As the Spirit Moves:
A Study of Personal Spirituality
as a Source for Musical Inspiration

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Abstract

This research aims to clarify links existing between the performing activities of musicians and their spiritual and religious backgrounds. Specifically, it investigates my spiritual background and the impact it has had on my creative musical activities from 1990-2010. It explores my involvement with the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), demonstrates links between Quaker religious practice and improvised musical performance, charts the musical and spiritual influence of Indigenous Australians on my performances, and examines the influence of contemporary Australian Quaker thought on my recorded and notated musical activities.

Chapter 1 outlines my personal spiritual background. It examines the history of Quakerism, clarifying its conceptual origins and outlining the ongoing commitment of Quakers to social justice issues. The conflicted history of art-making within the Society of Friends is investigated, and experiential links between “improvisational” Quaker worship and the practices of improvising musicians are identified.

In Chapter 2 I scrutinise my experiences performing with Australian Indigenous musicians, clarifying links in my own performances with Indigenous ideas and concepts of music-making, and exploring how my musical performance and social and spiritual understanding have grown due to Indigenous influences. I explore issues of meaning, language, politics and social structure in relation to Indigenous music, establishing their possible impact on musical structure and performance in Indigenous rock and reggae music.

Chapter 3 comprises an analysis of selections from my recorded and notated output as a composer and improvisor from 1990-2008. Having demonstrated that spiritual belief can manifest as a concern for social justice, I uncover specific techniques that I have used in my work to express social and political ideas that encompass environmentalism, multiculturalism, non-violent resistance, opposition to war, and the rights of animals.

In sum, my aim is to clarify the artistically generative aspects of my spiritual practice and to come to understand how my beliefs inform my creation of new music.
Declaration

This is to certify that

- the thesis comprises only my original work;
- due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used;
- the thesis is between 10,000 and 15,000 words in length, inclusive of footnotes,
  but exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

[Signature]
Acknowledgements

I am profoundly grateful to the many people - family, friends, colleagues and lecturers - who have helped me in the preparation of this thesis, who have discussed its ideas with me, encouraged and stimulated me along the way. In particular, I would like to thank my Supervisor Dr. Rob Vincs and Convenor of Post Graduate Studies Dr. Donna Coleman, both of whose advice and attention to detail has been invaluable. Most of all I must thank my wife Anita Hustas, without whose tireless support, encouragement and advice I cannot imagine this thesis ever reaching completion.

Please be advised that this document may contain references to Indigenous people who have died.
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Introduction

In everything which gives us the pure authentic feeling of beauty there really is the presence of God ... Hence all art of the highest order is religious in essence.

Simone Weil, Gravity and Grace

Music puts our being as men and women in touch with that which transcends the sayable, which outstrips the analyzable.

George Steiner, Real Presences

This paper argues for the crucial generative impact of my spiritual background on my activities as an improvising musician and composer.

I have long been aware that my spiritual beliefs and background have been an important influence on my ethical and moral orientation. However, prior to this research I had not understood the direct effect my spiritual beliefs exert on my musical practice.

I am attempting to make visible these “hidden” influences on my music in order to better understand the way in which a spiritual background influences other artists. In addition, I expect that understanding my own practice at a deeper level will enable me to evolve as a creative performer and help me to build stronger links with audiences.

I have long felt music and spirituality to be closely related, and have been gratified to find through the course of this research many other people who share this idea. Discussing the spiritual in art can be a difficult proposition, owing to the inherent

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unknowableness of the subject, and its complete subjectivity. Accordingly, I have chosen to explore this subject directly through my own experience, and will attempt to find some personal truths that I hope may have wider relevance. I will first discuss my own spiritual background and the parallels that I perceive with other artists, and then explore my own performance in an attempt to gain understanding of specific musical principles that can be perceived as demonstrating a spiritual influence in my own work.

While spirituality is often an integral part of music-making in traditional cultures, it is less often explored as an influence on improvised music except in explicitly religious contexts. Jon Michael Spencer’s Theomusicological studies of African-American music are a notable exception, as is Cole’s biography of saxophonist John Coltrane. English theologian Jeremy Begbie attempts to identify some parallels between jazz performance and religious thought, but he does so within a strictly theological framework that does not illuminate musicians’ practice. A number of writers, following Amiri Baraka’s seminal Black Music, have identified the submerged influence of West African spiritual traditions on African-American improvisers, but it is hard to demonstrate a strong link to contemporary Australian improvised music making. Major histories of Australian jazz and improvised music published to date by Clare, Whiteoak, and Bissett do not discuss the influences on and motivations of the musicians beyond purely musical considerations.

Recently, people have begun to ask me if there is intentionally an awareness of spirituality in my performance. While I do not consciously attempt to invest my music

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with a spiritual quality, I am concerned with the issue of meaning in music, and I like to explore ideas and feelings through music rather than playing music that is simply “about itself.”

I experience music-making as a sacramental activity, an idea explored in some depth by French philosopher Simone Weil: “Every true artist has a real, direct, and immediate contact with the beauty of the world, contact that is in the nature of a sacrament.”7 The more that I have been involved with Indigenous performers over the last ten years, the more deeply I have felt this connection. This is not to suggest that there is a self-righteous “holiness” around musical performance, but rather that the inherent ritual, social, mystic and vibrational qualities of music can be respected and valued more widely than they tend to be in an increasingly corporatised global music industry. The process of this research has been a challenging and revealing one, as I have come to understand my own spirituality, its influence on my everyday life, and its presence in my music-making at a much deeper level. This recognition of the relationship between my spirituality and my musicianship has shown me that my involvement with Indigenous musicians and with peace and social justice issues may have their roots in my experiences with Australian Quakerism.

Methodology

My methodology in this research has been drawn from Clark Moustakas’s *Phenomenological Research Methods.*8 Specifically, my process has been:

- to consult the existing literature on Quakerism and broader ideas of spirituality in Australia in order to give context and background to my own personal spiritual constructs, supplemented by casual discussions with other musicians and others with a similar background including members of my family;

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to consult existing literature in relation to improvised music and spirituality, as well as discussing this literature and its implications with colleagues and mentors;

to consider links between the spiritual importance of music for two Australian Indigenous performers and the spiritual importance of music for myself, reflecting on my years of performing and touring experience with Indigenous performers, extensive reading on the music, history and culture of Indigenous Australia, and casual discussions with Indigenous performers;

finally, in order to subject my own recorded and notated works to a severe analysis of both musical and non-musical aspects, I have consulted scores and transcribed recordings of my music to determine what specific musical techniques I have used to express discrete spiritual and social ideas.

Much of this research has had a very long genesis, and is the result of years of contemplation, experience and discussion that has only fully reached fruition through the current study.

In Chapter 1, *Let our lives speak*, I will give a brief history of Quakerism. I will then articulate my understanding of the Quaker faith and how I interpret various Quaker processes of worship and administration to relate to my process as an improvising musician. Chapter 2, *Blackfella, Whitefella* will explore how my work with two prominent Indigenous musicians has helped me to understand and integrate spiritual ideas in my own performances. Lastly, I will present an analysis of my recorded and notated performances and compositions with reference to my leanings towards peace and social justice issues as an expression of my spiritual being in Chapter 3, *We Shall Overcome*.

It is a challenging process for me to explore this spiritual area. I am not particularly comfortable expressing these ideas or presenting them for discussion, as I believe spirituality is a profoundly personal area, especially in reference to people’s art practice. I have no intention to make anyone feel uncomfortable, judged, dismissed or preached
to. I only hope that my research experience can help me to consider my artistic process and background, and understand a little more about the purpose that art plays in my life. I also hope that when others share this experience it opens a door to reflection for them too.
Chapter 1  

*Let our lives speak:*

The spiritual foundations of musical performance

I was raised in the Quaker faith. I have not been active as a Quaker for nearly twenty years, and my ideas of spirituality have developed significantly as I have absorbed ideas from sources that include Buddhism, Taoism, Yoga, and Australian Indigenous people. Nevertheless, as I reflect on my approach to musical performance and composition, it is revealing just how much of my personal ethical, moral and spiritual approach to music-making has been shaped by my Quaker background.

I will, in this research, refer to “the Spirit” and to “God.” While early Quaker texts can reference the Christian God, I do not have a personal affinity with this concept, and see rather a divinity in all things, much after the fashion of Indigenous people worldwide:

> The interconnectedness about Indigenous spirituality relates everything into a kinship system which identifies itself with all that is, that lives and grows. There is no separation or alienation, which are the main factors responsible for us hurting the earth, the environment, and ourselves.⁹

This spiritual understanding is increasingly common in contemporary Western¹⁰ societies, as individuals disillusioned with conventional churches and theism increasingly find meaning in other systems of belief, whether ethical, moral or otherwise.¹¹ While I see myself as a part of this shift in belief, this research has made it

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¹⁰ Here and elsewhere in this research, I use the term “Western” to describe the “Western world,” broadly understood to encompass the cultures of Western Europe and the former English colonies of the United States and Australasia but not inclusive of their indigenous populations.

clear to me how much of my broader spiritual understanding and expression is derived from my Quaker history.

Quakers formally refer to themselves as The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), and address each other as “Friend,” and where appropriate I will use this terminology rather than the more commonly known term “Quaker.” I should also make it clear that there are various strands of Quakerism worldwide, many of which are closely aligned to the Evangelical movement, with structured services similar to the more mainstream Christian churches. My own background is known in the broader Quaker world as “un-programmed.” My perspectives in this research relate to my personal experience of Quaker worship as conducted in Australia over the past 30 years, and I will contextualise my research by outlining contemporary Australian Quaker practice.

Interestingly, while there are a small number of artists who identify themselves as Quakers, I have found through this research many more who, like me, carry a Quaker background that may have influenced their artwork more than is generally recognized. I also attended a Quaker school, and while I recognize the impact of this experience, I will treat this influence as being one element of my experiences of Quakerism, and I will follow the influence as I see it from the Society of Friends rather than from The Friends’ School.

