1950s. For me, it has always meant, simply, a remote and lonely place.' (Peter Sculthorpe, *Sun Music,* 68).
Sculthorpe's intentions is a kinship with Krzysztof Penderecki. 2

A year later, he became involved in Balinese idioms.

The 60s were important to me because Donald Peart got me to teach ethnomusicology. I had no training in it and I was about one step ahead of my students. And, while I had always been drawn to Asian music, for the first time I was really finding out about it. 3

The gradual absorption of Balinese parameters into Sculthorpe's music formed a complement to the 'Irkanda idiom'. At this time, Colin McPhee's Music in Bali 4 was a revelation to him.

In the first place, I simply tried to imitate the sound, [as exemplified] in Sun Music III and Tabuh Tabuhan. Then I tried to use the techniques (women pounding rice- the way they all have a different rhythm, a different length). The third stage was where the very spirit of the music entered my own music without my having to imitate the sound or taking over the technique. 5

He was interested in the structures of Asian music, he claims, although Coralie Rockwell sees it as more of an interest in the linear aspects of music and also the colours, the

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2 Polish composer, born 1933; most noted as composer of Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima (1960).

3 Writer's Interview.


5 ABC Radio Program.
textures, the timbres, the sounds.¹

Whether it was a concern with the underlying structures or the accidents of Oriental music, Sculthorpe moved further away from European parameters. Anne Boyd’s observed differentiation is that Sculthorpe’s music is impersonal in its structure but distinctly personal in its essence.² At this stage of his compositional life, Déserts (1950-1954) by Varèse was very much in his mind, as well as some of the French-born composer’s early percussion pieces.

One of the more beneficial personal influences on Sculthorpe’s career was Sir Bernard Heinze, Professor of Music at the Conservatorium of Music in the University of Melbourne when Sculthorpe was a student there.

Heinze pushed me, back in the 1940s. He organised for me to have the first concert of my music at the Conservatorium. He used to come to Launceston when I was young and, while he encouraged me when I was a student in Melbourne, there was a distance. When I stopped being a student and moved to Sydney in 1963, things warmed up. He introduced me to musique concrète—and to a lot that you would have not thought he would have been capable of knowing or being interested in. From a career point-of-view, he was a fantastic support.³

In the mid-60s, Heinze asked Sculthorpe to write a piece for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra to take on overseas tour, one of the first times that an Australian orchestra had

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¹ *ABC Radio Program.*

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.
undertaken a European tour, and surely the first commissioning of a young Australian to write a work for such an enterprise. Sculthorpe wanted to say something that was quite unique, very Australian, unlike what he had written in Europe.

At about this time, Penderecki's *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima* was being performed in European and American concert-halls. Nevertheless, the similarities between *Sul Music I* and the Polish composer's work are superficial, the string sound-production devices that they share were by that stage common property. 1 In any case, Sculthorpe is only secondarily a texturalist; even in the colourful palette of *Sul Music I*, there is an embryonic melody on the trumpet at the work's opening which illustrates one of Sculthorpe's characteristics: growth by accretion. At all events, this piece marked a simplification, albeit a stylized one, in the composer's work and the critics of *Sul Music I* (and the criticism persisted into the next three *Sul Musics*) saw its ultimate effect as of 'picture postcard music'. 2

Alongside this latter-day critique, the first reading of the piece by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in 1965 led to a downing of instruments and a negative reaction on the part of the body for which *Sul Music I* had been commissioned. A meeting was called at which

1 'Despite the composer's self-acknowledged debt to electronic music and despite its obvious kinship with the international family of sound pieces initiated by Penderecki's *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima*, the score remains unmistakably Sculthorpe's property; and it is even a relief when some of his characteristic rhythmic pulses for fiercely splintered string harmonics disturb the slow deep-breathing of the piece as a whole.' (Covell, op. cit., 208-9).

2 Anne Boyd, in *ABC Radio Program*. 
Lois Simpson\(^1\) spoke and informed her fellow musicians that

they ought to play the piece because 'Peter could write a good tune if he felt like it so we should just humour him'. But the fact is, they did walk out at first glance at the score. \(^2\)

To the charge of 'picture postcard' composition, Sculthorpe's view is,

One has to start somewhere. It would be impertinent of me to think that I could penetrate the music by going straight to the heart. One has to start by imitating. If the criticism offered above is taken at its face value, then the solution seems to be that, 'Once I've done this picture postcard, then we can get to the serious letter.' \(^3\)

Cugley judges the work as part of the total output.

In most of Sculthorpe's music, the immediacy of the effect, while very striking, is all there is. That's all there is to that piece....A piece that deliberately avoids intervallic and rhythmic relationships is *Sun Music 1*; it contains a very high level of texture and colour material.

Indeed, as one can see from a dynamically climactic page from the score, the composer uses the orchestral groups as discrete sound blocks in a language notable for dramatic gesture constructed from simple motivic elements (see Figure 6). The tools used are orchestral timbres and dynamics, by which Sculthorpe creates a kind of dramatic gravity, the music moving slowly, thus allowing the listener time to imbibe the disparate colours and (on this page of the score) release from tension.

\(^1\) Cellist with Sydney Symphony Orchestra, teacher at New South Wales Conservatorium of Music.

\(^2\) Writer's Interview.

\(^3\) *ABC Radio Program.*
Figure 6: Extract from Sun Music I by Peter Sculthorpe

(Faber Music, 1985); bars 92-97
But the rationale behind the work is a search, a striving for structural development:

Sculthorpe was trying to get away from the small range of intervallic materials he had used till then. He was fascinated by the immediacy of the idiom. He tried to evolve his concern in earlier pieces with intervallic material and apply that to sound material.

