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Australian Music Centre

The Australian Music Centre is the leading provider of information, publications and scores relating to Australian music. There are currently approximately 400 composers represented in the Centre's extensive Music Resource Library. The Centre services annually 25,000 requests for information, loans, hire and sales of publications, recordings and scores. Performers, orchestras and ensembles are regular users of the Centre along with private, secondary and tertiary teachers for whom the range of teachers' resources is a vital adjunct to their work. The Centre is a member of the International Association of Music Information Centres, a worldwide network of forty-five organisations in forty countries, and represents Australia at the International Society for Contemporary Music.

Publications and Recordings

Sounds Australian is an authoritative journal published twice a year. The Australian Music Centre invites various members of the music community to act as guest editors. The editors for this issue are Art Phillips and Yantra de Vilder. Opinions expressed are those of the writers, and are not necessarily shared by the Australian Music Centre Board or Staff. The layout and cover design for this issue are by Andrew Davidson. Printing is by BEE Printmail.

Australian Music Centre Update is published quarterly. It includes information about new library acquisitions, regular columns from music industry representatives and details of new releases of Australian music on compact disc.

The Australian Music Calendar lists performances of Australian music nationally and is published monthly.

Sibelius Opportunities Listing is a listing of opportunities for composers and performers to apply for funding, or enter awards and competitions. This appears monthly.

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Subscription to the above publications is a benefit of membership of the Australian Music Centre. Members may also borrow scores, recordings and / or books from the Music Resource Library. They receive voting rights and priority invitations to the Annual General Meeting and Australian Music Centre's annual awards ceremony, and they support the promotion of Australian music around the world. In addition to these benefits, members receive discounts on CDs from the Centre's extensive catalogue, scores produced in-house through the Centre's facsimile publishing service, teacher resource kits, and scores and publications from publishers around the country. The rates for 2003 are:

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The Music Resource Library houses 12,000 works by approximately 400 composers. The collection, the most comprehensive of its kind, focuses on contemporary Australian music and, in many cases, is the only source for these works. It also holds books, recordings, performance parts, bibliographies of composers' works, lists of repertoire for any instrumental combination, biographical files on more than 1,000 Australian composers, press clippings, analyses, reviews, photographs and an extensive collection of program notes. Specialist staff are available to help and advise those wishing to borrow, purchase or research Australian music. The telephone information service is open to all, but it is necessary to become a member to borrow.

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The Australian Music Centre provides extensive packages of information tailored to the requirements of students and teachers. These include a series of kits covering all genres of music, which can be used to teach broad music concepts in an Australian context. They contain scores, text and recordings. Visits for small groups of students may be arranged. These sessions familiarise students with the music, services and facilities.

Other services of the Australian Music Centre

Funding assistance for copying of performance parts is provided by the Music Fund of the Australia Council and the Australasian Performing Right Association (APRA). The Australian Music Centre administers these funds by reimbursing copyists, helping towards the cost of premiering Australian compositions.

Australian Composers' Orchestra Forum

The Forum offers a unique opportunity for exceptional young composers to write for and work with one of Australia's professional orchestras. The Forum is a joint project of Symphony Australia and the Australian Music Centre, and in 2002 was hosted by the West Australian Symphony Orchestra.

APRA / Australian Music Centre Classical Music Awards

Each year, the Centre recognises achievement in the composition, performance and presentation of Australian music at an awards ceremony.

Australian Screen Music



Art Phillips

is a screen composer, and holds the prestigious position of President of The Australian Guild of Screen Composers (2001 and 2002). He was the Vice-President of the organisation from 1992 to 2000. Art lectures in screen music composition on a contract basis at Griffith University (Gold Coast, QLD), Central Queensland Conservatorium of Music (Mackay, QLD), The Australian Institute of Music (Sydney, NSW) and The Queensland Conservatorium of Music (Brisbane, QLD).

Cover image from the feature film *Shine*, featuring Geoffrey Rush as David Helfgott, courtesy of Momentum Films Pty Ltd and Ronin Films. Photograph by Lisa Tomasetti.

As President of the Australian Guild of Screen Composers (AGSC), and co-editor of this journal, it is a great pleasure to present this publication.

The articles contained in this issue represent a fraction of subjects relating to screen composition. Whilst a number of books have been published on Australian cinema music over the years, there is very little documentation available about the historical events that have shaped our industry.

In this issue the first article gives us an insight into the various events that contributed to some of the methods now used to synchronise music to the screen. We also look at the process of assembling an orchestra for a soundtrack recording from the contracting and concertmaster experiences of Phillip and Coralie Hartl. We escape into the depths of 'A Film Composer's Challenges' with Nerida Tyson-Chew, and are fortunate to have an interview,

transcribed by Yantra de Vilder, with David Hirshfelder and Burkhard Dallwitz, two of Australia's most prolific screen composers. The interview was convened by Martin Armiger for the Professional Development seminar series run by the Australasian Performing Right Association (APRA) and the AGSC. We look into the creative process and experiences from screen composers Guy Gross and Sven Libaek with their work on internationally acclaimed animation productions. Professor Michael Atherton documents a very well detailed summation of educational offerings available on screen music studies in Australia, and we include a view from a former Australian screen music student, Leah Curtis, who continues studying whilst actively practising her craft in Hollywood. And, finally, a focus on sound design where the writer, Peter

Miller, screen composer and sound designer, discusses the cohesion of 'music' and 'sound'.

We have a great industry in this country and I firmly believe it's just the beginning of a long success story for Australian screen music.

It is my hope that this issue of *Sounds Australian* will be both educational and enjoyable to all. ■

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screen music.**

the art and craft of composing for a moving image



Yantra de Vilder

is a composer for film, theatre, dance and multimedia events. She has recently returned from a visit to Europe on a study grant as part of her masters degree research project in contemporary music at Macquarie University (Sydney, NSW).

Whether it is scoring for a major feature film, writing music for a TV series, or designing soundtracks for multimedia purposes, the majority of screen composers are subject to the same laws of isolation and introspection in the initial stages of composition. Staring at one's computer, piano, or score paper, waiting for the muse to descend with the inspiration of the sound of the next opening theme is a familiar place for many of us. As members of the Australian Guild of Screen Composers (AGSC), Art and I are grateful to the Australian Music Centre for providing us with the valuable opportunity to present a written forum from a broad cross-section of Australian composers, promoting and encouraging a sense of shared knowledge and experience throughout our artistic community.

Australia stands at a pivotal point in its direction and influence as a vital force in the international film community.

Exquisite natural locations and the availability of highly skilled professionals not only make Australia a valid option in filming and production schedules, but also provide a financially viable outcome for producers. There is an unmistakably unique sense of fresh creativity and ideas arising from Australia's fertile ground of multicultural sensibilities and inherent independence resulting from our specific geographical location. We have an Australian sound, we can sense it in the natural environmental ambience, and define it in the popular music genre.

The art of the screen composer in contemporary society is diverse and multi-faceted, subject to the constantly changing demands of technological, artistic and cultural developments. Today, screen composition is a broad term and can incorporate a wide range of skills and personnel including the composer, lyricist, music editor, copyist,

orchestrator, conductor, sound designer, music editor, music programmer and music supervisor.