The Society of Friends emerged out of the turmoil of the English Civil War of the 17th Century as a reformist church with much in common with others of its time, rejecting the control of the Papacy and seeking a more direct communion with God. The ideas that would become known as the Enlightenment were spreading, and starting to impact on grassroots public expression of religion and spirituality. In his Philosophical Dictionary, Voltaire asked what form an ideal religion would take, and his suggested

12 Geoffrey Hubbard, Quaker by Convincement (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), 7.
14 Painter Edward Hicks and composer Ned Rorem are possibly the best-known artists to have identified as Quakers. I will discuss these two, and other artists with Quaker connections, later in this research.
15 I received all of my primary and secondary schooling (1975-1988) at The Friends’ School, Hobart.
form accords closely with my understanding of Quakerism:

Would it not be that which taught much morality and very little dogma? that which tended to make men just without making them absurd? that which did not order one to believe in things that are impossible, contradictory, injurious to divinity, and pernicious to mankind, and which dared not menace with eternal punishment anyone possessing common sense? Would it not be that which did not uphold its belief with executioners, and did not inundate the earth with blood on account of unintelligible sophism? ... which taught only the worship of one god, justice, tolerance and humanity?16

The Quaker faith encourages a direct personal connection with the divine: “Seek to find and answer that of God in every one.”17 Moreover, since the origin of the Society, Friends have felt that this idea was not to be treated as a platitude, but rather as an active calling:

The message which George Fox and his co-religionists brought to their contemporaries was not a system of doctrine. They had tapped afresh the sources of spiritual power in Christianity; they had found a new way of life, and they set out to live it uncompromisingly and to invite all men to share it. For them Christianity ceased to be a set of forms and “notions” that left the moral life practically untouched. It became the basis of a new type of first-hand experience. There is an intense feel of reality in their messages. George Fox asserted that he knew his religion “experimentally.”18

Contemporary Friends continue this tradition: “The Quaker testimonies to peace, equality, simplicity and truth are a challenge to alleviate suffering and seek positive

Accordingly, Quakers have been at the forefront in the fight against slavery\textsuperscript{20} and the peace movement since the 17th century,\textsuperscript{21} temperance,\textsuperscript{22} women’s rights and prison reform movements in the 19th century, and nuclear disarmament, gay law reform and social justice in more recent times.\textsuperscript{23}

Quaker involvement in the Peace movement began with their opposition to the English Civil War, expressed in a 1660 statement delivered by Margaret Fell to King Charles II, and now known as the Quaker Peace Testimony:

Our principle is, and has always been, to seek peace and ensue it … seeking the good and welfare, and doing that which tends towards the peace of all … All bloody principles and practices, as to our own particulars, we utterly deny, with all outward wars and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretence whatsoever.\textsuperscript{24}

The belief in “that of God in every one” led Quakers to be instrumental in the campaign to abolish slavery:

\textsuperscript{20} Adam Hochschild, \textit{Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free an Empire's Slaves} (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005), 77; Hubbard, \textit{Quaker by Convincement}, 35. Hubbard further points out that as early as 1688 certain Quakers were rejecting slavery as inconsistent with Quakerism. In contrast, the formal abolitionist movement did not begin until the 1780s.
\textsuperscript{24} Fox and Fryer, George Fox and the Children of the Light, 153.
The Society of Friends, both in the United States and in Great Britain … represented the vanguard of opposition to slavery during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{25}

Unlike many other Christian denominations, and possibly reflecting their Puritan origins, Quakers have not produced a great deal of religious art, tending to place more emphasis on “living simply.” Early American painter Edward Hicks, whose bucolic \textit{Peaceable Kingdom} images seem in contemporary light to be remarkably non-confronting, struggled with his Quaker community to establish the validity of his work.\textsuperscript{26} Poets have been common, perhaps a natural development in a faith that encourages verbal ministry arising from deep personal reflection – revealingly, American poets Walt Whitman and Ralph Waldo Emerson both had strong Quaker leanings.\textsuperscript{27} While Quakers often have a connection with community music-making, and a number of my early performance experiences were at Quaker gatherings, there is not a strong tradition of Quakers as professional musicians.

Early Quakers saw music as a distraction: “Music, if it were encouraged by the Society [of Friends] would be considered as depriving those of maturer [sic] years of hours of comfort which they now frequently enjoy in the service of religion … if instrumental music were admitted as a gratification in leisure hours, it would take the place of many of these serious retirements,”\textsuperscript{28} and Quaker founder George Fox was “moved also to cry against all sorts of music.”\textsuperscript{29} Such attitudes have not been a part of Quaker thought since the 18\textsuperscript{th} Century. Quaker Kelsey Aves here describes a more contemporary attitude:

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{25} Ryan P. Jordan, Slavery and the Meetinghouse: The Quakers and the Abolitionist Dilemma, 1820-1865 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), ix.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Alice Ford and Edward Hicks, \textit{Edward Hicks, His Life and Art} (New York: Abbeville Press, 1985).
\item \textsuperscript{28} Howard H. Brinton, Friends for 300 Years: Beliefs and Practice of the Society of Friends since George Fox Started the Quaker Movement (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1953), 135.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Hubbard, Quaker by Convincement, 25.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
I love music, yet a hundred years ago, and still more in the hundred years before that, Quakers disapproved of music as liable to distract a person’s thoughts from God. Yet throughout human history music has always been a means of spiritual uplift and intercession … It can sometimes lift me onto a different plane where I feel almost in tune with the universe. I don’t think that is distracting from God. I think it’s a part of God.  

Nevertheless, American composer Ned Rorem has spoken of a lasting conundrum for Quaker musicians:

To be a birthright member of the Society of Friends and to be a composer is to embody the paradox of reconciling implicit quiet with explicit sound … if my religion means silence while my craft means sound, that craft (that sound) has always very consciously been devoted to banishing the noise which forms an ever vaster cloud between humdrum and mystical realities.

Quakers do have a long history of social activism as an expression of spirituality, a tradition continued within my own family through work with non-government aid organizations. I argue that my Quaker heritage helps to drive my need to be a socially relevant musician, and has remarkable parallels with my process as an improvising musician.

**An improvisation for worship**

Elizabeth Stevenson has written evocatively of a child’s experience of a Quaker Meeting:

We slipped inside and sat on an unoccupied bench, hard benches with edges that

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cut into the underneath of the legs, and backs that just caught the tender places on
the shoulder blades. The silence of the gathered Friends enfolded us in a silence so
deep, it seemed bottomless. Outside magpies warbled, the sound of the organ from
the Anglican cathedral next door rose and fell, bees and blowflies buzzed in and
out of the open windows of the Meeting House. Inside, no-one moved. The large
clock on the wooden wall slowly ticked away the minutes. My legs did not nearly
reach the floor … The silence continued. My father rose to speak. I had no idea
what he had said but I remember his words falling into the silence and the silence
deepening.\textsuperscript{32}

I intend to demonstrate that the process by which Quakers “give ministry” at a Meeting
for Worship is closely related to my experience as a musician in the moment of
improvising. There is a very real sense in which a Quaker Meeting is an improvised
religious experience “performed” by an ensemble whose individual members may
change, but the essential “spirit of the meeting” is preserved.

The structure of a Quaker Meeting is as follows: The whole group sits in silent
contemplation. A Friend is moved by the Spirit to stand and share a thought with the
gathering. As with musical improvising, this offering may spring forth whole and
complete as the result of a sudden inspiration, be a musing on preceding offerings, or be
a largely pre-prepared statement arising from past experience. Other Friends may
continue this train of thought, develop it, respond to it, assent to it, quietly question it,
or move in another direction entirely, “as the Spirit moves.”\textsuperscript{33} There can be meetings
where little is spoken but it is of great profundity, or meetings where much is spoken
but little is really said.

All of these processes are very familiar to improvisors.\textsuperscript{34} Like improvisors, some

\textsuperscript{32} Charles Stevenson and Max Raupach, As the Seed Grows: Essays in Quaker Thought (North Hobart:
Australia Yearly Meeting of The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia, 1997), 91.
\textsuperscript{33} Interestingly, it is now not uncommon for Friends with a musical background to be moved to offer
musical ministry within the structure of a Quaker Meeting by singing or playing.
\textsuperscript{34} While the usage ‘improviser’ is common in broader, non-musical contexts, musical improvisors tend to
prefer the spelling ‘improvisor.’ Derek Bailey’s seminal work Improvisation uses ‘improvisor’ exclusively.
Friends will speak often, while others will speak rarely or intermittently. Instead, as in Indigenous tradition, they will bear witness by their silent assent that the meeting was “performed” correctly – “in correct ordering” in Quaker parlance.

In some ways, Quakerism can be seen as an inherently improvisatory faith – with no formal texts, and an insistence on personal exploration and discovery:

Like the freshness that blows through the early morning window, Quakerism has no rigidity of doctrine. It is an experiential faith marked by diversity around the world. The unity lies in sharing the insights that come from that experience. Quakers are “seekers after truth,” rather than looking to ideology or authoritarian guide. “Let your lives speak,” one of the great Quaker insights, goes to the heart of the spiritual life: that each individual has to find what for he or she is the true way.35

In this study of the parallels between Quaker worship and my own performance as an improvisor, I find a strong link with the way that storefront churches36 influenced generations of African-American improvising musicians, especially in regard to the energy generated by the call and response within the congregation, and the transcendent experience expressed vividly in James Baldwin's novel *Go Tell It on the Mountain*.37 Charles Mingus, who “clapped my hands in church as a little boy”38 and John Coltrane were both open about this influence on their music. Dizzy Gillespie has stated that “like most black musicians, much of my early inspiration … came from the church.”39 Max Roach has spoken of the role of the church in directing the expressive development of many of his generation's performers. In Berliner, he explains how young musicians were judged on their abilities to stir the congregation's feelings “rather than their

36 Since the early 20th century, there has been a tradition in poorer African-American neighbourhoods of churches operating out of converted shopfronts.
technical expression alone.”

This early influence is played out very strongly in Roach's *Freedom Now Suite*, as it is throughout both Mingus's and Coltrane's work.

I am not the first to see this connection in essence between the Quaker experience and the revivalist churches: In Pendle Hill’s article *Quakers and Music* he suggests that it was just these churches that influenced previously resistant Quakers in the United States to accept music as a valid form of expression:

> Outwardly, a revival meeting may look very different from a traditional Quaker meeting, but behind the outward form is a very similar spiritual impulse. Both Friends and revivalists urged people to pursue a powerful and direct spiritual experience. Both emphasized personal transformation … In revival meetings, music had a specific purpose. The very point of a revival meeting was to bring its participants to a “moment of decision.”