So that, as Cugley sees it,

The real strength of *Sun Music I* is that Sculthorpe hasn't gone berserk and tried to construct strange noises. He has used a small range of material and polished the relationships between those very small elements; doing with tone colour what he had done with intervals. ¹

As the 1960s drew to a close, Sculthorpe's interest in Japanese culture grew at the same time as his interest in Indonesian art dwindled.

The sophistication and culture of the Japanese fascinates me. In the 1960s, the influence of Japanese music came through a kind of austerity... how many notes I can pull out? In recent years I have been using Japanese melodic patterns, and scales. Some Japanese scales are absolutely identical with Australian Aboriginal scales. ²

- after which statement one realises that Sculthorpe's compositional resonances have come full-circle through the two decades.

Cugley was unhappy about the attention paid to Sculthorpe between 1963 and 1967. He saw Sculthorpe as

someone who was called upon to play the Great Australian Composer. He does fill the role very well... If you had to choose a person to act the role of Australian's leading composer, he was the obvious choice. But he didn't have the chance to get away and write music.

¹ *ABC Radio Program*

² Ibid.
In Cugley's perception of Sculthorpe as a social phenomenon,

There was a conflict with what he wants to do and the pressures put on him to carry the flag for Australian composition; if he doesn't do it, it will be to the great disadvantage of Australian music as a whole. ¹

Anne Boyd is more charitable in her perceptions. To her,

Sculthorpe was preoccupied in the search of finding an Australian voice. He felt that all Australian music was borrowed or derived from fairly out-of-date and decadent European trends. This was particularly true of music ... We had somehow opted for English pastoralism or French impressionism but we couldn't express something in our own language. In a way, he went right to the opposite extreme. We had been imitating: we were producing second and third-rate cultural products.²

Sculthorpe is, of all the Australian composers of his generation, the one with the most openness to influences of many kinds and the most successful in internalizing each strand of his compositional armoury and welding the complex web into a consistent work. The fact is that his voice is a unique one. As one commentator notes, 'Sculthorpe's path has essentially been highly consistent, and experiments with other styles and techniques have generally been tangential.'³

As for his Sydney peers, Sculthorpe has an unusual respect, particularly for their work in making a breakthrough, even if the terrain unveiled was not exactly novel to him.

I think *Las Alboradas* [by Richard Meale] was more important than *Laudes*

¹ *ABC Radio Program.*

² Ibid.

³ Patricia Shaw, 'Peter Sculthorpe', in W. Bebbington (ed.), op. cit., 508.
[by Nigel Butterley], maybe because it was performed before "Laudes" [by a year]. But suddenly people all around the country realized that this sort of music was being written; it galvanized interest - positive and negative. I went ahead writing my music and was not as influenced as Meale and Butterley by what was going on in Europe . . . . My music was not quite acceptable in ISCM circles. \(^1\)

To the composer's latter-day amusement, his music was seen in avant-garde circles as dated, almost retrogressive.

People would say about me, 'Peter's such a nice man; pity about the music. When [Donald] Peart arranged an ISCM concert in London and *Tabuh Tabuhan* was played, a claque organized from Australia actually booed the work; the London Sinfonietta's playing was appalling but the claque was booing the piece, not the players!' \(^2\)

As for his treatment by music critics,

Back in the 1960s, they were very kind. Curt Prerauer was the most wonderful friend, writing wonderful pieces about us in *Nation Review*. What he did for our morale was fantastic. Unfortunately, he did later become very pro-Richard [Meale] and it ended up being anti-me. Two camps existed in Sydney. If a piece of mine was performed, Richard's people would boo it, and vice versa. Things like that were exciting - almost to the point of fisticuffs . . . . Yet Richard and I have always stayed friends; our supporters got heated. I'm glad it happened because we need some passion around the place.

At the time of this critical polarisation,

Curt was stirring the pot a little bit. 'Listening to Meale after listening to Sculthorpe is like hearing Schoenberg after Zemlinsky.' \(^3\)

One of the pivotal occasions in the sequence of stages that led to a popular realisation

\(^1\) Writer's Interview.

\(^2\) Ibid.

\(^3\) Ibid.
that contemporary music had become a fact in Australia's artistic world was the 1963 Composers' Conference in Hobart, where established and senior composers, whose careers had been nurtured by the Australian Broadcasting Commission and whose self-assurance had been unchallenged by any winds of change from overseas, were brought face to face with the younger generation that was writing music of startling and unsettling character. Sculthorpe was in attendance but views this occasion with mixed feelings. On the one hand, it was inevitable that younger voices had to be heard.

Looking back, perhaps it wasn't a good time. People like Clive Douglas and Robert Hughes were getting up and almost weeping in front of us, feeling that they had been left behind. These young composers were coming up with all this modern music that they didn't know about. Robert Hughes publicly booed a piece played by Larry Sitsky; it was as much about the situation as the piece. Feelings were running incredibly high. Looking back, the event might have blighted some careers.¹

Those careers would hardly have been Sculthorpe's own but rather composers like Douglas and Hughes who were brought up short by their own alienation from this new wave in composition. Indeed, when faced with the acerbity of Larry Sitsky's Woodwind Quartet (the piece that provoked Hughes' negative reaction), it is little wonder that Sculthorpe himself felt that it might not have been 'a good time.' Even so, Sculthorpe's view is that 'The 60s were crucial. Looking back, they were a bit small-town, small-time, but pretty special.'² That is to say, the excitement and animosities that arose did not rate very highly in world terms, despite the enthusiasm of some seasoned critics like

¹ Writer's Interview.