The application of the appropriate musical form and style may vary, from the pure simplicity of acoustic instrumentation for a small ensemble, through to majestic orchestral works. On the other side of the scale we encounter the notion of the art of the recording studio as a composition medium, whereby music technology, samplers, synthesisers and programming provide a musical composition derived from applications of sonic texturisation and electronic music practices, bearing a direct relationship to the contemporary popular music world. The success of the soundtrack album bears witness to this cross-fertilisation of styles and marketing exploits due to the amalgamation of many film and record companies.

The wide range of musical genres, whether driven by acoustic or

The art of the screen composer ... is diverse and multi-faceted, subject to the constantly changing demands of technological, artistic and cultural developments.

technological composition tools, are subject to the dictates of budget and directorial preferences. Beyond the influence of huge orchestras, sampled loops or solo piano, it is of vital importance to recognise and appreciate the simplicity of a good composition that supports the story, regardless of the

instrumentation applied. All too often, a sledge hammer soundtrack of thunderous orchestration and ear-defying sound design just serves to manipulate the viewer into a constructed and limited emotional response.

Educational institutions are now beginning to sense the importance of the advent of screen composition training and related contemporary music courses with a direct link to orchestral training, technology practices, audio synchronisation and music programming. The lack of formal training institutes specialising in screen

omposing to

composition points to a somewhat naïve understanding of Australia's role as a burgeoning filmmaking community, rich in directors and composers of an international standard.

The impetus driving Australian contemporary music and artistic inspiration is drawn from a wide range of possibilities derived from education, artistic influences, technological advancements, cultural paradigms, and environment (to name a few). For us, as members of the AGSC – a fellowship of creative individuals aligned through the trials and tribulations of composition for the screen – this series of articles not only provides an educational forum under the auspices of the Australian Music Centre, but also gives us a sense of unity and the possibility to implement changes and direct initiatives that influence the future direction of Australian screen composition.

This opportunity to present Australian composers' stories plays an important role in the evolving history of screen composition. Hopefully it will mark the beginning of many discussions and forums aimed at raising vital issues which will have far-reaching implications, manifesting in the broader applications of education, career development, cultural initiatives and international artist placement. Ultimately, and of necessity, these impacts will be implemented as positive outcomes in political applications, thereby ensuring a new understanding and respect of the unique cultural identity and vital role of the Australian screen composer. ■



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The History and Mechanics of Music: The Early Days

Art Phillips

is a screen composer, and holds the prestigious position of President of The Australian Guild of Screen Composers (2001 and 2002). He was the Vice-President of the organisation from 1992 to 2000. Art lectures in screen music composition on a contract basis at Griffith University (Gold Coast, QLD), Central Queensland Conservatorium of Music (Mackay, QLD), The Australian Institute of Music (Sydney, NSW) and The Queensland Conservatorium of Music (Brisbane, QLD).

From the very start of civilisation, music and drama have been closely connected. The Aborigines and other cultures used music to accompany ceremonies and spiritual gatherings. The Greeks, Romans, Japanese, Indonesians and Indians used music to accompany dance and dramatic plays. In the medieval era music was used in pagan festivals and liturgical dramas. The Renaissance period utilised music in specific scenes in Shakespearean plays, on through the Baroque operas and ballets, to modern-day theatrical productions such as plays, musicals, cinematic films, and television. Music for the screen has always played an important role in heightening the emotions and clarifying the interpretation of a storyline by interacting with the visual to form a cohesive interplay between the auditory and visual senses for the audience. Music is capable of swaying the viewer into a desired mood based on the content of the musical language utilised.

Music and sound can affect a film's audience subconsciously. It can manipulate the viewer's emotions in various directions. Mostly, its function is to guide the audience on what to feel and when. It has the ability to create a mood that may not necessarily be the obvious. It can provide a depth unlike any other form of communication and it can move us into the inner thoughts of a character on screen without a word being spoken. Music is able to put us on edge or it can create a calming effect. It can provide emotional and atmospheric shading that is not unlike the brush strokes of an artist and the various hues painted onto the canvas. It also has the ability to help with transitional elements within a scene and to help focus a point of view. It is interesting to me that certain musical clichés have appeared in cinema since the beginning of the film era. Even though the experience of music will differ from listener to listener, the foundation for an intended uniform result is much the same. Deep low frequencies, whether in the context of a single drone, or close-voiced higher frequencies, such as intervals of a second, create feelings of a threat or uneasiness. There are many

theories for further research, such as whether these frequencies, or the combination of layered frequencies, cause mood-related effects due to an association with our ancestral roots. It may also be possible that the frequency vibrations of our planet and galaxy cause us to respond as we do. Or, are our emotional responses simply due to our continued exposure to similar musical languages. Music for the screen is an invisible character – an alternate dimension that can enhance the film like no other element.

A good score sits well within the film and does not jump out at the audience as being too obvious. It should be like an accompanist to a vocal artist, never attempting to take over the stage unless it is called upon to do so.

Very little has been documented about the early history of Australian screen music. Whilst there is some information available about the early Australian cinema, it is limited compared to the details available about Hollywood. I spent 18 years working in Los Angeles as a session guitarist, music arranger, orchestrator and screen composer, writing for such television series as *Santa Barbara*, *Guiding Light*, and incidental music for *The Love Boat*. Much of my information has come first hand from talking with many of the older schooled composers and orchestrators who were working in the '40s, '50s and '60s. I have noted various publications where other information was obtained. Whenever I make no direct reference to a location I am referring to Hollywood.

It is just over a century ago that the silent film era began. On 28 December 1895 the Lumiere brothers screened their first silent film in a basement café in the Boulevard des Capucines, Paris. The program was accompanied by a solo piano. 20 February 1896 saw the first public screening of a film in England, entitled *The Arrival of a Train in a Station*, produced by the Lumiere family. The film was shown at the Regent Street Polytechnic and was accompanied by an old harmonium that was brought in from the chapel. This is also the beginning of a concept we now call 'sound effects', where a cylinder of

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compressed air was used to imitate steam engine noises against the visual. In this same year music hall orchestras provided full musical accompaniments to film shows presented at the Empire and Alhambra Music Halls in England. The music was existing materials (not written specifically for the program) and cued on the fly.

Another concept called the 'needle drop' was introduced in the late 1890s using an orchestral gramophone record. A piece of music was specifically chosen to coincide with a particular scene in the film. Whilst the movie was playing, the projectionist or another person sitting in the booth would physically drop the needle onto a chosen position on the record to accompany the drama. The first film using this technique was called *Little Tich and his Big Boots* and was shown in England. Between 1901 and 1906 various experiments with the musical (singing films) were produced using the needle drop method to accompany scenes.

Australia produced silent films as early as 1896. The first continuous silent film of any substantial length was *The Story of the Kelly Gang*, directed by Charles Tait. The film opened at the Athenaeum Theatre in Melbourne in 1906. As the film unwound an orchestra provided music, an actor (or two) provided voices and a description of the actions, and young boys were employed to provide sound effects from behind the screen. (Pike and Cooper, 1981). Music would have been performed and conducted on the fly. There is no specific documentation of the music used.

The first original music score composed to a film was a score by Camille Saint-Saëns for a film entitled *L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise*, produced by Film D'Art in France in late 1907. The score was for strings, piano and harmonium. It was cued and conducted on the fly.