Like the desire of improvisors to “find their own voice,” Quakers have long rejected the primacy of a single religious text, preferring the honesty of an individual's experience. Quaker founder George Fox would ask “but what canst thou say?” Quakers have traditionally refused to swear on the Bible in legal proceedings, for the same reason. Thus Quaker thought and theology are derived from a multitude of consensual voices rather than a centralized directive, as had been the history of jazz and improvised music up until more recent times. In the 1930s, it was still an expectation that every musician would have an individual sound and style rather than directly following their mentors and predecessors. As jazz drummer Jo Jones has said:

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40 Ibid.
43 The name “Pendle Hill” is presumably a *nom-de-plume*. Pendle Hill in Lancashire UK was a significant site for early Quaker activities.
Music is not only a God-given talent, it is a God-given privilege to play music … It should be presented in the exact spiritual vein originally intended. It is something within ourselves. That is why musicians express themselves so individually with various instruments.\textsuperscript{46}

A further parallel exists in the anti-hierarchical structure of Quaker worship and decision-making. This structure is more of an ideal than a practical reality, as “Elders” of each meeting tend to become, in Martin Luther King, Jr.'s elegant phrase, “molders of consensus.”\textsuperscript{47} Improvisors similarly, and especially free improvisors, work in an ideally non-hierarchical setting, with a fluid interchange of roles as different members of the ensemble lead, follow, respond, inspire or fall silent by turns. Jazz educator Billy Taylor describes this process in jazz ensembles:

> In a typical jazz performance each individual performer contributes his or her personal musical perspective and thereby graphically demonstrates the democratic process at work. There is no conductor directing the musical flow, but rather, the interaction of individuals combining their talents to make a unique musical statement.\textsuperscript{48}

In reality, “Elders” within the group may determine the style and help to shape the language of a particular improvisation, depending on their influence (conscious, deliberate or otherwise) on the younger performers.

As with most religious groups, a sense of belonging to a social community can be vital. Quakers, like improvisors, can be seen as belonging to an odd cult of enthusiasts, and the validation and understanding of fellow cult members help the individual to feel a sense of self-worth in their invariably heartfelt activities. There can be nothing quite so

\textsuperscript{46} Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff, Hear Me Talkin' to Ya: The Story of Jazz by the Men Who Made It (New York: Rinehart, 1955).
\textsuperscript{47} Martin Luther King, "Martin Luther King at Santa Rita 1968," Pacifica Radio archive, http://www.archive.org/details/MartinLutherKingAtSantaRita1968.
naked, or as self-revealing, as standing up to perform to an uncomprehending world. Steve Lacy describes it in somewhat mystical terms:

When you go out there you have all your years of preparation and all your sensibilities and your prepared means but it is a leap into the unknown. If through that leap you find something then it has a value which I don't think can be found in any other way.\(^{49}\)

In *This We Can Say: Australian Quaker Life, Faith and Thought* there is a statement (here reproduced in edited form) which sums up much of my own personal theology:

*We affirm that the Spirit is everywhere and always accessible.*

*We affirm that the Spirit is shaped by the mysteries and contrasts of the ancient Australian landscape, the climate, our rivers and oceans.*

*We affirm our need to be open to the Spirit in Indigenous cultures.*

*We affirm that ordinary experiences of life – imperfections, yearnings, birth, suffering and death, nature, beauty, art and science – are the Spirit.*

... *We affirm that the Spirit is breath, hope, love, dancing. Singing, laughing, wholeness, connectedness, focus, integration, courage, journeying and leadings.*

*We affirm that the Spirit is unsettling, paradoxical and doesn't necessarily follow our timing.*

*We affirm that the Spirit is in all our ways of living and working.*

...

*We affirm the utter availability of the Spirit of God.*\(^{50}\)

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\(^{50}\) Australia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) Inc, *This We Can Say*, 3. The full text is reprinted in Appendix B below.
Many of the ideas expressed in this statement accord closely with those that I have expressed regularly in my creative activities of the last 20 years, be it through composition, improvisation, education or performance.

In this chapter, I have discussed my Quaker background, and how it has been reflected and supported by subsequent musical, social and spiritual experiences. In the next chapter, I will explore how working with Indigenous musicians and coming to an understanding of their spirituality has helped me to understand my own spiritual background and how it is expressed in my music.
Chapter 2  *Blackfella, Whitefella:*

*A personal collaboration with Indigenous Australians*

*Blackfella Whitefella*

*it doesn't matter what your colour*

*as long as you a real fella*

*as long as you a true fella*

Warumpi Band: *Blackfella, Whitefella*  

In this chapter, I intend to explore experiences I have had in performing with Indigenous Australians, clarifying links in my own performances with Indigenous ideas and concepts of music-making, and exploring how my musical performance and social and spiritual understanding have grown due to Indigenous influences. I contend that Quaker views on the equality of all people have drawn me towards an understanding of the value of all musics. I believe that this egalitarian view has led me to seek opportunities to collaborate with Indigenous performers, and to attempt to find ways to integrate Indigenous concepts of music making into my own performances.

For many years, I have felt that my engagement with Indigenous Australia has been a personal moral imperative. My Quaker background calls me to challenge injustice, as an aspect of seeking “that of God in every one,” and I feel that the inequities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians are unconscionable. According to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) 2009 report *Overcoming Indigenous*

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51 Warumpi Band, *Big Name, No Blankets* (Australia: Powderworks, 1985), CD sound recording.
Disadvantage\textsuperscript{52} and the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2008 report The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples,\textsuperscript{53} there exist profound disadvantages for Indigenous Australians in relation to health, education and training, mortality, imprisonment, housing and economic participation:

Across nearly all the indicators ... there are wide gaps in outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. While the gaps are narrowing in some areas, in too many cases outcomes are not improving, or are even deteriorating. We still have a long way to go to fulfill COAG’s commitment to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage.\textsuperscript{54}

In the course of my research for this chapter, I rediscovered one of my earliest recorded creative activities: a youthful poem written for Australia’s 1988 Bicentenary, which appears below in Appendix B. I found to my surprise that this poem, \textit{Lament}, had been used in This We Can Say: Australian Quaker Life, Faith and Thought to open a chapter discussing the concern Australian Quakers have for Indigenous issues.\textsuperscript{55}

Quakers have a long history of commitment to the rights of Indigenous people, in the United States and in Australia, being early advocates of Indigenous equality and land rights.\textsuperscript{56} I hope that through my musical performances I am able to contribute what skills I have to broaden understanding of this situation in the wider Australian community.


\textsuperscript{54} Australian Government, "Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage," iii.

\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Lament} had previously been printed in the quarterly journal of Australian Quakerism The Australian Friend, September 1987.

\textsuperscript{56} Quaker William Penn negotiated a treaty with Delaware Native Americans in 1691, paying them for their land, while in 1836 Quaker James Backhouse demanded of the New South Wales Colonial government “protection and support” for Indigenous people. Australia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) Inc, This We Can Say, 246-67.
I also hope to gain a deeper understanding of “Country.” The word “Country” as commonly used by many Indigenous Australians, means not just land but an all-encompassing intimate relationship that combines place, family, ancestors, spirituality, and all living and non-living things.57 I am in sympathy with Quaker Susannah Brindle who has said, “In recent years my close association with Aboriginal peoples has verified my relationship with the Spirit. It seems to me that their experience of the manifold aspects of the Spirit, connected with every aspect of life in the universe, transcends dichotomies and makes sense of the paradoxes that tantalize, perplex and stress those who try to separate spirit and matter in their lives.”58 Yolngu elder Galarrwuy Yunupingu puts it succinctly, “Our land is our life.”59

I have been fortunate, since 2000, to work with a number of extraordinary Indigenous musicians, whose musicianship, strength and courage have been a great inspiration to me. In working with these musicians, there are often cultural difficulties to overcome, and the rehearsal and performance process of these musicians can be profoundly different from those that I have learnt as a non-Indigenous musician, even while working across fields that span jazz, rock, reggae, pop, free improvisation,60 world music and classical music. In learning to collaborate with Indigenous musicians, I have had to learn a very different set of communication and musicianship skills. In return, I have gained invaluable insights into the role of music in traditional societies, and into how I can personally connect my music with my spiritual understanding.

57 Mudrooroo, Us Mob, 23,33.
58 Australia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) Inc., This We Can Say, 119.
60 Notwithstanding Christopher Small’s insight that the musics of the African Diaspora are, essentially, one music: Christopher Small, Music of the Common Tongue: Survival and Celebration in Afro-American Music (London: J. Calder, 1987), 5.
In this chapter, I will explore my experiences working with Yolngu man and Warumpi Band leader the late George Burarrwanga, and with Pitjantjatjara man Bart Willoughby, and how these experiences have influenced my own musical performances. Working with Djolpa McKenzie, Yilila Band, Deline Briscoe, Papuan New Guineans Airileke Ingram, the Tribe of Jubal ensemble and George Telek, and fellow Willoughby band members Selwyn Burns and Tjimba Possum Burns have also helped to inform my understanding. I worked with Burarrwanga from 2000-2002, touring in Europe and around Australia in major cities and small Indigenous communities. I have been a member of Willoughby’s band since 2007, performing regularly around Melbourne.

Much of what I have learnt from Indigenous musicians has a profound social basis and ongoing social implications. There have been a number of direct impacts on my musical performance as a result of my work with Indigenous musicians. These impacts include: a greater respect for the textual meaning of a piece of music; a greater personal commitment in the moment of performance; a greater awareness of the possibilities of music as a reflector of physical, emotional and spiritual realities; a greater understanding of the different performance skills and concepts of Indigenous musicians; and a realisation of the profound impact cultural background makes to a musician’s performance, in both musical and social terms. The ideas I discuss in this chapter reflect the things I have learnt by absorption, by experience, by research, and by making mistakes.

Indigenous rock and pop music can be misunderstood by the wider community. As P.G. Toner argues, there is often no profound distinction made by Indigenous musicians between traditional and contemporary music. Just as Indigenous people describe a continuous and present bond with the land and their ancestors, so there is not

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61 While Burarrwanga has been referred to in some sources by the name used while he was living, out of respect for Yolngu tradition I use the name spoken since his passing in June 2007.

62 Yunupingu, Our Land Is Our Life, xv.
necessarily separation between music carried down from the ancestors and music created today.\textsuperscript{63} They are both expressions of the same spiritual intensity.