² Ibid.
Prerauer and Covell. Nevertheless, when considered as events on a local scale, they meant a good deal to the participants; concerts of new music, premiere performances, the attractiveness of change, even if just for its own sake - all mattered intensely to participants in the musical world like Sculthorpe himself.

As the new decade dawned, Sculthorpe achieved an extraordinary success with Love 200, (1970) written to celebrate the bicentenary of Cook's discovery of Australia. This cross-cultural piece fused the Sydney Symphony and the pop band Tully in an 'event' complete with lighting and smoke machines on the final night of the 1970 Sydney Proms series - a farewell to the enthusiasms of the 1960s, written in an accessible style calculated to excite a youthful audience. Far from being allied inextricably with its time, however, Sculthorpe believes that 'It could be done today with another rock group.'¹ In this kind of 'happening' on a large scale, the promotional and administrative scene in Sydney concert-giving was more polished than that in Melbourne because 'there was lots more support from powerful sources, especially John Hopkins; and the ABC would record the concerts of modern music.'²

As one of those whose name is linked inextricably with the development of a modern musical tongue in Australia, Sculthorpe has speculated on the question of why a coming-of-age took so long, why the country was so late in developing a musical tradition: he sees it as due to an historical misadventure.

Music in England was at its lowest ebb in the 18th and 19th centuries....

¹ Writer's Interview.
² Ibid.
We were not isolated long enough to establish certain traditions to withstand foreign influences.

Hence,

Most music written here had little relation to place. 1

It was a culture transplanted, and not one which was rich enough to sustain original creativity. It is one of Sculthorpe's most meaningful legacies that he has enhanced the richness of the country's musical vocabulary as well as insisting on giving his music an unmistakeable sense of place.

As with Dreyfus - his co-student at the Melbourne Conservatorium - there was no direct influence, no teacher that determined the composer's stylistic path. Sharing in what clearly appears to have been a general experience for young composers in the 1960s, Sculthorpe cannot point to a musical influence of overwhelming importance in his stylistic development but rather to the sources of much encouragement - from Heinze, Peart, Hopkins, his peers, as well as the advantages given him by numerous awards, commissions and academic honours.

In capturing the attention of critics and becoming the centre of a group of devotees - admirers and pupils - Sculthorpe shared common ground with Richard Meale, although Sculthorpe's name was well-known when Meale's first significant acknowledged works caused a stir on the contemporary music scene in Sydney. Sculthorpe has retained a wide audience and produced his music consistently, year after year, commission after commission; Meale's compositional travels have been less smooth.

1 Peter Sculthorpe, Corroboree to Corroboree Lecture, 2MBS FM, (June 1981).
Meale was the dominant figure in Australian composition during the 1960s and in the early 1970s. He enjoyed an extraordinarily elevated position in the Sydney avant-garde circles; his sophistication and emotional voice marked him out from many others; he enjoyed adulation from a circle of devotees, among whom were music critics and administrators. More than this, his works increased in complexity, resources and significance as the 1960s progressed.

Richard Meale has established an international reputation with only five compositions: 1 - Flute Sonata (1960); 2 - Las Aboradus (1963); 3 - Homage to García Lorca (1964); 4 - Images (1966) and 5 - Nocturnes (1967)...

Each of these compositions has displayed, by comparison to the preceding works, a considerable development and increased ability. ¹

Also in the 1960-1970 decade, Meale produced Very High Kings (1968), Clouds Now and Then and Soon It Will Die (1969) and Interiors/Exteriors (1970). Each of these was eagerly awaited by Meale devotees, and that section of the public interested in contemporary music.

As Brumby did, Meale moved from the complexity and atonality of his compositional style exercised in these works of the 1960s to a diatonic-melodic style of writing in the early 1970s. Over the past two decades, his output rate has dwindled markedly (although punctuated by the production of two operas) and he himself has moved into an eremetic lifestyle, emerging rarely into public view.

¹ James Murdoch, 'Voyage of Discovery', Sounds Magazine (February 1968).
preserving a silence that was once foreign to him. This writer's attempts to speak to Meale have met with no success. For his recollections of what the fulcrum years of Australian composition meant to the composer, the central basis of information has been an ABC interview in the *Composer Profile* series, as well as several articles written about specific Meale works at the time of their premieres by his pupils and sympathetic colleagues/critics.

During the ABC interview, it was proposed to Meale that his initial importance in the world of Australian music was in bringing the post-World War 2 avant-garde into Australia, even though such a categorization puts him 'into a box'.

'That was a necessity; a happy necessity,' responds Meale, who quite clearly sees this evaluation as correct. Others might disagree; there are clear grounds for making similar regional claims for Brumby and Dreyfus, both of whom were producing music of contemporary interest in two different parts of the country well before Meale produced his first work to have an extra-Sydney impact - *Las Alboradas*.

'I see a continuing thread [in my works], although people think I have changed style. I can see a lyrical thread running through them.' ¹ This is a valuable observation in that Meale sees his own oeuvre as consistent, of a piece, and there is certainly a case to be made out for lyricism in each of his works, if one accepts that his melodic curve has moved from a chromatic-rich set of motifs to a very orthodox diatonic arch, found in the

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operas and some later chamber works, like the String Quartet No. 2 (1980), concerning which work Covell notes a 'post-Debussyean clarity and tune-and-accompaniment textures'.