In 1909, the American company Edison Films issued musical cue sheets with film releases. These cue sheets would detail the type of music required by mood description or sometimes the actual name of an existing musical work was listed. The cue sheets indicated where

a musical piece should be used in the film sequence.

Australia continued to produce a trail of films throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century. Music was provided by live ensembles, solo pianists, organists or gramophone records. In 1907 Charles MacMahon directed the Australian film *Robbery Under Arms*. The initial presentations of the film were elaborate: on 9 May 1908, at the Adelaide Town Hall, Alfred Boothman, a well-known actor, stood beside the screen and narrated the story, accompanied by realistic sound effects, by George Rocks, and an orchestra consisting of piano and strings. In 1911, a film entitled *The Lost Chord* was made and, at the screening in Melbourne, music was performed live on stage by vocalist Isabella Bull, accompanied by a grand organ (Pike and Cooper, 1981).

1913 is a key year in the development of printed music publications that could be used for the screen. The Sam Fox Moving Picture Company (Cleveland, Ohio) published music volumes by composer J. S. Zamecnik. Other noted publications were *Kinothek* by G. Becce and *Motion Picture Moods* arranged by E. Rapee. These publications were designed specifically

for silent movie pianists and tended to standardise the musical and emotional content for the viewers. In my opinion, this was the beginning of the cliché approach that we see today with many film scores. These publications contained works that would deliver results for various moods such as 'Hurry Music' for mob or fire scenes (Zamecnik, c. 1913), pieces for a sinister mood or a love scene, triumphant, sneaky or burglar music, threatening mood, horror, heroic, combat, joy, mystery, humour ... the list goes on, covering every mood imaginable. The music

director of the film would view the film with a stopwatch and time each scene. They would then find an appropriate piece contained in these music volumes. The tempo and arrangement of these works would vary depending on the film sequence. As you can imagine, this was a very pre-historic approach to synchronising music to film but, nevertheless, it was a positive step forward.

In Australia during this era there were local companies publishing similar material. Allan & Co. and Paling & Co. were the major publishers of Australian film music. Their published music consisted of short, episodic pieces of sentimental charm and illustrative music intended to augment the appropriate emotional moments of the film. Originally scored for piano, these pieces could easily be modified (often marked with cues) for ensembles or orchestras. (Diane Naphthali, 1999).

In my opinion, music to silent films served two main purposes. Firstly, to provide depth of dramatic content, creating another dimension aside from the visual, and, secondly, there was no other sound except for the clunky noise of the projection machinery. Music was used to help cover up these

annoying audible frequencies.

In 1924, Lee De Forrest produced experimental sound films in New York. The film of notable recognition is *Love's Old Sweet Song*. A year later in London, De Forrest released sound films with effects, dialogue and music. In 1926, British Acoustics produced the sound film *A Wet Night* at Weissensee Studios in Berlin. The most recognised film of its time was the Warner Brothers production *The Jazz Singer*, released in New York in October 1927, with music playing an intricate role. The film was mostly silent, but the audience was

Music for the screen is an invisible character – an alternate dimension that can enhance the film like no other element.

shocked when they suddenly heard words coming from Jolson's mouth. 1928 saw the arrival of the first Walt Disney sound cartoon entitled *Steamboat Willie*. Up to about 1931, most of the early sound films produced were musicals.

The production of 'sound to film' was achieved by various experimental methods, including the sound-on-disc system, a non-editable format on a separate medium from the visual film. In the late 1920s the production of 'sound on film' came into play with the use of sound cameras and optical soundtrack recording, where the entire soundtrack was recorded at the same time as the visual, on the same medium. Sound was recorded by a sound camera directly onto 35mm film. Editing was difficult and mostly impractical, as it would interfere with the audio track. With recording techniques of this time, there was only one track available for sound recording. The visual was filmed at the same time as the recording of the dialogue, sound effects and music. Musicians needed to be on the set during filming. This was, of course, a very expensive and problematic process as mistakes from the director, musicians, actors, recordists, camera operators, etc. would cause take after take, as there was no way of recording anything independently.

Australian filmmakers were also experimenting with sound films from about 1926. By 1930 Australian producers were adapting their silent films into partial-talkies, and were producing new sound films, usually employing the sound-on-disc system or recording sound on to 35mm film stock.

By 1931, magnetic recording advancements made their way into filmmaking. This made the recording process much more practical as music and other forms of audio could be recorded separately from the filming. This technology, called 'the pre-record', would allow synchronisation to the visual during production and post-production. Image contained on one 35 mm film reel has a sprocket hole sequence that aligns to a location. Aligning the visual film to the soundtrack recording(s), recorded on

separate 35mm magnetic film stock, allowed fairly accurate synchronisation via sprocket hole lock. This allowed for greater control over post-production techniques and helped keep music budgets manageable.

This method of locking the machinery together was fairly foolproof, providing the power supply was constant. If a 'surge' or 'drain' in the power supply occurred, as often happened in those days, the speed of motors would alter. If the music was recorded at an uneven moment in power, it wouldn't align with film that was shot during a normal period, and vice versa. This was corrected when power grids were better perfected.

The 1930 Australian film production *Fellers*, directed by Arthur Higgins and Austin Fay, was a partial-talkie. Music is credited to Barney Cuthbert. The last reel of the film was synchronised with a few minutes of dialogue and a song, which *Everyones* (a weekly film trade paper published in Sydney from 1921 to 1937) dismissed as "... in no way important, moreover the recording is irregular. At one moment the voices come over excellently, only to blur a few moments later". The song was *Boy of Mine* sung by Grace Quine. The rest of the film was silent with a recorded music score as accompaniment, and even that failed to impress *The Sydney Morning Herald* on 25 August 1930: "The music is far too turbulent, providing for the most commonplace scene a background of such vivid emotions as would be in place only at a grand opera climax". (Pike and Cooper, 1981).

The first commercially viable sound film in Australia was *The Diggers* (1931), Efftee Film Productions, Melbourne. The musical soundtrack consisted of existing traditional music. Over the next five years Efftee Films produced seven features and numerous

shorts. *His Royal Highness*, made in 1932, incorporated burlesque operetta style that impressed audiences and critics alike with its music and sets. (Pike and Cooper, 1981). Alaric Howett and George Wallace composed the music score.

Although completed as a silent film early in 1929, *The Cheaters*, an Australian production directed by Paulette McDonagh, was so long delayed in the director's search for a release that an attempt was made to improve its commercial chances by adapting it into a partial-talkie. Additional scenes were filmed in March 1930 in Melbourne, using the sound-on-disc system. The talkie scenes, none of which remain in the surviving copy of the film, included a fancy-dress party sequence and a romantic interlude in which Paula (played by Marie Lorraine) at the piano, sings a song to Lee (played by Josef Bambach). The musicians' union,

nervous about the implications of talkies, caused further delays by temporarily preventing its members from recording music for the film, but by May it was ready for entry in the first Commonwealth film competition, where it failed to win a prize. On 1 June it was shown at the Roxy Theatre, Parramatta,

to a large invited audience of press and trade representatives, but few commercial screenings followed, partly because of the poor quality of the sound reproduction. (Pike and Cooper, 1981).