Contemporary Yolngu culture can only be meaningfully understood as the product of a long and varied history; Yolngu people have always refined and adapted their cultural practices to deal with changing circumstances. It is inappropriate, therefore, to judge any aspect of Yolngu culture as being “authentic” or “traditional” only if it matches its pre-European contact manifestation.\textsuperscript{64}

Catherine Ellis agrees, clarifying that the Dreaming is a contemporary experience, not simply an historical one:

> It is possible to dream a song as a contemporary event … it is still a proper Dreaming, a “true” Dreaming, as it draws on the eternal sources of the original Dreamtime, but it is a contemporary form of this Dreaming.\textsuperscript{65}

Bangarang elder and educator Eddie Kneebone concurs:

> Aboriginal spirituality is not the equal of the European ideology of reincarnation. The Dreamtime is there with them, it is not a long way away. The Dreamtime is the environment that the Aboriginal lived in, and it still exists today, all around us.\textsuperscript{66}

In George Burarrwanga’s set, he would freely mix purely traditional songs with contemporary songs with no feeling of awkwardness or disconnection. One of the first things that I learned while working with Burarrwanga was the crucial importance of the \textit{meaning} of the music being presented, and exactly where it belonged. \textit{Meaning} in Western-world rock and pop music is often restricted to expressing feelings of longing,

\textsuperscript{63}Peter Dunbar-Hall and Chris Gibson, \textit{Deadly Sounds, Deadly Places: Contemporary Aboriginal Music in Australia} (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2004), 64.
\textsuperscript{65}Catherine J. Ellis, \textit{Aboriginal Music: Education for Living} (St. Lucia, QLD: University of Queensland Press, 1989), 71.
\textsuperscript{66}Mudrooroo, \textit{Us Mob}, 35.
nostalgia or angst, but in traditional music worldwide, a sense of location and community is often paramount. Burarrwanga’s Warumpi bandmate Sammy Butcher has said, “If you listen to all the Warumpi Band songs, all of the songs have meanings.” Many of the songs were used to spread positive messages in the band’s local community of Papunya, encouraging people away from drinking and other drug abuse. One interesting aspect of Indigenous rock music in English is that it is often deliberately addressed to White Australia. “You” often appears in lyrics with unambiguous meaning: “Before you arrived,” “We’ve been here longer than you’re thinking,” and “We can make this happen you and me.” As Peter Dunbar-Hall has observed, contemporary music has often been used by Indigenous Australians as a vehicle for education within Indigenous communities and wider Australian society.

The problem of meaning in music has been a crucial one for me for many years, and my exposure to it in this context only redoubled my need to inform my own music with greater meaning. Combined with my interest in the highly message-driven Afrobeat of Nigerian saxophonist/vocalist/composer Fela Kuti, this has been expressed in the politicised music of my ensemble Big Fela. Appropriately, my Indigenous influences have drawn me to perform an Afrobeat version of Yothu Yindi’s anthem Treaty in this ensemble, which is the most striking example of Indigenous music in my current repertoire. Parts of this song are in the Gumatj language from North-Eastern Arnhemland.

When I sing in Indigenous languages, both in this context and as part of the Tribe of Jubal ensemble, I feel that it is an important attempt at a contribution, not

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67 Small, Music of the Common Tongue, 20, 21, 24.
70 Freedom, Peace and One World from Burarrwanga, Nerbu Message.
71 Bart Willoughby, Take It or Leave It (Polygram, 1992), LP sound recording.
73 Dunbar-Hall and Gibson, Deadly Sounds, Deadly Places, 16.
simply in the context of Reconciliation, but also in validating that language as a part of White Australia.

Language as an identifier is an important part of Indigenous culture. Mudrooroo states that “ancestral languages are property, in the sense that they have been given by an ancestor to a particular group along with their ownership of land.” Thus “Country” can be seen to encompass language as a component of place. Similarly, Dunbar-Hall has written extensively on the importance of sense of place and language in the context of Indigenous contemporary music, “A central concern of Aboriginal culture is expression of attachment to responsibility for and the significance of place.” He points out that “a song is a form of map” and so by performing songs in language, you validate not just the language, the people, and their culture but also the place itself. As Mudrooroo puts it, “To name is not only to define but to own.” This is extraordinarily important, given the hidden nature of Aboriginality in contemporary mainstream Australia. Dunbar-Hall also explores in detail the connection between members of Burarrwanga’s band Warumpi and their community in Papunya, NT. The Warumpi Band were the first Australian Indigenous act to release a song sung in language, the 1984 single Jailanguru Parkanu/Kintorelakutu, sung in the Luritja language. The word “Warumpi” itself is the name of a hill in Papunya of sacred significance, and the band folded when several of the members elected to stay in Papunya and reconnect with their community rather than continuing to tour. I feel a parallel here with my composition

75 “Reconciliation” is the formal term used in Australia to describe the process of building mutually respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.
76 Dr A. Schmidt, "Language Maintenance," in The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, society and culture, ed. David Horton (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press for Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 1994).
77 Mudrooroo, Us Mob, 72.
78 Dunbar-Hall and Gibson, Deadly Sounds, Deadly Places, 70.
79 Ibid., 41.
80 Mudrooroo, Us Mob, 11.
82 ________, Deadly Sounds, Deadly Places, 138.
83 Watts and Collins, Out of the Shadows - Sammy Butcher.
Forest Rain,84 which is dedicated to Burarrwanga, and was composed after spending some time touring with him. Forest Rain attempts to capture the feeling of the land, and the emotions that land gives rise to, in a certain part of Tasmania where I have spent a great deal of time. Consistently strong audience response to this piece leads me to infer that I have been successful in this regard (I will more fully discuss Forest Rain and its relationship to both my own and Indigenous concepts of spirituality in Chapter 3).

Burarrwanga’s songs “in language”85 often follow traditional Yolngu stanza structures rather than Western ones, so while his songs sound like standard Western rock forms, they often use phrase structures in 6 bars rather than four, or use 3 time repeats in a verse that might be expected to be a 2 time repeat.86 This caused some confusion and difficulties in rehearsal and performance. These difficulties were compounded by Burarrwanga’s conception of phrase length, which could vary from performance to performance. Many non-Western musical cultures do not share the Western concept of division into bars and sections, and Richard Moyle has suggested that, at least among the Agharringa people of Central Australia, individual manipulation of musical form within a group performance may be seen as a form of self-expression.87 Furthermore, much traditional Indigenous music is based on isorhythm and additive rhythms, with the singer in a polyrhythmic relationship to the accompaniment,88 effectively isolating the vocal rhythmically from that accompaniment. In my experience, the impact of this tradition in lyric-driven Australian Indigenous rock music is that the singer’s point of re-entry to the music can at times be unpredictable, and the singer may begin a line or

84 Fallingwater Trio, Stay (Melbourne: Jazzhead, 2008), CD sound recording.
85 The term “language” is used extensively in Indigenous Australia to refer generically to Indigenous languages. Hence songs are often described as being “in language” as a generic term, rather than being described as being in Gumatj, Luritja or any other specific language.
86 One song that caused issues in performance was Djutarra, which can be heard in its studio version on Burarrwanga, Nerbu Message. I am not aware of any extant live recordings that would document the occurrences I discuss here.
88 Marcus Breen, Our Place, Our Music (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1989), 7.
section quite independently of the accompaniment, i.e. starting the bridge or chorus a bar earlier or later than expected. While this practice can be confusing for accompanying Western-trained musicians who tend to phrase their own parts around that of the lead singer, my training and experience in free improvised music enables me to constantly respond to unpredictable situations. This flexibility may also be reflected in the extensive use in my compositions of sections that repeat “until ready” (see Chapter 3, *Forest Rain*). This tendency in my music may be seen to demonstrate a related “manipulation of form,” in the sense that I see the “content” or meaning of the music as determining its formal structure.89

Similarly, while the performance practice and stagecraft of Indigenous rock performers can appear to conform to mainstream conventions, in reality there are profound social differences in traditional societies that impact on their performance. In Australian Indigenous communities, complex social structures determine the manner of communication between different individuals, to the extent that, for example, there can be strong restrictions on contact between a young man and his mother-in-law, or even between a young man and a woman who is of the correct social group to possibly be his mother-in-law.90 Avoiding eye contact is a crucial part of this system, especially in paying respect to elders.91 Paying respect in this way is a very important part of Indigenous culture, and this can have strong impacts on musical performance. Both Burarrwanga and Willoughby lead their bands by asserting their own parts strongly and clearly, expecting the rest of the band to understand and follow their lead, without giving any explicit physical cues and with very minimal eye contact. For Western

89 This “until ready” principle is not simply a vamp waiting for the next section to start, it is a conscious push of energy and intensity to make an emotional link to the next section. Other instances of the “until ready” principle in my work appear in *A Call To Arms* from Phil Bywater's Buried Treasure, *Looking Up* (Melbourne: Newmarket Music, 2003) CD sound recording, and *Stay For A Long Time* from Fallingwater Trio, *Stay*.

90 Dr Ian Howie-Wills, "Avoidance Styles," in *The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, society and culture* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press for Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 1994).

91 Ibid. Also see Stephanie Fryer-Smith, "Aboriginal Benchbook for Western Australian Courts" (Melbourne: The Australian Institute of Judicial Administration Incorporated, 2002).
musicians working without fixed scores or phrase lengths, this is highly unusual, and requires a much deeper understanding of the song and the singer than usual. In Willoughby’s band, I lead the brass section, and I have had to learn to trust my judgment of his feeling of where the music is headed.

Common non-Indigenous notions of “entertaining” an audience can also be irrelevant to an Indigenous audience. While Burarrwanga was an incredibly dynamic presence on stage, often referred to as “the black Mick Jagger,” when we performed to Indigenous communities, to whom he was a big star, they would simply sit and listen without applause, and at the end get up and leave. It was only by talking to the audience afterwards that I was reassured that they had in fact enjoyed the performance very much. I realized that in performances of traditional music there is often no concept of performer and audience – either the individual has a role to play in the ceremony as a singer, instrumentalist or dancer, or they have no role to play at all, and the ceremony may have no meaning for them. Accordingly there is no established role for an audience in the non-Indigenous way, except to attend the performance to ensure that it is performed correctly.

Compared to Burarrwanga, Bart Willoughby is less obviously traditionally oriented as a performer. He doesn’t perform in language, and I have not played any traditional music with him, although he does play yidaki,\(^2\) and studied traditional as well as contemporary music at the Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music in Adelaide in the 1980s. Willoughby’s music is more clearly influenced by Bob Marley’s music and political engagement.\(^3\) Marley, broadly described as “the first third world superstar,”

\(^2\) Yidaki is the traditional name used in Arnhem Land (and adopted in the broader Australian Indigenous community) for the traditional instrument commonly known in the non-Indigenous community as the dijeridu or didgeridoo.