He recalls his grandfather's record collection; he grew up on these (Caruso, Galli-Curci, etc. ²). It was diverse in content. In similar style, Meale regards each of his own works as presenting a particular channelling-in of a particular issue. 'I am trying to get my speech to be musically more precise. The work comes out...it's like another aspect of World.' ³

As for the roots in which his inspiration grew, his early years were suburban. 'It was the right background to have because that was the kind of culture we are.' ⁴ This comes across as a mot, an observation that appears to be profound, but the interpretation revolves around the word 'right'. Meale is making the point that Australia's suburban culture ensured that his background was unexceptional and that, by being part of suburbia, he more capably represents Australia because he can claim kinship with the country's character.

Reviewing his output, Meale says, 'I am bloody-minded. I work terribly hard, which is

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² Enrico Caruso, Italian tenor (1873-1921), whose success was due in large part to his gramophone recordings; Amelita Galli-Curci, Italian soprano (1882/9-1963), made numerous records for the Victor company.

³ *ABC Composer Profile.*

⁴ Ibid.
why I haven't produced all that much. I want to make the works as spotless as they can be.' ¹ In fact, up to 1970 he produced a great deal, more than one can gain access to because many of the composer's early scores (pre-1960) were recalled or destroyed. To a greater extent than many of his peers, in the 1960s Meale produced works for large forces. *Nocturnes* and *Very High Kings* employ unusually dilated orchestras. The first calls for triple woodwind and three soloists - cello, vibraphone and harp; *Very High Kings* asks for two amplified pianos, organ, six trumpets as well as full orchestra.

Meale's first acknowledged work, the Flute Sonata of 1960, is a work of some significance to the composer as it marked what he considered to be the achievement of an acknowledgeable voice and its predecessor-compositions were withdrawn from circulation and disowned. ² While playing the last movement at its premiere, Meale confesses that 'I felt very good' ³ because of the negative reaction of staff and teachers at the Sydney Conservatorium, where the performance was being given. It was as though Meale realised that he was succeeding with this piece, simply because he aroused strong revulsion in the establishment of his day; the self-congratulation of a typical avant-gardist. (It is worth noting that, 20 years later, he found the same reaction inflicted on him after the premiere of his 'retrogressive' String Quartet No. 2.)

The Flute Sonata, championed by Donald Peart, was the catalyst for the Ford Foundation

¹ *ABC Composer Profile.*  
² Murdoch (1972), 141.  
³ *ABC Composer Profile.*
grant that took Meale to America, to studies in Eastern music at the University of California. Here, Meale’s artistic consciousness had a vitally important meeting with the music of South-East Asia. ‘It was devastating,’ he recounts - both for his realisation of the language and its complexities, and for his inability to come to intellectual terms with performing such music himself. Playing in the gamelan orchestras at the University of California, he got the accents wrong, counted metrical lengths improperly. ‘This helped me realise that everything I’d thought about music was open to question. That simple thing changed my whole approach to rhythm.’

These experiences may have been formative as far as the impetus towards adopting Eastern structural and sonic peculiarities in later compositions was concerned, but his next admission points towards the exorcism of another tendency, shown by such early works as the 1961 Lorca-indebted ballet *At Five in the Afternoon* (later withdrawn from the composer’s catalogue of acknowledged works).

‘I’d always had a tremendous interest in Spain, its otherness…’ and, after his visit to that country just prior to his resettlement in Australia, the impact of Spain - its literature more than its musical gestures, peculiarities and clichés - determined the intellectual and emotional content of the two works that were greeted with such acclaim by Meale’s admirers - *Las Alboradas* and *Homage to García Lorca*.

*Las Alboradas*, following its first performance (31 May 1963) in Sydney, became the

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1 *ABC Composer Profile.*

most important work of its time for Australian contemporary composers. A certain amount has been written in discussion and analysis of it,¹ but Meale's perception of its content, 27 years later on, is surprising. He sees it as containing 'a lot of elements.' It was my first attempt to digest what I'd encountered in Webern's music, the angular intervals. It's not a Spanish work. It's more a feeling of waking in a foreign country.²

So the composer sees this work as a less finished product than others did, especially Curt Prerauer who found it superior to any other music on its premiere program. Meale would be, naturally, a severe critic of a work whose style and setting he outgrew not very long after it was written. Las Alboradas was followed by a much more complex work, Homage to Garcia Lorca. 'It's pretty tough...a tense and complex sound. Composition also becomes a question of improvement of one's technique or one's vocabulary.'³

Reviewing both works, Meale notes that

These things had to be said, they had to be said in this country. Other things had to be told about Australian life [than the gum trees]. As far as I'm concerned, it's still an Australian work [Homage to Garcia Lorca]...I wanted to see how far I could push this. It was also how I was feeling at the time. I was aware of things that were irritating me about the country... and myself...the angst of living in a country where I was dissatisfied.⁴


² ABC Composer Profile.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

Meale's career was by this stage (1965) a more public one than that of any of his peers, except possibly Peter Sculthorpe. The two Spanish works were followed by *Intersections, Images (Nagauta)* (the first acknowledged work for orchestra) and *Nocturnes*. This last 'does contain the most advanced sounds I had written to the time.' ⁴

'The important point about *Nocturnes* is not its intervallic structure but what is its cultural message.' Such an evaluation makes good sense, asking the listener to view the work as something beyond a masterly construction. Meale's concomitant observation on its gestation and accomplishment is more self-regarding than concerned with any reactions from others: 'Composition is purely a selfish act...it has to develop or else I'm not developing.' ²