The early 1930s saw the rise of the 'symphonic style' music score. Noted composers such as Shostakovitch, Schoenberg, Holst, Prokofiev, Steiner, Waxman, Korngold, Britten, Rozsa, Copland, Tiomkin, Jaubert, to name a few, set the stage for what we now know as the cinematic Hollywood-style movie score and 'The Golden Age of Cinema'. Music was influenced by the late nineteenth-century Romantic period

Writing music to coincide with visual timings is not an easy task. During these early days the work process was much more difficult and time consuming than it is today.

composers, such as Puccini, Verdi, Mahler, Strauss, Wagner and Brahms. This genre of music was an effective dramatic vehicle for film scoring, incorporating both underscore style (used mostly during dialogue) and thematic melodic development material (used in heightened and featured dramatic sequences). The operatic musical style, leitmotif (recurring, reminiscent and thematic recollections showing relationships between characters or emphasising thoughts within a character's mind), was widely used during this 'Golden Age'.

The composers would view the work print of the reels of film on movieola equipment and would use a stopwatch to time every piece of music so it would fit to a 10th of a second in accuracy. Once they found an appropriate tempo to coincide with a specific scene (with diligent consideration to emotional or mood changes, transitions, hit points, dialogue, etc.) they would begin writing the music. Every moment of importance contained in a scene had to interact with

the tempo of the music. And every moment of music had to serve a purpose emotionally to the picture. The timing information compiled was, and still is to this day, referred to as a 'music cue sheet'.

From the time of the pre-record technology (off-the-set recording of the music) performance synchronisation techniques were accomplished by screening the sequence of film in front of the music conductor, directly behind the orchestra, so that the music could be conducted and performed to coincide with the visual. This screening technique is still utilised today. However, in the early days it was extremely difficult to achieve accurate synchronisation of music to image due to implications arising from human error when trying to catch music cues on the fly. The conductors on the sound recording stages, not always the composers, had to become well acquainted with each film sequence. They only had 'familiarity' as their guide to make every moment of music fit to a specified visual moment.

The conductors would use a large clock placed next to the podium to help with tempo and timing. Still, this was not foolproof as their performances could not be perfect each and every time. Film studios were going over budget, often due to re-takes, because of these imperfections.

Then, in 1935, a new development began to shape the path for the future – the hole punch in the work print of the film. This concept aided the conductors to some extent as it provided an accurate mark in a film's sequence to show a specified point, such as the start of music, an important cue point, such as a car crash, two lips meeting in a passionate kiss, etc., as well as the end of a scene where music is to cut off. The hole punched in the film, accomplished via an office hole punch, created an explosion or flutter of light to appear on screen at a specified cue point, allowing the conductors to re-align their tempo (on the spot) to fit the written music score. Quickly thereafter it was found that a diagonal slash, called a 'streamer',

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placed on the surface of the film prior to the hole punch, anywhere between 2 to 4 seconds in duration, achieved a warning to the conductor of an upcoming punch or “cue point”. This aided the performances enormously.

The hole cut out of the film made a clicking sound as it passed over the projector’s lens. It was soon realised that punching holes at exact distances from each other would create a constant metronome click. The speed of film runs at 24 frames per second. Musically, this timing equates to 60 beats per minute. Electronically amplifying this sound provided a ‘click track’ that could be fed to the conductor via a set of headphones.

Experimentation played a part but mathematics was the key to accurately create the various ‘frame ratio’ to ‘beats per minute’ charts. Composers Max Steiner, Carl Stalling and editor Ruby Raskin are often credited with the advent of working with this early concept. The charts indicated the various increments of time it takes for x frames to pass across the projector’s lens being cross-referenced to x beats per minute. Once these calculations were documented, most screen composers, orchestrators and music editors compiled additional charts containing their own tables of timings (musical ‘click charts’). Their click charts would include columns indicating the amount of time, represented in seconds, it takes to complete 4 bars of 2/4, 3/4, 4/4 and columns of time durations to complete 8 to 32 bars of 2/4, 3/4 and 4/4. Their charts usually started with a quick paced 6-frame click on through to a slow 28-frame click, representing tempos that conform to approximately 216bpm to 50bpm respectively. There were various charts floating around, however most creators needing this data would compile their own reference guide. Prior to the recording of the music, the film music editor would be advised by the composer of the exact frames per second (referenced to beats per minute), for each music sequence. The editor would prepare a click track on another 35mm reel or loop reel. A 12-0 frame click (120 beats per minute) meant punching a hole at the start of every twelfth frame. They were able to increase or decrease the

various click tempos by moving the hole punch earlier or later with eight possible increments contained within a frame, such as 12-1 frame click (slightly slower than a 12-0 frame click), 12-2 frame click (slower again), 12-3 through to a 12-7. These variations would allow compensation for all the various tempos. The process of recording with the film punch click was much more foolproof and remained constant to the industry until the development of the Urei Metronome in the early ’60s and then, of course, SMPTE, developed in Europe in the mid-’60s.

Writing music to coincide with visual timings is not an easy task. During these early days the work process was much more difficult and time consuming than it is today. The laborious processes of experimenting with timing results on blank manuscript paper, mapping out timings in seconds and tenths of seconds, and the need to have a firm grasp of mathematical calculations surely must have robbed composers in this era of the most important aspects of getting on with the creativity of writing music!

In the late 1960s a music editor named Carroll Knudsen developed a very detailed and concise book created for film composers and editors called *Project Tempo*. I have a copy of this book as well as copies of some original ‘click track charts’ by Hollywood orchestrators and screen composers. *Project Tempo* is an unbelievable bible of information relating to frames, clicks, click numbers and tenths of seconds for timing purposes. It provides a quick reference, page by page, to each and every possible metronome and frame-click marking, with seconds displayed at each and every click number. For the allegro tempos the charts go all the way up to 2.5 minutes in timing information whilst the slower tempos go up to 9 minutes and 57 seconds in detailed timing information.

Most composers and editors in Hollywood worked with *Project Tempo* until the advent of MIDI in the early 1980s, and a few years thereafter a program called *Cue* – the film music program created by Opcode Music Systems in the USA.

This is a very broad outline of some of the historical events that have shaped the

path of our current working process – technology that has contributed to the way we work today. Much more research needs to be completed and documented about world screen music and, in particular, Australian screen music.