\(^3\) Eleanor Wint, "Bob Marley: The Man and His Music: A Selection of Papers Presented at the Conference Marley's Music, Reggae, Rastafari, and Jamaican Culture, Held at the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, 5-6 February 1995" (Kingston, Jamaica, 2003), 29-30. Willoughby is emphatic about Marley’s influence on his music in Cameron White, "Rapper on a Rampage: Theorising the Political Significance of Aboriginal Australian Hip Hop and Reggae," Transforming Cultures eJournal, 4,
had a strong impact on Indigenous communities worldwide for his sense of black pride and independence from colonialism. In Australia, many of the first musicians to be influenced by reggae were Indigenous performers like Willoughby, Joe Geia and Burarrwanga, and today possibly the most performed reggae based music in Australia is the “desert ska” performed on Indigenous communities across Northern Australia.

Where Willoughby’s music is related to Burarrwanga’s is in its sense of engagement. Marley’s reggae is inherently a music of social engagement. Keisha and Louis Lindsay, examining Marley’s status as a social revolutionary, explore Marley’s commitment to the long-term process of social change: “we must, as Marley insists, desist from living the life of ‘false pretences every day.’” It is this sense of engagement, as much as anything, that I connect with in Willoughby’s music, and that I feel is a constant reminder to me to remember my own calling in this regard. When playing with Willoughby, it is impossible for me to perform Black Man’s Rights, or We Have Survived, or even the more joyous Aboriginal Woman without feeling the message of the music very intensely. “It gets you in the heart,” as Willoughby sings in Australian Reggae. Willoughby is a songwriter who is never shy of making a strong political, social or emotional statement, and he presents his music in a very visceral, unapologetic way, a trait he shares with Archie Roach, Burarrwanga, Kev Carmody and many other Indigenous performers. The emotional grit and energy conveyed by his voice are a constant challenge to the rest of the band to match. While I rarely improvise

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no. No.1 (2009): 118. The influence of Marley’s 1979 tour of Australia on the broader Indigenous community is made clear in Breen, Our Place, Our Music, 121.

94 It is also interesting to ponder the possible connections between Rastafarianism and Quakerism. The Quaker stand against slavery may have impressed the Jamaican community that gave birth to Rastafari, and the Rasta concept of I-and-I referring to the holiness within has resonance with Quaker ideas.

95 Wint, "Bob Marley: The Man and His Music."

96 No Fixed Address and Us Mob, Wrong Side of the Road (Original Soundtrack Album) (Melbourne: Black Australia Records, 1981), LP sound recording.

97 Ibid.

98 Mixed Relations, Love (Sydney: Red Eye, 1983), LP sound recording.

99 Unreleased.

100 Breen, Our Place, Our Music, 122. See also White, "Rapper on a Rampage," 119-22.
(in the pure sense) on these songs, the urgency and emotional intensity in my approach to performing these songs can manifest in spontaneously adjusting the brass section lines, creatively pushing the lines to reveal more by subtle manipulation, adding little runs, falls and turns, changing register, and colouring my sound through techniques that include stronger accents, a richer blend of harmonics, a broader vibrato and tightening of the stomach muscles to build emotional intensity. While this can result in a looser ensemble within the section, I believe that looseness gives the parts an energy they otherwise lack. I have always used these techniques to some extent in brass section playing, but working with Willoughby has driven me to develop these ideas more strongly and fully, building new techniques that I have since applied to music making in other contexts.

Working with Indigenous musicians is an on-going process of learning and growth for me, and I hope that it continues as long as I am playing music. Indigenous musicians have taught me an enormous amount about connecting music to daily life, to spirituality and to community. I have learnt new ways of performing and new ways of understanding performance. I hope that I continue to be open to the lessons this process brings.

In these first two chapters, I have explored the influences that I have discerned on my concepts of spirituality. In the next chapter, I will analyse my compositions and musical expression in an attempt to clarify the expression of spirituality in my work.
Chapter 3  

We Shall Overcome:

A commitment to peace and social justice through music

It can be difficult to establish what exactly constitutes a sense of the spiritual in an instrumental and outwardly secular musical context, and this difficulty has prevented extensive literature being presented. In A Dictionary of Comparative Religion, Brandon bemoans that “although so much is known about the practical function of music in various contexts, little attention has been paid to its significance as an aspect of religious action.” In analysing my recorded and notated output, I have chosen selected works which I consider to have a particular spiritual connection, and have endeavoured to determine what techniques I have used to serve this purpose.

I am happiest in playing when I can get completely away from thought, when I feel that my responses to the music are uninhibited, unconsidered and automatic, yet at the same time profoundly constructed in intuitive ways that I am unaware of. I am always hoping for a sense of transcendence in my music, that the listener should experience the music, that it should be transformative. Many artists speak of channelling an energy when they are performing, of feeling that the music is passing through them rather than coming from them. I am very familiar with this feeling, especially in relation to composition. I feel that my most successful pieces, and the ones that get the most intense audience response, come to me almost complete and without explanation, often without standard

102 I suggest that about half of my recorded compositions of the last ten years can be seen to reflect a spiritual influence as defined in this chapter. On the album Looking Up by Phil Bywater’s Buried Treasure, five of the nine compositions can be seen to have some sort of spiritual intention. On Stay by Fallingwater Trio, three of my eight compositions have spiritual intention, while another three have a strongly meditative ambience. By contrast, spirituality is a concept rarely explored by other Australian improvising musicians. The work of Sandy Evans, Tony Gorman, Rob Vincs, Adrian Sherriff, Adam Simmons and Anita Hustas in this area is both an exception from the norm and a personal inspiration.
musical logic. It has been challenging and enlightening to subject these intuitive responses to this sustained analysis.

In seeking to explore the spiritual dimension of my own performance and compositions, I am drawn towards the many works that I have written that explore issues of peace and social justice. A commitment to peace and social justice issues has long been part of my performance, dating back to the composition *A Dry White Season* for tenor saxophone and piano (1991), and other works including *New World Order* for double bass quartet (1992) and *The Lucky Country* for tape collage (1991).\(^{103}\) This commitment has continued through dozens of subsequent compositions, a number of which I will discuss in this chapter. I intend to show that this impulse may have its roots in my understanding of Quaker beliefs. Once again, it might be said that the spiritual and the political are very different realms. I intend to demonstrate that my political actions are essentially spiritual, driven by the need to acknowledge “that of God in every one”: “our faith and our action are indivisible.”\(^{104}\)

*A Change Is Gonna Come*: Non-violent resistance as spiritual expression

Earlier in this research I discussed the Quaker Peace Testimony. In *This We Can Say*, David Purnell explains how the Peace Testimony is not an end in itself, but rather a beginning:

> Quakers emerged from the turmoil of seventeenth century England with a clear philosophy which asserted that there was “that of God in everyone.” The consequence of this was that killing or doing violence to others was seen as attacking part of God. The complement to this “negative” was the commitment to “removing the causes of war” by working for justice, equity and truth.\(^ {105}\)

Accordingly, a number of other Quaker testimonies have emerged, identifying

\(^{103}\) All these works are unpublished manuscripts in the collection of the composer.

\(^{104}\) The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, *Peace and Social Witness*.

\(^{105}\) Australia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) Inc, *This We Can Say*, 165-66.
commitment to issues that include Truth, Simplicity, Equality and Community, The Earth and Environment. These testimonies are not directives, but rather explanations of the callings that Friends have felt, both individually and collectively: “A testimony is not a form of words but an expression of actions characteristic of Friends. New testimonies emerge as the reasons for them and the underlying spiritual basis of action become clarified.” The process of acting on these testimonies is not always easy, or clear:

Quakers’ understanding of faith is that true human fulfilment comes from an attempt to live life in the spirit of love and truth and peace, answering that of God in everyone. These beliefs spring from a sense of equality, compassion and seeing the sacred in all life. The testimonies are about Quakers’ commitment to those beliefs. Naturally, our day-to-day practice of them faces us with many dilemmas and compromises. Indeed the testimonies are often out of step with the way that many other people think and act and so may seem idealistic. The testimonies arise out of a deep, inner conviction and challenge our normal ways of living. They do not exist in any rigid, written form; nor are they imposed in any way. All Quakers have to search for the ways in which the testimonies can become true for themselves.

There is a clear parallel here between Quakers’ need to find ways of overcoming injustice and the line of thought that led to Gandhi’s ideas of ahimsa, or non-violent resistance.

Non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man. Destruction is not the law of the humans. Man lives freely by his readiness to die, if need be, at the hands of his brother, never by killing him. Every murder or other injury, no

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107 Ibid.
108 Ibid.
Quaker Richard Gregg was the first Westerner to translate Gandhi’s work, and was “the first American to develop a substantial theory of non-violent resistance.” Charles C. Walker has observed that: “Quakers … were drawn to Gandhi because of their mutual interest in the practical effect of religious experience, as well as principled rejection of violence,” while Stephen Kent and James Spickard affirm that “No religious group has been more involved in sectarian civil religious action than the Quakers.” Since the first World War, a number of leaders in the American peace, civil rights and union movements, including Bayard Rustin, Rufus Jones and A.J. Muste, have been Quakers inspired by Gandhi’s ideas, and Toit has shown that Gandhi’s thoughts on society were partly inspired by Quaker principles as interpreted by Leo Tolstoy in his 1893 book The Kingdom of Heaven is Within You.

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110 Kosek claims Gregg was not a Quaker, while other sources do claim Gregg as a Quaker. It seems likely that while, like myself, Gregg did not seek membership of the Society of Friends, he was heavily influenced by it in his ideas on non-violence, simplicity and the power of moral conviction. Leilah C. Danielson, "In My Extremity I Turned to Gandhi: American Pacifists, Christianity, and Gandhian Nonviolence, 1915-1941," Church History 72, no. 2 (2003): 375; Lawrence S. Wittner, Rebels against War: The American Peace Movement, 1933-1983, Rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984), 31.


Beyond Gandhi’s direct principles of non-violent resistance, Quakers have also recognized that expression of the testimonies might come through artistic forms, “Creativity and spirituality are very close together. Perhaps they are the same.”115

A key way I can practise non-violent resistance is through my artwork, and I contend that as an artist, my composing and performing work is the most appropriate way in which I can non-violently work for “justice, equity and truth.”116 Ideas of social justice have been expressed in my work in a number of ways: through strong anti-war and pro-human rights themes, through a commitment to multiculturalism, recognizing “that of God” in music from many cultures, and through environmentalism.