Prior to *Nocturnes*, in 1966 Meale had produced the first of his overtly Oriental works, *Images (Nagauta)*. The bracketed part of the title signposts the Japanese elements to be found in the work, as do the titles that preface the piece's seven sections that spring from the Nagauta music drama. Its final section, *Kuse*, encapsulates the less frenzied vocabulary Meale adopted due to his imbibing of Japanese theatre culture and the slow pacing of events. Yet it also displays the composer's trademarks - his signature markings, almost, evident from *Las Alboradas* and *Homage to García Lorca* - of sevenths, short bursts of repeated notes, rhythmic disjunction achieved by cutting across the beat with a triplet yet leaving the first note silent (see Figure 7). As well, this segment exemplifies Meale's sophistication in that selectivity operating in his scores, the musical gestures

¹ *ABC Composer Profile.*

² Ibid.
Figure 7: Extract from *Images (Nagauna)* by Richard Meale

(Boosey & Hawkes, 1968): bars 81-83
calculated to a degree of refined lucidity that marks out his works as original constructs.

So the composer turns his back on Europe (for a while) and moves into forms and a soundscape closer to his home continent - interestingly, at the same time as Peter Sculthorpe was imbibing the influence of Indonesian music and giving it rein in his Sun Music III (1967) and Tabuh Tabuhan (1968).

What was the catalyst for embracing Japanese music at that time?

I'd been at UCLA playing gagaku. I used superficially some of the sections of Nagauta. I wanted to create the blend and sound of the gagaku instruments in the orchestra. I wanted to bring the sound of Japanese court music to the listener... once you do that, you've made them Western sounds.

In explicating this adoption of Japanese music, Meale suggests a listener-supportive technical approach.

I try to structure a piece so that it gives the ear support... trying to find new ways of making a world in each piece that the ear could relate to quite naturally. ¹

In this regard, his works of the 1960s (which progressed to Very High Kings and the two haiku-inspired soundscapes, Clouds Now and Then and Soon It Will Die), achieved a remarkable success.

What one learns about Meale's path to dominance in the world of Australian contemporary music is that the inventive seeds were already there without excursions

¹ ABC Composer Profile.
overseas. The Flute Sonata was exceptional for its time but it was written with an awareness of current practice gained from exposure to the recording industry; from 1955, Meale worked in record retail shops, eventually as a buyer, and 'he had immediate contact, not only with the new post-war contemporary music, but also Asian and overseas popular music.' In terms of tuition, Meale is at one with Dreyfus in his memories: 'the difficulty of trying to discover oneself as a composer...was there was absolutely no guidance available.'

As with several of the other leading lights in Australian music in the 1960s, then, Meale forged his own path. Even if one can see influences - the influence of Boulez and Messiaen on his technique, although not on his soundscape, the debt to Japanese art, the bottomless suggestions in the literary references that his work's titles evoke - they in no way mask the composer's individuality as exemplified in this period of his creative life.

'I mean, it's exploration which is the experience of life.' The thought is hardly an original one yet it serves to underline the changes in approach in the genesis of his works that typifies Meale in what were his most rapidly productive years. The search for new methodologies and the progression from one inspirational source to another - without

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1 Covell (1988), 6: 'In the absence of a movement that might have been regarded as a collective avant-garde, he had single-handedly to embody the idea of one. In a way, he was Australia's solitary modernist, at least as far as the musical public was concerned.'

2 Murdoch (1972), op. cit., 140.

3 Edwards, op. cit., p. 38.

4 *ABC Composer Profile.*
rejecting any one of them at a later stage - typifies Meale's catholicity, which is best illustrated by his passion for Rimbaud that started off his 1960s and ended it with *Incredible Floridas* (1971).

In his fusion of a highly physical, sonorously ardent musical voice and a predilection for circumscribing his works with a philosophical framework, Meale has some association with Nigel Butterley, his one-time colleague at the ABC and in the Sydney branch of the International Society for Contemporary Music. But where the Meale of the 1960s decade moved from the aggressive physicality of the acerbic string-writing in *Homage to Garcia Lorca* to the opulent orchestral richness of *Nocturnes*, Butterley's music was firmly rooted in a Christian tradition, albeit that part of it that involves the mystical. The contrast between both composers' perceptions of their times, let alone their world views, makes for an interesting commentary on this musically absorbing decade.

NIGEL BUTTERLEY

Recalling Butterley in the 1960s, one tends to judge his impact in the Australian compositional field as being overwhelmed by that of his work and compositional colleague Richard Meale. Both held positions with the Australian Broadcasting Commission and were responsible for the dissemination of much new music by way of their control over certain ABC radio programs. As a kind of avant-garde duumvirate, Meale and Butterley also collaborated in concerts and recitals; Butterley was the pianist in the first performance of Meale's *Las Alboradas* as well as participating in the Meale-
directed premiere of Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*. This relationship is recalled by Butterley as a substantial element in his life as a performer, composer and bureaucrat; by his own admission, 'Meale intimidated me.'

The differences between the two composers are significant. Where Meale found fertile fields in literature and a form of musically expressed 'astrological and poetical symbolism', Butterley drew a vast amount of inspiration from Christianity, specifically the Anglican tradition in which he was an active participant for many years. He has cited with approval the concept of everything being 'for the glory of God' - an idea inextricably linked with the pietism of the most famous church composer, Johann Sebastian Bach.

Born in Sydney (1935), Butterley studied composition at the New South Wales Conservatorium with Noel Nickson. But his real awakening came while he was a student in England through his teacher, Priaulx Rainier - 'the right person at the right time for Butterley, and he greatly benefited from her expert advice.'