Some notable Australian films with music credits between the 1930s and 1950s:

His Royal Highness (1932) – Alaric Howitt and George Wallace
The Squatters Daughter (1933) – Frank Chapple and Tom King
Strike Me Lucky (1934) – Hamilton Webber
Heritage (1935) – Harry Jacobs
Thoroughbred (1936) – Hamilton Webber
Uncivilised (1936) – Lindley Evans
White Death (1936) – Isadore Goodman
Orphan of the Wilderness (1936) – Hamilton Webber
Rangle River (1936) – Alfred Lawrence
The Avenger (1937) – Frank Chapple
The Broken Melody (1938) – Alfred Hill (theme), Horace Keats (underscore)
Let George Do It (1938) – Hamilton Webber and Maurice Gilman
Dad and Dave Come to Town (1938) – Hamilton Webber and Maurice Gilman
Gone to the Dogs (1939) – Henry Krips, George Wallace and Harry Allen
Come Up Smiling (1939) – Henry Krips, Ronald Whelen, Bob Geraghty and Will Mohoney
Seven Little Australians (1939) – Nellie Weatherill
Forty Thousand Horsemen (1940) – Lindley Evans
Racing Luck (1941) – Rex Shaw
The Rats of Tobruk (1944) – Lindley Evans
Harvest Gold (1945) – Sydney John Kay
Smithy (1946) – Henry Krips
A Son is Born (1946) – Sydney John Kay
Bush Christmas (1947) – Sydney John Kay
Eureka Stockade (1949) – John Greenwood
Into the Straight (1949) – Wilbur Sampson
Sons of Matthew (1949) – Henry Krips
About Horses (1950) – Robert Hughes
Mike and Stephani (1952) – Robert Hughes

Captain Thunderbolt (1953) – Sydney John Kay
King of the Coral Sea (1954) – Wilbur Sampson
The Back of Beyond (1954) – Sydney John Kay
Long John Silver (1954) – David Buttolph
Jedda (1955) – Isadore Goodman
Smiley (1956) – William Alwyn
Walk into Paradise (1956) – G. Auric
Three in One (1957) – Raymond Hanson
The Shiralee (1957) – John Addison
Robbery Under Arms (1957) – Ronald Whelan
Smiley Gets a Gun (1958) – Wilbur Sampson
Dust in the Sun (1958) – Wilbur Sampson
Summer of the Seventeenth Doll (1959) – Benjamin Frankel

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Contracting an Orchestra Soundstage

Phillip and Coralie Hartl

An orchestra contractor or 'fixer', as they are sometimes called, will bring together musicians for recording sessions or live performances. They will have a large database of names and contact details, sourcing the right musicians for a particular project. Phillip Hartl, in the role of Concertmaster, and Coralie Hartl, as an Orchestra Contractor, have worked together on numerous projects, including *Moulin Rouge*, *On The Beach*, *South Pacific* and, more recently, *The Crocodile Hunter*, *Collision Course* and Disney's *Inspector Gadget II*. They have been providing these services for over 20 years and are well qualified to answer the following questions.

Is it necessary to use an orchestra contractor to get musicians together for a recording project?

If you have a score to record, it is imperative to use an experienced orchestra contractor. Whether you need one or a hundred-plus musicians for your recording sessions, the success of your score depends, to a degree, on the skill of the contractor. It is a unique, specialised job, where experience and familiarity with the local scene is of utmost importance.

What role does the Concertmaster play in the recording process?

There are numerous responsibilities that the Concertmaster performs that contribute to the overall smoothness and effectiveness of the recording process. These include the tuning of the orchestra and, when required, acting as a go-between for the composer / conductor and the musicians. Having discussed the score with the composer, it may be necessary to help the orchestra with stylistic interpretations of the music, even suggesting technical solutions for the performance.

As an orchestra contractor, how do you go about choosing musicians for the purpose of recording screen music?

A composer needs to contact an orchestra contractor with details of their project as soon as possible. What size orchestra is needed, what instrumentation is required, and what the style of writing will be, may largely be dictated by the budget. You work with the composer to set recording session times in place and, on occasions, help determine how many sessions will be required. A composer will have a time frame in which he / she requires their music to be recorded, so they are looking at the availability of all people involved in their project – for example, the recording engineer, availability of studio time, music copyists, etc. As a contractor, I look at the availability of the very best musicians that I want on the project. I will make a short-list of my first choice,

and the challenge begins when they may not be available, and you need to source the next best. So it is important to know how well musicians are playing, whether their circumstances have changed, and perhaps even who is new in town.

What also needs to be taken into consideration is that many classically-trained musicians may not want to perform commercial music. They may not want the pressure of performing in a studio with click tracks or pre-records. They need to be able to adjust their performance to a controlled studio environment, to play to the room. What is of paramount importance is to have the right musicians, which means they may not be the most suitable for the next score.

What do you require from the musicians in a recording situation?

Above all else, the musicians chosen need to display a professional attitude at all times, i.e. arriving well before a session, showing full attention, not reading newspapers, etc. The musicians chosen need to be flexible and patient when changes are made and music needs to be altered on the spot. They must have excellent sight reading skills and be quick to follow instructions.

What do the musicians expect when recording?

By the time the musicians arrive the room needs to be fully set up. This would include suitable chairs, music stands, adequate lighting with good sight lines to the conductor. Ideally, they would like to see the music on the stands, clearly copied, prior to their arrival, so they can look it over and note any solos, difficult passages, doubles, etc. To facilitate the recording process, it is an advantage to have as many phrasing, expression and tempo markings as possible.

What sort of conductor does the orchestra respond well to?

If a conductor is well prepared, familiar with the composer's

Orchestra for the

requirements and expectations, knows the score and can communicate ideas clearly, whether it be with gestures and / or verbal communication, then it becomes far easier for the musicians to respond effectively. If a click track or pre-records are used to set the tempos, the conductor needs to be aware that the aural response through headphones will be more immediate than the visual response to a conductor's baton. In such instances minimal conducting is preferable. When a score is well written and orchestrated, it in itself will inspire emotive responses.

What makes a room a good recording space?

Everyone will have different expectations based on an endless variety of technical data and individual tastes, hence what is acceptable to one may not be to another. Obviously there are benchmarks based on technical data, which relate to a number of factors, such as soundproofing, room decay, reflection off walls and ceiling, as well as the type of flooring used. Whether you use small or large ensembles, acoustic instruments will sound at their optimum if there is sufficient air space surrounding them. The musicians must be able to hear each other clearly and respond to dynamic and textural changes.

How does an orchestra contractor put together a costing for projects?

There are many factors to consider: are there any soloists, how many principals and doublers will be needed, are there any special requests for instruments or musicians, and is a full buy-out figure required? How large the orchestra is has a direct bearing on costing, because the larger the orchestra, the more rank and file players there are, and this tends to moderate the budget. Then there are some musicians who have their own fee, and if the budget allows, and they are the best for the job, then that, too, has to be factored in. In addition to a contracting fee, are your payroll costs.

What role does an orchestra contractor play at a recording session itself?

Having brought together your musicians for the project, your responsibility does not end here. Will everyone arrive on time, be ready and tuned to start recording, or has an unexpected problem arisen? The larger the number of musicians, the greater the chance of a problem. People do get sick, have accidents or, heaven forbid, have forgotten the time or the place, so as an orchestra contractor you need to either find replacements or negotiate solutions at short notice. After all, time is money, there is usually a great deal of pressure on composers to record a certain amount of music in a specific time period and even one small thing going wrong can have a huge impact on the entire project. So, as an orchestra contractor, you are a go-between for the composer and the musicians. You keep track of breaks and any overtime that may be required.

What are the legal requirements of an orchestra contractor in terms of payroll costs?