Having been introduced to ideas of social activism through Quaker ideas, in my adolescence I became increasingly interested in the resonance with and extension of these ideas that had been expressed in non-Quaker contexts. This process led me to the music and politics of the African-American Civil Rights struggle: John Coltrane and Max Roach, Chuck D and his band Public Enemy, Malcolm X, James Baldwin, filmmaker Spike Lee and other African-American activists. The anger, desperation and desire for change expressed in these sources had a strong impact on me, and encouraged me to discuss social issues in my own music:

The common goal of 22 million Afro-Americans is respect as human beings, the God-given right to be a human being. Our common goal is to obtain the human rights that America has been denying us. We can never get civil rights in America

115 Frances Parsons quoted in Australia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) Inc, This We Can Say, 14.
116 Other artists from a Quaker background who have been moved to socially engaged work include Paul Robeson and Joan Baez. See Jim Haskins, Black Stars of the Civil Rights Movement (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons, 2003); David De Leon, Leaders from the 1960s: A Biographical Sourcebook of American Activism (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1994). Baez speaks extensively about her family’s Quakerism and its impact on her activities as a musician and activist in her memoir And A Voice to Sing With (London: Arrow, 1989).
until our human rights are first restored. We will never be recognized as citizens there until we are first recognized as humans.\textsuperscript{117}

Similarly, Nigerian composer Fela Kuti described music as the “weapon of the future.” His music often includes titles and lyrics fighting corruption, militarism and neo-colonialism.\textsuperscript{118} Fela argued that through music he could spread ideas and information to the people in a way that the military government of Nigeria could not easily counter: “as an artist, politically, artistically, my whole idea about my environment must be represented in the music, in the arts. So art is what's happening in a particular time of people's development or under-development. Music must awaken people to do their duty as citizens and act.”\textsuperscript{119} Here his thoughts reflect his interest in Malcolm X.\textsuperscript{120} Interestingly for this research, in his later years Fela incorporated more traditional spiritual ideas into his performance,\textsuperscript{121} seeing no disconnection between the spiritual and the political realms. In addition to forming an ensemble to perform Fela’s music and my own compositions inspired by him, I have continued, after his example, to attempt to use my own music as a means to greater social understanding. I will explore in this chapter the techniques I have used in an attempt to further these ends.

In \textit{A Dry White Season}, inspired by Euzhan Palcy’s 1989 film of the same name,\textsuperscript{122} I explore the suffering caused by the Apartheid regime in South Africa. There is in this piece a fairly blunt style of characterization, which juxtaposes insistent tight chord clusters in the piano with floating anthemic melodies in the saxophone, aiming to contrast the aggressive brutality of the political system with the brave resistance of the

\textsuperscript{119} Jean-Jacques Flori and Stéphane Tchalgadjieff, \textit{Music Is the Weapon} (France: Universal Import, 1982), DVD videorecording.
\textsuperscript{120} Tejumola Olaniyan, \textit{Arrest the Music!: Fela and His Rebel Art and Politics}, African Expressive Cultures. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).
\textsuperscript{122} Euzhan Palcy, "A Dry White Season," (USA: Sundance Productions, MGM, 1989).
people fighting it. Expressions of emotional intensity are common in my work, and in *A Dry White Season* there are a number of markers of this intensity, which include rhythmic drive and syncopation, clustered harmony, marked contrast between instrumental parts, extremes of register, and the use of noise as a musical element. The use of minimalist techniques in the mechanistic repetition of a single chord (Ex. 1) is given extra drama and colour through the extended crescendo into noise in the closing bars of the piano part. The chords themselves are not triads *à la* Philip Glass but are clusters mostly of minor seconds, with the aggressive punch of the bass chords enhanced by darting right hand punctuations, the resultant chords often creating a very dense sonority comprising the notes C, D, D♯, E, F, F♯ and G. These sounds are used to create a sonic image of a society that used an unrelenting system of restriction, supported by random acts of brutality.

![Ex. 1 A Dry White Season, opening theme](image)

The performance notes make the intention clear: “This is angry music, an emotion which should be evoked in playing ... this music hopefully expresses some of the violence and pathos depicted in the film – the lack of communication between the protagonists has been emphasized.” Optimistically, the piece ends with the piano part (representing the regime) dissolving into the shapeless noise of a crescendo with an open sustain pedal, while the saxophone (representing the resistance) plays a last phrase.
of resolution, a gospel-inflected pentatonic melody. The work is rhythmically structured in such a way that the mechanistic feel of the piano part is largely unrelenting, while the saxophone, especially in this closing statement, strives to escape the bounds of conventional time. The two versions of the closing saxophone theme are markedly different, with the first being in 4/4, still bound tightly to the piano accompaniment, while the second version floats freely in 3/4 (Ex. 2).

Ex. 2 *A Dry White Season*, closing melody

There are a number of musical ideas in this piece that I have continued to use in an effort to create emotional responses. The use of pentatonicism to express feelings of peace, resolution and contemplation is evident in *Forest Rain* (2003), *Angkor* (2002), *Tears* (2006), *Absence* (2004), as well as *A Dry White Season*. A number of theorist have suggested that pentatonic scales may be “acoustically or

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123 Especially optimistic given that, at the time the film was made, any resolution in South Africa short of a full civil war seemed unlikely.
124 The complete manuscript score for *A Dry White Season* can be found in Appendix C.
125 Fallingwater Trio, *Stay*.
126 Phil Bywater's Buried Treasure, *Looking Up*.
127 Fallingwater Trio, *Stay*.
128 Ibid.
psychologically desirable,” and all of the instances from my own music that I will discuss arise not from a conscious decision to employ pentatonicism, but rather from finding the appropriate sounds to express my intention. It has been suggested that the fundamental structure of the intervals in the standard anhemitonic pentatonic scale has a purity of ratios that lends itself to being “acoustically desirable,” and pentatonic scales have been found to create responses in otherwise largely unresponsive brain injury patients. It may also be that the near universality of pentatonic scales across diverse cultural boundaries leads me to use them to express ideas of peace, contemplation and serenity. As I will discuss elsewhere, I contend that a commitment to multiculturalism arises naturally from Quaker philosophy, and that for me as a musician, multiculturalism must encompass music. This leads almost inevitably, I would argue, back to pentatonicism.

Be still and know that I am God: Environmentalism as spiritual expression

Aboriginal spirituality is the belief that all objects are living and share the same soul or spirit that Aboriginals share. Therefore all Aborigines have a kinship with the environment. The soul or spirit is common – only the shape of it is different, but no less important.

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129 Jeremy Day-O’Connell, "Pentatonic."


132 I do not claim that “peace, contemplation and serenity” are inherent in pentatonic scales, I merely observe them recurring in my own work to express these ideas. Furthermore, from a sustained analysis of my compositional output, I contend that I do not use major pentatonicism as a compositional device except when attempting to express these ideas. By contrast, minor pentatonic structures appear consistently in my writing for Big Fela Afrobeat Orchestra, where they reflect less of a compositional choice than a fundamental part of the Afrobeat genre.

133 Eddie Kneebone interviewed in Creation Spirituality and the Dreamtime ed. Catherine Hammond, quoted in Mudrooroo, Us Mob, 34.
I have felt for many years that the Quaker idea of “that of God in every one” extends into the natural environment. Here, Bangarang elder and educator Eddie Kneebone expresses much the same idea. This is also a common thread in contemporary Quaker thought:

> Our religious experience of the natural world is pervaded by a strong sense of God's presence immanent within it - a feeling so strong that it moves us directly to the worship of God, just as we would be moved to worship in a church or temple where we suddenly became strongly conscious of God's presence.\(^{134}\)

Thus, for me, environmentalism becomes a calling. Indigenous writer Mudrooroo, discussing Gagudju elder Bill Nedjie’s expression of indigenous spirituality in his book *Story with Feeling*, states:

> This spirituality is preoccupied with the relationship of the earth, nature and people in the sense that the earth is accepted as a member of our family, blood of our blood, bone of our bone, and to show it disrespect or willfully harm it is tantamount to patricide, matricide or fratricide.\(^{135}\)

In my composition *Forest Rain*,\(^{136}\) I seek to evoke the sort of mystical sense of communion with the forest that Ralph Waldo Emerson discusses in *Nature*. Emerson writes,

> Crossing a bare common, in snow puddles, at twilight, under a clouded sky, without having in my thoughts any occurrence of special good fortune, I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration … Within these plantations of God, a decorum and sanctity reign, a perennial festival is dressed, and the guest sees not how he should tire of them in a thousand years. In the woods, we return to reason and faith … Standing on the bare ground, my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into


\(^{135}\) Mudrooroo, *Us Mob*, 47.

\(^{136}\) Fallingwater Trio, *Stay*. 
infinite space, all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eye-ball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me, I am part or particle of God … The greatest delight which the woods and fields minister, is the suggestion of an occult relation between man and the vegetable. I am not alone and unacknowledged. They nod to me, and I to them.  

Emerson’s depiction of the natural world is analogous to the feelings I intend in my composition *Forest Rain*.

There are several structural elements in my music that I would suggest tend towards a spiritual sense: minimalism, repetition (or mantra), and drone. These techniques are supported by my approach to composition and improvisation that often focuses on emotional expression rather than technical specifics – for example, the frequent use of sections that repeat and intensify until cue, according to the needs of the performers in that moment. In *Forest Rain*, all of these elements are used. *Forest Rain*, which attempts to reflect the environment of a certain part of the Tasmanian bush, emphasizing a sense of quietude and profundity, anchors securely around two answering, almost palindromic pentatonic ideas. (Ex. 3) There is no continuous musical time in the piece, and the various sections can be repeated and played in a different order at the whim of the performer, freely changing register to suit the dramatic needs of the moment.

![Ex. 3 Forest Rain, first phrase](image)


138 Again, I do not suggest that “minimalism, repetition (mantra), and drone” have inherent spiritual meaning. Rather, I observe them being used in my work to express spiritual ideas.

139 The complete score for *Forest Rain* can be found in Appendix C.
After this opening phrase, short fragments may be repeated in changing dynamics, timbres and octaves, to evoke a sense of contemplation as the ideas are considered in different ways. The score gives only the most basic information (Ex. 4):

Ex. 4 Forest Rain, second and third phrases

The immensity of the forest is suggested by repeating these phrases emphasizing extended dominant harmony, before finally resolving to the very strong tonic directions indicated in the main melody. The descending idea in scale degrees 3-2-1 is a feature of both the start and end of the melody, giving a strong sense of return to the tonic. Deryck Cooke categorizes this movement as “naturally convey[ing] a sense of experiencing joy passively i.e. accepting of welcoming blessings, relief, consolation, reassurance or fulfillment, together with a feeling of ‘having come home’.” I cannot imagine a better summation for the feelings I was trying to express.