Despite the lack of modernity in his teachers at the Conservatorium (Alexander Burnard,

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4 Murdoch (1972), op. cit., 47.
Raymond Hanson), Butterley remembers hearing a good deal of modern music because 'Goossens used to play Schoenberg and the modern Americans in the ABC Youth Series concerts' 1 which Butterley attended when he was 19 or 20 years old.

In 1961, he worked in the religious department of the ABC and got involved in two things: the ecumenical movement that resulted from the Second Vatican Council, and music in church worship. But well before this, he had been writing music for liturgical use or works that clearly denoted a vital religious impulse, such as the Canticle of David (1959) for string orchestra, and many settings of traditional religious texts.

He obtained leave from the ABC and travelled to Europe in 1961. At the time, Butterley was involved in inter-church travel, organizing trips to the Holy Land. He halted for a time in Cairo, went through Israel/Palestine to Jerusalem where he came across his first Romanesque church - St. Anne's - which began a fascination with ecclesiastical buildings that resulted in his first major work, Laudes (1963).

Continuing through the Mediterranean countries, Butterley eventually visited the community at Taizé in Burgundy which was a very important experience for him, not least for providing him with the climactic movement to his first 'mature' work, Laudes. In Europe, he followed the familiar young student's path, staying in youth hostels. But he also 'did' churches, with more lasting effects and with more purpose than the average sightseeing tourist. Among other experiences, he heard Lukas Foss 2 improvise and

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1 Contemporary Composers Series 1.

2 American composer, conductor and pianist, born 1922; a significant contributor to the diffusion and appreciation of 20th century music.
attended the premieres of English composer Michael Tippett's opera *King Priam* (1962) and Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem* (1962).

Through this overseas sojourn, Butterley considered the composition of a substantial work. Eventually, 'Things came together at Ravenna', specifically in his experience of the Church of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo and the mosaic of virgin martyrs that is memorialised in the first movement of *Laudes*. He recalled a suggestion by Rainier to write an orchestral piece with four movements. 'The piece was there all the time.' ¹ *Laudes* was premiered at the Adelaide Festival in the following year; 'my first successful use of serial technique.' ² He had been experimenting with note-rows even before he went to study in England but had become bogged down under the influence of Bartók and, more significantly, in the ideas of Hindemith whose influence was extraordinarily popular in Sydney of the 1950s, largely due to the influence of Raymond Hanson [1913-1976] who taught Meale, Barry Conyngham, Don Burrows, and Roger Woodward, as well as Butterley.

On his return to Australia, Butterley resumed his work with the ABC and assumed a vital role in the fermenting if small world of Sydney's contemporary music circles. At this time, learning and playing Meale's *Las Alboradas* had a big influence on him.

In his next major work, *String Quartet No. 1* (1965), the religious element persisted, even into a comparatively abstract musical structure. The British metaphysical poet Henry

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¹ *Contemporary Composers Series I.*

² Ibid.
Vaughan's 'The Revival' gave him two central ideas of 'unfolding' and light. The *Quartet*, in two movements, unfolds in chords and in melodic lines. As Butterley explicates the process of the work, Movement 1 is illustrative of a groping 'towards the light' and a simultaneous unfolding; Movement 2 is more concerned with the sonic realization of light itself.¹

Preceding this work, Butterley attracted interest on an international level by composing a piece for recorder-player and noted early music authority, Carl Dolmetsch, on tour in Australia during 1965. *The White-Throated Warbler* was published in a short space of time as a successful sample of 'bird' music, part of its exceptional nature lying in its being written along serial lines.

A further and very public success came with a commission from the ABC. This work - *In the Head the Fire* - was written in 1966:

> the first commission I had had. (John Hopkins) ² sent for me and asked for a piece [for the Italia Prize competition]. I thought of the Dead Sea Scrolls...³

This work - a complex construct involving two orchestras, choir, speaker, two vocal soloists and a cantor/shofar player - won the prize, giving Butterley a more significant reputation on a much wider world scene than any of his colleagues.

¹ *Contemporary Composers Series 1.*

² British conductor and administrator; from 1963 to 1973, Director of Music for the ABC.

³ *Contemporary Composers Series 1.*
In 1968, he composed *Meditations of Thomas Traherne*, which mines a vein of British mysticism in a purely orchestral sound world (it also requires a recorder band). 'By now I was musically fairly confident. My style was fairly settled. The work had been in my mind for four years.' As for the link with the English writer, Traherne's appeal for Butterley lay in his 'positive view of the world....This was the last work in which I was able to refer to an extra-musical idea that was a Christian one.' 1 This piece suffered at its premiere; its first interpreter, conductor Moshe Atzmon, was 'scared' of the score. 'There were too many silences; he wanted them connected.' 2 Heinze later conducted the piece with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra, in a version that improved on Atzmon's version, not least by observing the score's requirements and thereby lasting longer.

As Sculthorpe finished his 1970 decade with the popular success *Love 200*, Butterley was commissioned by the Captain Cook Bicentenary Celebrations Citizens Committee to compose a major work to be played at the Sydney Town Hall in the presence of the visiting British Royal Family - another high-profile commission for Butterley. This was *Explorations for Piano and Orchestra* (see Figure 8) in which the composer utilised a tone-row borrowed from Ian Farr's 3 Cello Sonata (1969) to construct a continuous 15-movement work notable for its abstract, intellectual character - a marked change from the lyrical expansiveness of his other major productions during the 1960s. The piling up of cross-rhythms in the high woodwind and glockenspiel generates a high-pitched sound

1 *Contemporary Composers Series 1.*

2 Writer's interview.

3 Australian composer and pianist, born 1941; composition student of Raymond Hanson and Meale.
Figure 8: Extract from *Explorations for Piano and Orchestra* by Nigel Butterley

(Albert & Son, 1970): bars 188-191
with Ian Farr (a wrenchingly hard work, too hard in Butterley's opinion for one pianist).  