Here in Australia we are responsible for Goods and Services Tax (GST). However, if the project is an overseas one, GST may or may not be required depending upon the location of the production office. As contractors, we are responsible for the payroll of all musicians. This involves all workers' compensation and superannuations payable, and the need to understand when a musician is an independent contractor or an employee under the Australian taxation system. Because I want the right to specify who I want on a job, and direct what tasks I want them to perform, most musicians are deemed employees, and therefore the usual Pay As You Go (PAYG) system applies. Just because a musician can provide an Australian Business Number (ABN) does not excuse the liabilities involved in paying workers' compensation and superannuation. So, good accounting practices are also necessary. ■

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Beyond the Music: A Film Composer's Cl

Nerida Tyson-Chew

has scored feature films, telemovies, TV series, documentaries, internet sites, CD-ROM multipath movies, as well as working on soundtracks for theme parks and albums. She holds a Master of Music Degree in Scoring for Films. Her most recent score is the feature *Visitors*, to be released in 2003.

Being a film composer involves so much more than being able to write music, perform, orchestrate or conduct. Actually, from my experience, writing and producing the music is the easy part.

Every composer develops their own individual technique and language, their own means of artistic expression through music. For some it may come easily, for others there may be an element of angst involved. Some composers thrive on inspired improvisational techniques, others prefer to work within a well-planned organisation in which they have defined a set of rules for orchestration, harmony, and tonality. All composers have a methodology of internal logic when creating their compositions. However, when composing music for films, there are many external demands, other considerations involved, and a lot of accompanying stress, depending on how one copes with those demands.

It is interesting to me that when people think about the process of scoring movies, it is easy to be unaware of the other layers of sound production. A film's soundtrack is the blending of dialogue, music, sound effects and atmosphere. These combined elements have the power to take an audience on an emotional journey – one that allows them to become fully engaged, and at the same time totally lost in the world on screen. Whether or not an audience remains detached, observing the events portrayed on screen, or becomes so absorbed in a film's reality that they become unaware of outside senses, can be determined by the film's soundtrack. The power of a soundtrack can also psychologically and emotionally manipulate an audience. Have you ever been in a cinema and the person behind you involuntarily screamed? Have you ever had a lump in your throat, maybe a little weep – during a fictional story about people who don't really exist?

It is essential that a composer is aware of the other elements of sound when writing a score – or the music may be altered, played too quietly, or may even be removed from the scene. Composing film music requires working with external demands in a 'composer for hire' mentality and capacity.

For film composers, the challenge is to create artistically satisfying compositions within the parameters placed upon them from the relentless external demands of scoring a movie. Being a 'composer for hire' essentially means composing music to the specific requirements requested, remaining flexible to change, and coping with the unexpected.

Composing music to a budget

Under a 'package deal' contract, all expenses for the production of the music soundtrack are to be met by the composer under a blanket fee. If 50 minutes of music cannot be recorded by a live orchestra due to a low budget, it does not mean that the score is unimportant nor worthless. Nor does it mean that the composer should forfeit a creative fee and record with a symphony. It is important to balance the realities of the expense of recording a soundtrack with one's artistic integrity. Sometimes the choice needs to be made that the score is for three soloists and chamber strings, or is perhaps primarily electronic. I find that I make unpredictable choices, and enjoy that aspect of my career.

Composing music within a schedule

Film productions often run late, technical disasters can occur, directors often change their minds as to what they require, but the deadline for music delivery rarely floats. A film composer has to have the self-discipline to be a step ahead, especially when working within a compressed schedule. It is important to think backwards from the delivery date and schedule carefully the time required to accomplish the various stages of music production. Sometimes it is very easy to get caught up with the daily dramas and responsibilities of the film, and a composer must be careful not to overlook the pace needed. It is very professional to anticipate and recognise when help is required – do not leave that decision to the last minute.

challenges

Composing music to a director's brief

Film scoring involves coping with the personalities of multiple directors, and the multiple personalities of a single director! A film composer rarely has the opportunity to compose only what they are inspired to do in a scene. There is always a brief from the director, often coloured by their phobia of music, and their fears and disappointments in the outcome of the film so far. Developing dramatic instinct in one's musical palette is one part of film scoring, the other part of the equation is learning as quickly as possible how to interpret the words and intentions of another person, probably a stranger, to create the right music.

When meeting with directors, a composer does not need to be told that the main character gets into his car and drives off. One needs to be told that he despondently does so, or angrily does so, or he feels he is being stalked as he does so, or he is joyous. The music will state the unsaid and the unseen. It is the composer's responsibility to not assume the intentions of tone in the scene, as the scene may need to be scored again if the tone is not right. The only way to compose for the scene once, is to ask lots of questions and to understand very clearly what is being asked of the music.

In my opinion, comprehending a director's intent is the most important task of being a film composer. There may be occasions when a film composer is asked to write from a point of view that truly does not make sense to the composer. In film, there are so many different ways to approach a scene in order to find the right musical tone. It is important to listen closely to the director's manner of communication.

On a telemovie I scored about six years ago, the director stated he wanted the music to be "spacey". It took about half an hour for me to understand what he meant. Did he mean science fiction – point of reference: the music of *Star Wars*, or *Star Trek* or *2001*? Did he mean "spacey" as in 'airhead loopy, out-there, and psychological'? Did he mean "spacey" as in 'filled with voids and silence'? It took me a while, but I

discovered what he meant when he said "No. Spacey. Like *Out of Africa* spacey". What he meant was 'spacious equals expansive, broad sweeping, soaring'. The scene was a drug bust.

On another production, a director described a scene as "over-the-top, B-Grade spoof". Off I went having fun scoring in an overwritten tongue-in-cheek manner, only to be faced at my music previews meeting with a shocked, panicking director. He had meant that he was disappointed with the actors' performances, and that they appeared B-Grade and melodramatic and that he wanted me to 'fix it with music'. That was easy to do, but if I had challenged him with the simple question "Is that a good thing?" after everything he said at the initial briefing meeting, I would have been able to understand his intention clearer.

It is really important to question intentions before you start composing and do not assume that the person briefing you has an internal thesaurus.

Composing music which pleases a team of people

Every person has an opinion on the effect of music in a scene. One needs to be aware that the editor has been working with these images for several months and the film director relies very strongly on his opinion. However, an editor may have cut the picture to music and therefore may only 'hear' the tone in that specific way. Film composers have to establish the director's trust and be able to influence him or her on taking the film to another level – a tailor-made, especially created, original cinematic score. It is fighting a losing battle to compose new material with a budget for 10 musicians if the film was temp-tracked with John Williams' latest block buster score for

100-piece orchestra and 60 voice choir. Request a Wagnerian budget or educate your client on what they can have for their budget. Remember that directors are often insecure and rely on the opinions of their producers, entourage, and even the lady at the bus stop if they ask for her opinion, so a film composer needs to be able to make adjustments on request despite the original brief. If there is a request for a rewrite, it is not always that the music does not highlight moments in the scene – it could be that the director has a new idea of what he or she wants the scene to say emotionally. Even at the scoring session with an orchestra of 80 people, recording a piece that has already been previewed and approved, a director and his / her producers and executive producers may request changes. In times of conflict, always look to the director as the person you report to on a feature film production, as the film is their vision. On

a television production, it is the producer one should focus on pleasing as there may be several directors working on the production, and the producer, probably the person who gave the creative brief, has the perspective of the tone of the overall series. A composer has to be able to cope with

unexpected spontaneous behaviour and make the modifications necessary, or the piece of music may never appear in the film.