There is a simplicity and directness in this work that comes from the saxophone part being the only scored part, with the accompanying guitar and bass parts to be improvised in response to the saxophone melody. Uncommonly for an improvising ensemble, the saxophone part is always performed almost entirely as written, although the performer has the freedom to make choices to move between different sections of the melody, vary the number of repeats, switch registers of the saxophone, and freely alter the dynamics. All of these elements are manipulated by the performer in an effort to build emotional intensity. The melody is constructed almost exclusively of pentatonic

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phrases in F major, finishing often on the 5\textsuperscript{th} degree to create a sense of anticipation, often on the 1\textsuperscript{st} degree to provide a strong sense of resolution, and occasionally on the 2\textsuperscript{nd} degree to create a feeling of suspension (in the emotional sense, not the musical one). The guitar part is freely improvised harmony around the saxophone melody, while the bassist usually elects to save his own freely improvised part to the end of the performance to reinforce the strong sense of resolution.

I attempt in this piece to use strong tonic and dominant harmony to give a sense of the power and majesty of the forest. The use of pentatonic scales also helps to create melodies that have a sense of simplicity and strong internal logic. The lack of regular time is used to create a literally “timeless” atmosphere, and the use of stark wide ranges on the saxophone mimics the verticality of the forest trees.

That of God in every one: Multiculturalism as spiritual expression

Ex. 5 Angkor, complete score

Angkor\textsuperscript{141}, which was inspired by the jungle-encircled Cambodian temples of Angkor Wat, has a similar pentatonic melodic structure in two answering ideas (Ex. 5). Like Forest Rain, this piece has no set time, a technique I also use in Absence to create a literally time-less and meditative quality. In Angkor, the pentatonic melodies have a related sensibility to those in Forest Rain, but the influence of traditional Cambodian music is prominent in the pentatonicism and in the phrasing and ornamentation of the melody and associated improvisations. I heard a great deal of traditional Cambodian music while travelling there in 2000 and 2002, and this piece was written on my return to Australia. As is often the case with my use of music from other cultures, I endeavour in this piece to capture my emotional response to the Angkor temples by using musical

\textsuperscript{141} Phil Bywater's Buried Treasure, Looking Up.
ideas that are personally evocative, rather than attempting to replicate traditional music. These ideas are manifest in my approach to Angkor which, in the version recorded on the Phil Bywater’s Buried Treasure CD Looking Up opens with an improvisation on the pitches and mood of the theme, using a tone concept and ornaments inspired by the traditional musicians of Cambodia.¹⁴²

Ex. 6 Angkor, transcribed improvisation excerpt

¹⁴² Other of my works with a multicultural theme include Awakening (2000) and Ishtar (2005) which use scales and rhythms derived from Arabic music, Ali (2009) which is inspired by the music of Malian guitarist Ali Farka Touré, klezmer jazz piece Chutzpah (1999), South African influenced Lullaby (2000), Puerto Rican influenced Adios Tito (2000) and Mambo For My Mother (1992), and Jamaican Ska flavoured Jah March (2002). Nigerian Afrobeat is a strong influence on the compositions Why (Can’t We Live In A Peaceful World?) (2007), Stolen Land (2006), and I Got A Feeling (2009) performed by Big Fela Afrobeat Orchestra, which also performs the music of Fela Kuti discussed above.
Let There Be Peace on Earth: Opposing war as spiritual expression

Ex. 7 Tears, complete score

Tears (Must There Always Be One More War?)\(^{143}\) was written in response to the work of Lebanese artist and musician Mazen Kerbaj, in which he chronicled through his

\(^{143}\) Fallingwater Trio, Stay.

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website the 2006 bombing raids on his home city of Beirut. Kerbaj spent much of his childhood enduring war in Lebanon, and the return of war after many years of peace had a profound emotional impact on him, leading him to express immense sadness in his visual art.

In *Tears*, the melodic phrase in the voice is repeated unchangingly, while the harmony underneath it moves steadily from passive bare triads to the highly chromatic chords in bars 12 and 13 of the score (Ex. 7). In this way, I attempt to develop and intensify the anguish expressed in the sorrowful opening melody, before releasing the tension by moving back to stark triads to create a sense of resignation. The tension chords are related to those in *A Dry White Season*, though less densely clustered and in a more open voicing: stacked up and arranged within the compass of a fifth, the F-Δ9\#5 chord spells out E F G A\# B in comparison to *A Dry White Season*’s C D D\# E F F\# G. In *Tears*, however, the chords do not have the static intensity employed in *A Dry White Season*, but rather the more disconcerting sliding chromaticism of *Don’t Sell It All, Jeff* (see below). The key part of this work is, however, the opening melodic statement, which expresses determination and struggle against the odds as it attempts, through numerous repetitions over changing harmony, to reach its closing tonic note. This note, having been set up in the initial statements of the theme, seems to be thwarted with each shift in the harmony until it is finally resolved in bar 17. Deryck Cooke describes this descending 3-2-1 phrase in the minor key as being much used to express “an incoming painful emotion, in a context of finality: acceptance of, or yielding to grief; discouragement and depression; passive suffering; and the despair connected with death.” Once again, I could not imagine a more clear expression of my intention with this work. I recently had an experience in performance that I found quite disturbing.

At the end of this piece, the audience sat silent without applause for what seemed like

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146 Ibid., 81.
147 Cooke, The Language of Music, 133.
148 Fallingwater Trio performance at La Mama Theatre, 27 April 2009
an inordinately long period of time, but was most likely several minutes. An audience member commented afterwards, “it would have been like clapping at a funeral.” I can only assume that the emotional intensity of the piece (I once burst into tears while performing it at the Apollo Bay Music Festival 2007) carried through to the audience to such a degree that they were moved on a profound, indeed spiritual, level.

It was after this performance at the Apollo Bay Music Festival that Fallingwater Trio were asked to be involved in a forum on spirituality for a disability support service in Ballarat. This was a surprise, as I had not previously considered my music particularly appropriate for such a context. However, at the forum, it was clear that the calm, meditative quality in much of the music we present, offered people an opportunity to consider their faith and explore it in an informal, non-prescriptive setting.

Keep the bastards honest: Social awareness as spiritual expression

The use of minor second intervals to express tension is common in my work, whether they appear melodically as in Don’t Sell It All, Jeff (1996) or harmonically as in A Dry White Season, Purple Sunrise (2004) and Tears.

Don’t Sell It All, Jeff was written as a very deliberate piece of agitprop protesting the then Kennett Government’s sale of state assets including the Victorian gas and electricity utilities. In this work, the tension is created by the tonal ambiguity of the cyclical moving chords in multiphonics that avoid a strong tonal centre, and reinforced by the production of the notes themselves, which require a challenging technique involving singing or screaming the third of the chord through the saxophone to induce that harmonic (Ex. 8). The interference between the saxophone harmonics and the voice

149 Released as a cassette demo recording by Jazz With Attitude, 1996. The complete score can be found in Appendix C.

150 Unpublished manuscript in the collection of the composer.

151 Jeff Kennett was Premier of the state of Victoria, Australia 1992-1999.
creates quite a brutal sonority that establishes the aggressive tone of the work very clearly.

Ex. 8 A section melody of Don’t Sell It All, Jeff constructed from saxophone multiphonics

Extremes of register are a common device I use to express strong emotion, and my saxophone playing uses the altissimo register extensively. The Curse of the Flesheaters, for improvising tenor saxophone (1995), a militant vegetarian statement, starts on an altissimo Bb well outside the standard saxophone range, then moves through a range of extended techniques including harmonics, multiphonics and notes sung through the instrument that move well beyond the standard compass of the saxophone (Ex. 9). These techniques are also used in combination to enhance their aural effect. The performer in this piece is requested to freely employ these techniques in a melodic context in order to create a sense of fear, dread and foreboding. While this piece was motivated by Peter Singer’s book Animal Liberation and its description of barbaric practices in the factory farming industry, the title deliberately tones down the political impact of the piece by casting it in the style of a B-grade Hollywood monster movie.

152 I essentially have two styles of saxophone altissimo playing: a "clean" style which I tend to use on Awakening and Stay for a Long Time, and an inflected "dirty" one as on Flesheaters and d’d’n’ (1996). The inflected sound is used to create emotional intensity. In the works with more spiritual intention, the use of the inflected tone will be much more pronounced and consistent, as on Flesheaters, and on most of my work with Big Fela Afrobeat Orchestra.


As shown at the end of the first phrase, the idea of saxophone multiphonics moving in chromatic semitones as employed in Don’t Sell It All, Jeff is here used again to express frustration at injustice.

It might be suggested that beyond an investigation of tonalities and scales, an assessment of a musician’s social relations with their fellow performers could provide a deeper understanding of spiritual influence. Certainly, I often find myself, when working as a sideman in other peoples’ ensembles, in the role of conciliator and diplomat, seeking to find non-confrontational ways to resolve conflict. As a composer and bandleader, I have in recent years endeavoured to present less complex scores to my colleagues, finding that by allowing my conception of my own work to expand to actively encompass the contributions of the other performers, I have been able to achieve a more effective music-making process. By allowing the other performers more leeway in their personal expression, I can be more respectful of their ideas and allow the performance process to be a more rewarding one for all the performers. This approach has its hazards; a leader-less ensemble can become shapeless, and the direction chosen by the other performers may not gel with my ideas on the “correct” presentation of a particular piece. Nevertheless, I feel that the positive impacts on the music-making process firmly outweigh the occasional negative results.

I aim to treat my fellow musicians with utmost respect, and my bands usually have very stable line-ups over many years, which I think reflects this attitude and helps to create the intuitive ensemble sense I prefer to utilize in my performances. When working as a sideman, I try to focus my energy on making the entire ensemble sound as good as
possible, aiming to fulfil the bandleader’s musical objectives to the best of my ability. In some instances, this has resulted in long-term associations where I become a default musical director, interpreting the needs of the leader to explain them to the other musicians. This requires the ability to “read” and interpret the leader’s physical and musical gestures, and transfer them clearly but not dictatorially to the ensemble.

I suggest that my Quaker background contributes strongly to this relatively supportive and consultative approach to band leading, ensemble performance and composition.