In Sydney, as in Melbourne, there were musicians who regularly played at contemporary music concerts, like the Richardsons - soprano Marilyn and flautist Peter. When George Dreyfus gave a concert in Sydney, Butterley participated: 'you used to do that sort of thing.'  

One of the facets of music-making that he misses from the 1960s is that it was easier in those days to put on a concert. 'You booked the hall, printed something.... You didn't wait for an Arts Council grant.' And, although audience numbers were never great for intense ISCM chamber music recitals (nowhere near the numbers who heard his large commissioned works), in the 1960s he established the practice of talking about his music to audiences. He likes telling them about an unfamiliar piece. 'It is a good thing to do, rather than leaving the audience to make up its mind.... leaving them unguided.' In this respect, he is showing the significance of his career as a teacher: Butterley was Lecturer in Composition at the University of Newcastle for 18 years (1973-1991) and still lectures at that institution.

In this respect Butterley falls into line with many of his composer colleagues by finding a

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1 Writer's Interview.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.
source of regular income from academic life. Sculthorpe at the University of Sydney, Meale at the Elder Conservatorium in the University of Adelaide, Brumby in Brisbane at the University of Queensland, all have found that, although there is satisfaction in composing and - in these later years - there are bodies most receptive to their scores - nevertheless academic posts bring security; in which consideration, they are little different to those British academics who taught at Australian conservatoria in the many years when English pedagogy of the most stifling kind was universally practised.
CHAPTER 5

Conclusion: Self-made Composers and Beneficiaries of Historical Process

The aim of this thesis is to determine the 'nature of a significant change' that took place in the field of Australian classical music composition during the 1960s. One might have expected to be able to attribute much of the impact of this change to specific personalities and, to some extent, certain members of the musical community played great roles in the transformational process. There is no denying the primacy of place given to composers like Meale and Sculthorpe whose careers constituted a major facet of the decade and who have continued to compose to such a degree of continued success that their current output continues to interest musicians - and the public devoted to classical music - across the nation.

But there was also the expectation that a seachange could have been anticipated if only because music's developmental state in Australia was lagging well behind substantial changes in the plastic arts and literature, as described in Chapter 3 of this thesis. The matter could have been reduced to an argument from historical inevitability: if not Meale and Sculthorpe, then other composers would have taken the initiative and composed works that took account of European music, in particular the massive impact of the works of Webern.

It is impossible to avoid discussion of the impact of personalities because, even if the progression from British pastoralism and Hindemith-style Gebrauchsmusik or neo-
classicism to the adoption of 12-tone, serial and chance techniques of composition might have come to pass at any rate (if not quite as rapidly as it did), specific people determined what took place in Australia. Along with the creative characters of Meale, Dreyfus and Sculthorpe, one also has to take into consideration administrators of vast influence like John Hopkins, Bernard Heinze and Donald Peart. The encouragement given to young composers and the propagation of new Australian works by men like these who held powerful positions in the musical administration of the country gave a significant impetus and weight to the flurry of creativity at this time.

The musical world was again fortunate in that certain critics of the time were positive in their responses to the best of the younger generation's new work, or at least they realised the importance of what was being attempted; so that the music criticisms of Roger Covell, Dorian Le Gallienne, Curt Prerauer, Felix Werder and Kenneth Hince played a not inconsiderable role in disseminating information and appreciation of the new compositions, and also gave encouragement to the composers at a crucial time in their creative lives.

But what still remains undetermined - and is probably incapable of determination - is the question of the extent to which the composers examined in this thesis were children of their time, or originals who would have been just as productive and ground-breaking some decades before or after the 1960s. Several of the composers examined are quite prepared to acknowledge the influence of a senior figure; indeed, most of the composers in this thesis mention other composers as direct influences.
For Colin Brumby, the figure is Alexander Goehr, even if he later rejected the British composer’s serial discipline; Nigel Butterley studied with Priaulx Rainier and attributes to the South African composer the genesis for his first major work.

Others acknowledge their debts but the fruits are not as easy to discern as a mentor’s transferred intellectual equipment or modes of practice. With some, any knowledge gained from specific composers, schools of thought and musical practice and/or patron-figures is acknowledged unstintingly. Such admissions vary in professed quality and depth. For example, one type is the alleged theft of material that Dreyfus claims to have carried out on Boulez’s material from *Le marteau sans maître*, or the Melbourne composer’s intention in writing scores that resembled those of Henze in appearance. Of another kind is the acknowledgement by Sculthorpe of the significance of his time studying in England with Egon Wellesz and making the close acquaintance of Wilfred Mellers.¹ Both relationships, however, had little perceptible influence on Sculthorpe’s actual practice of his art. A further instance of admitted influence comes with Helen Gifford’s admission to a simple admiration for everything she has heard by Luciano Berio.²

The interest lies in the different methods of assimilative techniques exercised by each of these Australian composers and it is probably in the variety of these techniques that their specific contributions to the maturation of Australian musical composition can be found. Both Gifford and Dreyfus had no teacher, in the sense that Stravinsky was Rimsky-

¹ Murdoch (1972), op. cit., 166.

² Writer’s interview.
Korsakov's pupil - the younger composer submitting his scores to the older for examination and assessment. In a way, the two Melbourne composers' careers were less dominated by direct contact with other composers and teachers than some of the others treated here.