I once scored a feature film for four producers and two executive producers, who all had different opinions, after the director was fired. I have also re-scored a new version of a film on three occasions because of distributor requests for changes. Even though there was editing of the original score to match the new cut, plus new scenes scored, it truly is like scoring two different films.

A music score is the emotional landscape for the story. It is essentially the film's soul, and is the ultimate example of psychological manipulation through sound.

Composing music which is 'playable'

Film music needs to be physically uncomplicated for ease of performance as, often due to budget and time constraints, recording needs to commence after only two reads. For music to come to life and express immediately the emotionally dramatic intentions of a scene, thought must be put into careful orchestration, an awareness of the physicality involved, and the changes of colour as a result of the use of keys. Time in the studio with the musicians should ideally be spent perfecting interpretation and refining, in performance, how the music works to picture, rather than solving difficult passages which may require a lot of rehearsing. This is the art in the craft. If the orchestra does not sound wonderful, it is more than likely the music is awkward, and written with poor technique. It is very stressful under recording conditions, with the pressure of the films 'suits', and time racing by, to not accomplish clarity in the intention of the music effortlessly.

Composing music in clear notation

Choices need to be made, within the context of the piece, using common sense simplification for the sight-reading musicians and the conductor. Should the time signature be in a straight 4/4 with accents all over the place? Or, should there be meter changes so that strong accents occur on downbeats? The tempo will have an influence on this decision. Should the music be notated in semiquavers or in double time as quavers?

This decision would be determined by the timing required to catch visual action. Thought needs to be put into where the pulse is. Nomenclature is also important. I work the Hollywood way – no key signatures, and enharmonically with the least accidentals possible. This ensures few questions, and speed in correction. Mark on the score indications for the musicians to colour their performance. Use English if Italian terms are unknown.

Composing music which catches visual demands

A music score is the emotional landscape for the story. It is essentially the film's soul, and is the ultimate example of psychological manipulation through sound. By following the visual action, a fight scene can appear more aggressive with music assisting the physical blows, or the score could make the exact same scene be one of immense sadness. A film score can make an audience feel fear, and can ensure that an audience is brought to tears – music can push emotion just that little bit further.

Film scoring requires hundreds of minute decisions for synchronisation. Both in tempo and rhythm, music needs to be entwined with the images. Sometimes when composing, music has a life of its own. It may want to take longer to make its statement or it may wander off into an exciting place musically. A film composer often needs to control inspiration and make the music work within the restraints of the images. This is the craft of the art. It is so easy to start writing music which makes sense musically, but has lost its way in serving the film.

A film composer also needs to remain open and flexible to modifying music which has already been written and approved. It has not been unheard of that even after recording the musicians, edits and changes to the music may need to be made because of revised picture changes which have altered the timings of phrases and 'hits'. Sections of the composition may need to be shifted because computer-generated images are now in place and are running at a different time, or perhaps a substituted performance may have been made, because audience testing indicated a negative response to one of the actors.

Composing under dialogue

If an audience can not discern what the actors are saying, the thrust of the story can be lost, and an audience may lose any affinity established with a character. It doesn't matter how gorgeous the

phrases are, how emotional or beautiful the harmony, or how skilled the counterpoint for a modulation is, if the dialogue loses its clarity by being swamped by the music one of two things will happen to the score. The sound mixer will pull the volume down and 'ride' the volume around the dialogue – and audible fader moves will happen, contrary to the music's natural build, or the piece will be dropped. Obviously, it would be better for a composer to maintain the control through careful orchestration, with guidance for the musicians' interpretation, and with the assistance of the scoring mixer, let the music support the dialogue. Keep control of what happens to your music by keeping in mind the collaborative art of film. It is essential that the music be shaped around the rhythms of the on-screen performances, that the musical ebb and flow does not occur at the same time as the dialogue's ebb and flow. Beware of percussive rhythmic lines clamouring on the words – especially 'piano figures' – shape them in the gaps between the words. Even the choice of instrumentation needs to sit with the actor's voice so that the music does not draw attention to itself. If the music feels too emotional there is the fear of turning a scene into melodrama – something to keep in mind, especially when scoring real-life documentaries.

Composing with an awareness of sound effects

All layers of sound are a form of story-telling. The sound effects recordist, designer and sound effects editor are responsible not only for realistic sounds but also for the sounds which add heightened drama. There are so many other things that can be communicated through sound that are not visually directed. The sound effects team may need to be told that it is a dangerous part of town, that there is a chill in the air.

For example, there may be a scene in an office where two people are arguing. There are the obvious location sounds, which need to be recorded, and cut to picture – the hand thumping on the desk,

pens and paper being swept off – foley sounds. But in this office scene there may be other stress-inducing atmospheres which do not occur on camera and are not part of the on-screen story but are a part of a back-story – a type of aural framing and context placement. There may be an unseen rumble from the subway below (indicating a low-rental office space), a car accident outside the window, and perhaps dogs barking, people yelling at each other. These sounds may not necessarily be discerned but are layered to create a texture of tension. When scoring a scene it is important to be informed of these other sounds which do not appear on screen and will not be on the composer's work tape.

It is a terribly disheartening experience to be unaware of the other members of the soundtrack's efforts, and for everyone's work to be in competition with each other. If care is not taken, music will be meddled with at the final sound mix.

I had a difficult moment on one of my movies several years ago when the sound effects had placed windchimes in a scene that was scored. I too had wind chimes in the score, but as a musical orchestration choice. There were no windchimes physically hanging on the verandah so I was stunned when all this tinkling in a perspective of reality was occurring. I had used marktree carefully to add a bit of magic in an emotional build. The sound effects were dropped after much debate in the mixing room.

Summary

In summary, there are many external demands placed on a film composer's art. Film is a collaborative art. Film scoring – is it an arty craft or a crafty art? I think it is both. ■

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In Depth with David Hirschfelder and Burkhard Dallwitz

Yantra de Vilder

is a composer for film, theatre, dance and multimedia events. She has recently returned from a visit to Europe on a study grant as part of her masters degree research project in contemporary music at Macquarie University (Sydney, NSW).

The following is a transcript of discussions at the first Professional Development Seminar presented by the Australasian Performing Right Association (APRA) and the Australian Guild of Screen Composers (AGSC). My aim is to capture the ambience of the evening and, hopefully, for the reader to glean some new knowledge from these stimulating and informed discussions.

As composers, many of us have experienced the sense of isolation that can arise from prolonged solitary creative reveries with the muse. Whilst this introspection of writing, whether it be music or words, is a special and hallowed sanctuary, only known and understood by those who walk its corridors, the stimulation and appreciation of diversity that is achieved through the meeting of like minds is an important ingredient in the artistic and cultural development of the individual artist and the broader community.

It is to this end that APRA and the AGSC provide a constant fertile and rich breeding ground for the appreciation and growth of the profile of Australian composers, whether they be international players or those operating at a more grassroots level, composing music for the many different aspects of film, be it documentaries, advertising, multimedia performances, TV series or CD ROMs.

This seminar was an important event in the diary of Australian composers. Hosted by Martin Armiger, its audience was given an insight into the lives and music of its two guests, David Hirschfelder and Burkhard Dallwitz. The event was opened by Art Phillips, President of the AGSC.