Ideas of peace and social justice continue to be a strong influence in my compositional and improvisational work. As I have explained in this and previous chapters, I experience a profound link between the spiritual, the musical, and the political spheres. I associate these links with my Quaker background, but I have also observed it in Indigenous cultures and in many of the African-American musicians whom I have been inspired by. In keeping with these traditions, I feel compelled to express socially positive messages through my music. I am in sympathy with saxophonist John Coltrane: “When there’s something we think could be better, we must make an effort to try and make it better. So it’s the same socially, musically, politically, and in any department of our lives … you know, I want to be a force for real good. In other words, I know that there are bad forces, forces put here that bring suffering to others and misery to the world, but I want to be the force which is truly for good … I think music is an instrument, it can create the initial thought patterns that can change the thinking of the people.”\footnote{Coltrane quoted in interview with Frank Kosky, New York September 1967 printed in Pauline Rivelli and Robert Levin, Giants of Black Music (New York: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1979), 26, 38.}

Trumpeter Don Cherry said of Coltrane, “His thinking was spiritual but instead of speaking it, he would play and you could feel it.”\footnote{Brian Priestley, John Coltrane (London: Apollo, 1987), 68.} Coltrane also expressed a desire to “become a saint.”\footnote{Lewis Porter, John Coltrane: His Life and Music, The Michigan American Music Series (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 260.} I deeply understand this expression of personal commitment to a spiritual principle.
Conclusion

I began this research intending to investigate issues of music and spirituality as they relate to my artistic practice. My intention was to clarify the artistically generative aspects of my spiritual practice and to come to understand how my beliefs inform my creation of new music.

Through this research I now understand at a conscious level that my artistic practice, from inspiration to fulfilment, is profoundly informed by my spiritual background, and that this process extends to being drawn towards working with musicians from a variety of spiritual beliefs that share these concepts of social justice. There is perhaps a danger for spiritual belief to be seen as “dogma” that divides various social activities and processes. My understanding of the Quaker faith has helped me towards a different experience where I am able to work with musicians and artists from a variety of faiths and backgrounds for a common social cause.

It has been a challenging and rewarding process to analyse and explore my personal experiences and musical performances for this research. It has revealed aspects of myself of which I was largely unaware, and has deepened my understanding of my own creative process.

It is true that the compositional choices and devices I have detailed cannot be defined as expressing universal spiritual meanings. Rather, this research examines how my life experience, my understanding of social context, and reactions from myself, fellow musicians, and audiences have led me to recognize those elements of my music that express a sense of my own spirituality.

Through this research, I have attempted to demonstrate that my Quaker background, reinforced and influenced by my exposure to other musicians and social ideas, has led me to compose and perform music that has a strong spiritual and socially conscious
dimension. I have explored the elements of Quakerism that I consider relevant to my own spirituality, and identified parallels between Quaker practices and those of improvising musicians. I have detailed my experience working with Indigenous musicians, and how this activity has broadened my understanding of the role of spirituality in Indigenous music and culture. Finally, I have analysed my own compositions in order to ascertain what musical elements I have used to express social, political and spiritual ideas.

The process of undertaking this research has been a profoundly valuable one for me, and I expect that my understanding will continue to grow and develop over the coming years.

The effects of our actions are largely beyond our control. Any happening they may influence has multiple causes that can never be unraveled; the contribution of what we did is as hard to assess as that of a single strand in a rope. We must have faith that if we purify our hearts making our motives more compassionate, what we do will strength unimaginably the great forces that can save humanity.

Adam Curle

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158 Australia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) Inc., *This We Can Say*, 117.
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LP sound recording.

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Warumpi Band. *Big Name, No Blankets.*
CD sound recording.

Willoughby, Bart. *Take It or Leave It:*
LP sound recording.
Appendix A

Recorded musical examples as referenced in the text
Examples 1 and 2 have not been recorded. Tracks 1 through 7 are excerpts related to each example, while tracks 8 through 12 are the complete performances from which the excerpts have been taken. A complete personnel listing can be found below.
**Forest Rain**
Fallingwater Trio  *Stay* (Jazzhead 2008)

Phil Bywater, tenor saxophone
Elliott Folvig, guitar
Dale Lindrea, electric bass

**Angkor**
Phil Bywater’s Buried Treasure  *Looking Up* (Newmarket 2003)

Phil Bywater, flute
Anita Hustas, double bass
Elliott Folvig, guitar
Dale Lindrea, electric bass
Will Guthrie, drums
Elissa Goodrich, vibraphone and percussion

**Tears**
Fallingwater Trio  *Stay* (Jazzhead 2008)

Phil Bywater, voice, tenor saxophone
Elliott Folvig, guitar
Dale Lindrea, electric bass

**Don’t Sell It All, Jeff**
Jazz With Attitude  (Unreleased 1996)

Phil Bywater, tenor saxophone
Nigel Hope, electric bass
Will Guthrie, drums

**The Curse of The Flesheaters**
Hexfarm  *Wall of Taste* (Corporruption 1996)

Phil Bywater, tenor saxophone

Band members not performing on this track:
Mat Ward, electric bass, vocals
Dane Renshaw, drums
Appendix B

Lament

two hundred years ago
an Aborigine was killed
by a white

the conquerors did not note
who they killed
who they raped and tortured
the names of the first brave fallen
are lost to history

in every country town
stands a marble monument
bearing the mortal names
of the men who fought
(with borrowed honour)
and died
(for a borrowed cause)
we shall remember them
and yet

where is the monument of those
who did not travel across the world to fight
but sacrificed their lives
to protect their homes
their sacred lands
these people fought surely
and not men only but women
and terrified confused children
their names have been discarded
their lands confiscated
their lives debased

so two hundred years in
their sacrifice is finally noted
commemorated
if all was right
this should be the time for recognition
but it is the killing
not the dying that is made honourable
and still the people cry
and die

Philip Bywater (aged 16) 1987\textsuperscript{159}

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., 246.
Experiences of the Spirit

We affirm that the Spirit is everywhere and always accessible.

We affirm that the Spirit is shaped by the mysteries and contrasts of the ancient Australian landscape, the climate, our rivers and oceans.

We affirm our need to be open to the Spirit in Indigenous cultures.

We affirm that ordinary experiences of life – imperfections, yearnings, birth, suffering and death, nature, beauty, art and science – are the Spirit.

We affirm that the Spirit is in goodwill, in small acts of kindness and in being utterly truthful.

We affirm that being held in the Spirit is a way through brokenness, darkness and sorrow.

We affirm that the Spirit is breath, hope, love, dancing. Singing, laughing, wholeness, connectedness, focus, integration, courage, journeying and leadings.

We affirm that the Spirit is unsettling, paradoxical and doesn’t necessarily follow our timing.

We affirm that the Spirit is in all our ways of living and working.

We affirm that the Spirit is in all our ways of living and working.

We affirm that the Spirit shines through our connections with, and support for each other, and our community.

We affirm the need for stillness to listen in silence to the Spirit.

We affirm the utter availability of the Spirit of God.¹⁶⁰

Australia Yearly Meeting 2001

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 3.
Appendix C

*A Dry White Season*, full score (manuscript)

*A Dry White Season* for Tenor Saxophone and Piano

April - July 1991

**Performance notes** (as written in original score):

Saxophone appears in actual pitch.

This is angry music, an emotion which should be evoked in playing.

The section at 106: the piano quavers should continue oblivious to the freely interpreted saxophone melody (freedom refers to the rhythm, the melody should be retained). The single bar of quavers should be repeated incessantly until the saxophone melody has been completed, when the 6/8 section may proceed immediately.

The section at 111: The piano holds the big chord, while the saxophone goes on an ad lib tangent over an F dorian scale. When finished, the saxophone should cue the pianist into 112.

*A Dry White Season* was inspired by the film *A Dry White Season*, which explores racial tensioning South Africa. This music hopefully expresses some of the violence and pathos depicted in the film - the lack of communication between the protagonists has been emphasised.
Day White Season
(Tenor Saxophone + Piano)
4/91
- 7/91
Saxophone appears in actual pitch

This is angry music, an emotion which should be evoked in playing.

The section at 108: the piano quavers should continue to allow the freely interpreted saxophone melody (freedom refers to the rhythm, the melody, yes, should be retained). The single bar of quavers should be repeated in exactly whilst the saxophone melody has been completed, when the G section may proceed immediately.

The section at 111: the piano holds the C# chord, while the saxophone goes on an A flat pentatonic over an E minor scale. When finished, the saxophone should cue the pianist into G.

A Day White Season was inspired by the film A Day White Season, which explores racial tension in South Africa. This music hopefully expresses some of the violence and pathos depicted in the film - the lack of communication between the protagonists has been emphasised.
Forest Rain, full score

Score

Forest Rain
(for George)

Phil Bywater

Slowly, patently, sparsely, contemplatively

Tenor Saxophone

As if improvised

Order of sections, octave displacement, repeats and dynamics are all to be freely interpreted by the performer.

Any additional performers improvise freely within the aesthetic parameters established by the score.

©2006
Angkor, full score

Angkor

Start with flute and percussion

1  whisper tones and rattles
2  quiet impro E minor pentatonic
3  resolve to theme
4  dbass enter in canon with flute
5  Guitar and ebass enter with their own canon of theme
6  die away to ebass solo
7  long notes ppp UNDER bass solo

8  ebass brings back theme answered by unison tutti
9  dbass theme answered by unison tutti
10 guitar theme answered by unison tutti
11 big tutti
12 dissolve back to flute and percs, die
Tears, full score

Voice

Guitar

Electric Bass

F./C (scored chord voicings are given as guides only)

F.  E⁰  C⁷b⁹  D⁰  C⁷Δ  F⁷sus  E⁰  B⁹/⁷/F  B⁹  A⁷b  A⁷⁴⁶/G

F-Δ⁹b⁵  F-Δ⁹b⁵  G⁷b⁹/B  F./C  C⁷  D⁰  E⁰  F.  E⁷/F  F-

- minor  ø  half diminished (minor ⁷,⁵)
Δ major ⁷th  ø  diminished
Don't Sell It All, Jeff...

Agressively \( \frac{1}{4} \) circa 144

VAMP - start with saxophone alone

(long notes sung)

C min

Bb/C Bb/Db Bb/C A/B Bb/C Bb/Db Bb/C A/B

Bb/C Bb/Db Bb/C A/B Bb/C Bb/Db Bb/C A/B

Double time jazz

Emaj7#11 Gmin9 G9 F9

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Saxophone solo begins over C minor vamp, then continues through whole form.
Head repeats for ending, no C minor section at very end