Meale makes an interesting case in that he studied piano at the New South Wales Conservatorium, as well as traditional harmony and counterpoint, but he never undertook composition classes. Like Dreyfus, his compositional path was to a large extent self-forged. But he shared with the Melbourne composer access to a large number of scores and recordings with which he fitted out his compositional technique.

None of the composers has delusions about his or her standing in the field of Australian composition, in the sense that - in the tapes and conversations noted in Chapters 4 and 5, none of them claims more than his or her due. The more one spoke to them or heard their recollections on tape, the more obvious it became that to a large extent each was composing as a result of reaction to influences - either from a teacher, from recordings (of vital importance to the younger composers, in particular) and books, from information provided by other interested parties and peers. The question of originality did not present itself as a pressing one, one suspects mainly because the steps that each composer was taking had perforce to be individual because there were no benchmarks existing on home soil, no matter how rich the ground overseas. For a time, every work was bound to be an original product, the first of its kind.

The two senior composers, Le Gallienne and Hughes, should make a telling contrast with the younger composers but there are parallels with their successors which ought not to be dismissed lightly. In Le Gallienne's case, there is a clear comparison to be drawn with
Brumby and Butterley in that he studied overseas with a well-known musician and 'his three most important and major works were composed in a three year period while he was in England, and under the guidance of a renowned teacher.'

Putting aside some contact with and encouragement from Fritz Hart, Hughes appears to have received very little pedagogical instruction in Australia; like Dreyfus, he learned his craft from practice and his own resources.

Nevertheless, Le Gallienne and Hughes inherited the British tradition that Covell has recorded as being the dominant factor in musical life before the 1960s decade, and both composers were able to function without stress within that tradition. By their own admissions, they did not take kindly to the excesses of the new music and to some extent represented the old guard which the younger composers quickly came to discountenance, and then ignore. The fact that their works were sited in the sonata-form pattern of previous centuries (major productions by both composers are orthodox symphonies and sinfoniettas) at a time when the impact of Schoenberg was beginning to be felt in Australia was an unfortunate conjunction of circumstances for both these men and their colleagues such as Clive Douglas and Margaret Sutherland.

The sources of inspiration and musical reference that the seven composers treated in Chapter 5 used show a tendency towards Asia, although admittedly not a universal one.

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1 Murdoch (1972), op. cit., 133.

2 Covell (1967), op. cit., 145.

3 Murdoch (1972), op. cit., 117, 134.
Sculthorpe and Meale have both been influenced by Indonesian and Japanese music and have detailed the impact of these countries' musics on their own. Gifford's assimilation of Oriental and African music has coloured her works less ostentatiously than the two Sydney composers but she still regards her enforced education in the field of 'world music' as vitally important to her; Dreyfus has found at least textual inspiration in a text from Vietnam (*From Within Looking Out*). Butterley's mysticism, although founded in Christianity, also has references to the Near East (for example, employing the culturally suggestive sound of the shofar at key moments during *In the Head the Fire*). Standing out against this trend, Brumby rarely moves from a solid Western base for his many text settings.

Despite the resemblances and differences between these composers - representatives of both the 1950s and 1960s - it would seem that, apart from their various personal characteristics as composers, their enjoyment of heightened creative activity at this point in Australian cultural history was a matter of their being in the right place at that specific time, equipped with appropriate intellectual and aesthetic equipment to carry out what can now be seen to be necessary changes in a laggard music field.

In this regard, then, the thesis tends to show that the burst of creativity in the 1960s was caused by a definite reaction against the status quo - and it is true that a composer like Hughes made few accommodations with the new forces, continuing to compose in his own style well into the 1970s, albeit at a slower rate of production - and the enduring success of the movement towards a contemporary language in music was due to the efforts of the composers here examined, as well as several others whose profiles have faded in the intervening decades or whose one-time compositional fecundity has not
realised the promise of their earlier years.

The 1960s remains a fulcrum in the history of Australian music for two reasons: first, the time for change had arrived and the build-up of information was great and, for the first time, highly accessible; and there were a number of young composers who were talented enough to cause a change in direction, both by their own creative gifts and by their enthusiastic promotion of the new music. But in recent years, attention given to this passage in the country's musical history has waned and concentrated source material of substance on the period has appeared infrequently, apart from theses on specific works or bio-bibliographies of a small number of composers.

A reappraisal of the works by the period's major composers, particularly in the light of developments (if not large-scale changes) in their compositional practice, presents an investigative field of some urgency. There has been no successor to Covell's pioneering work and Murdoch's book on Australian composers has proved to be unreliable, particularly in its lists of compositions. Hence, a study of the last 50 years of musical composition in Australia would be a welcome addition to what constitutes a thinly populated field of research.

This thesis has in part concerned itself with interviews of living composers but its focus has concerned a particular part of the interviewed composers' lives. Sculthorpe and Dreyfus are now over 70 years old; Meale, Butterley and Brumby have all passed 65; Gifford is about to do so. All are still composing and their perceptions and opinions on the generations that have followed (or rejected) their composing initiatives would be well worth recording - as would the voices of other senior Australian composers who are still
practising their craft, like Larry Sitsky and Felix Werder.

The period from 1950 to 1970 represented a significant transitional stage in the development of Australian music. Yet, in spite of the flurry of notice that the young composers of that time attracted - in newspaper articles, in attention and championing from music critics, in performances by both ad hoc and establishment organisations - the two decades have been largely forgotten, their importance rarely challenged but just as rarely explored. A reappraisal is well overdue.
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