Opening Address

Art Phillips (AP): This evening's event is quite exciting as we have the composer to composer discussions, hosted and convened by the illustrious screen composer Martin Armiger, whose credits include *Come in Spinner*, *Rescue*, *Stringer*, *Young Einstein*, *Seven Deadly Sins*, *Cody* and *The Crossing*. Martin has received numerous awards associated with these credits.

Our composer guests this evening are two high-profile Australian composers

working on both local and overseas productions.

David Hirschfelder's credits include the score to *Strictly Ballroom*, *Shine* (AFI Award for best music score, best score nomination in the Golden Globe Awards and Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences), *Elizabeth* (nominated for an Academy Award, received the BAFTA Award and APRA Award for best original score) and *Better Than Sex* (APRA Award for best original score).

Burkhard Dallwitz's credits include the feature film *The Truman Show*, TV series *Crash and Burn*, *The Dream* (Roy and HG / Seven Network), *Paperback Hero*, and music for the *Sydney 2000 Olympics* and *Salt Lake City Winter Olympics*. Burkhard has been awarded numerous awards and accolades with most of these credits.

This evening Martin will lead the discussion between these two high-profile composers in an attempt to look into the translucent creative tunnel that we, the composers, dwell in as we are swayed into inspiration.

[AP also spoke of the unique qualities that we have in the Australian environment for cultivating a healthy and diverse musical landscape, and of the growing international recognition of the specific qualities that Australian composers and landscape bring to a project.]

Discussion

Martin Armiger (MA): *'The Translucent Tunnel' is the subject of tonight's enquiry. How do you find your way in and out of that tunnel without getting lost, and where is that orifice in particular? These two composers have had a musical path before writing for screen, and I would like to know what happens between your other music and your film music and how you get from the music life that you lead into films? I ask both of you. I know David worked in record production before and I know Burkhard is a player, with quite a lot of music recording for his own purposes, not commercial purposes. I wondered what is the thing that got you out of that and into film music; when did it all start?*

Hirschfelder and

Burkhard Dallwitz (BD): In retrospect, I was always looking for something to write music for, not just music for its own sake. I came to film being a fan fairly late in life. My older brother wasn't into cinema, so I didn't go along until I was probably 15 or 16. Before that it was music theatre that caught my attention, so for me, from a fairly early age, what really interested me was to write music for something. Even though I played in bands I don't know if I ever considered myself a songwriter. It was the fascination with instrumental music. I started looking at music and thinking, "If I'm not writing songs, then what can I write?" So film music became something that I was fascinated by.

Maybe some of you have seen that wonderful series called *Master Series*. It is basically a documentary where they highlight the making of one album. A couple of weeks ago I saw Meatloaf's *Bat Out of Hell*. At the time that it was released I was about 17 years old in Germany, and it spoke to me in lots of different ways, as I was interested in girls and romance.

Jim Steinman talked about what motivated him into writing that music, that he wanted to write something that was like grand rock opera. To me it made sense because when I looked at the albums that I was influenced by early on, they are all not really conventional songs. There was something a bit more escapist, so for me, now looking back, it is quite a natural progression.

David Hirschfelder (DH): The first time I felt I wanted to write music for film was when I was about 14 or 15 and I was watching one of the many re-runs of *Ben Hur*, which is still my favourite film because it is so big, and the score is huge. The opportunity to really make a big noise and yet at the same time be also the wallpaper of something even bigger, so that you are speaking to the audience not as a concert composer where the people sit down.

I guess the twentieth century brought this new artform which is so taken for granted and probably the most powerful and universally popular artform. So I think wanting to be part of that artform

and at the same time, at the age of 15, being already a certified piano nerd, practising piano when I should be out kicking a football.

Music was always an opportunity for me to feel incredibly fulfilled. But then I thought, "What if I just get up on stage and I'm fulfilling myself but no one else is? Is that enough for me?" And I thought, "Can I handle that pressure?" From a purely business and career motivation there was a part of me that somehow wanted to plug into society and do something that is part of society, not just part of music culture. That is what threw me into it.

From the age of 18 to 28 I found myself being an accidental tourist in the rock and roll industry. I started out wanting to be a jazz-fusion master, and I still actually miss performing, and that is something I am going to get back into. I think it is important to have a balanced diet. I've come to the conclusion that it is good to do lots of different things.

From an early age I always had my sights set on being a film composer and it actually took quite some time before I got my first break, and that happened through a friend of a friend, who knew a friend of a producer and they couldn't afford anyone, so this was my big chance. I happened

to have cassette tapes of lots of things I had done in my bedroom, mainly for my own enjoyment, but also because I was making a showreel of projects I hadn't done yet.

MA: *When you were a keyboard player, arranger and producer, you were called a 'sideman' for various artists. Now as a film composer you've become completely invisible, and yet you miss performing. Where's the moment that that happens for you? Is it like sitting in the studio when you are thinking of it or is it actually hearing it back on the screen?*

DH: When you are composing it is a little like performing, but it is procrastination because you can perform a little bit of an idea and then sit back and play with it like putty until it sounds good. In a sense, walking on a stage and either performing something that is semi-rehearsed or totally ad lib, as in the case of the jazz concept.

One of the most impressive statements I ever heard from a musical luminary at a seminar I went to once was, "Composing is jazz improvisation slowed down".

In fact that is what it is in a way. When you improvise on an instrument or vocally you are totally in the moment and you have your bags of tricks and musical language, whatever that is, to draw from. So, having now composed exclusively for the last 10 years and doing very little live performance, I now miss that part of the balance as being on the spot, as I am now, and saying, "Here you go, here's the microphone, come up

with something, express yourself now in this moment without judgement, and without prejudice and preconceived notions of what it should be". I think that the training I had in the jazz tradition always brings me back to that kind of happy moment when I realise, I'm just here in this moment

coming up with something out of thin air and we'll work out later whether it is any good.

MA: *When people ask me how to get into films I just say hang around with people that make them. What is your response to this?*

BD: I was at La Trobe [University] doing a music degree and cinema studies as a minor subject, so I was very much cued into trying to do something in that area and, in the end, didn't think of really how to go about it. I met my wife-to-be

I guess the twentieth century brought this new artform which is so taken for granted and probably the most powerful and universally popular artform.

who was a film editor. There wasn't a great plan behind it. I just went out with her and mixed with people she worked with and eventually one of them said, "We've got \$500, can you do something?"

My performing career was never very illustrious. It never got beyond playing in pubs. I had just come from Germany. Three years of doing full-time study and playing in Melbourne pubs three or four nights a week, lugging around a Yamaha CP-70. I had no qualms about giving up performing. It made me determined to become an invisible backroom player and, through those first couple of jobs, everything I earned went into buying gear. Initially four-tracks, digital delay, etc. To me, that was a godsend: being able to sit there and do my own stuff and fix my mistakes. I was never really such a great player. Now the thought of having to perform would send me into absolute turmoil because I am so used to being able to play something and fix it up later.

MA: *When you sit down with a film for the first time, how do you get your first ideas? Is it a matter of sitting down at the piano and playing, or thinking about the film?*

DH: It varies. Sometimes I have to watch a film many times to get the structure of the movie, and so I can focus on the big picture of what it is. Usually the first ideas that come to me come very suddenly after a long, agonising wait where I am racked with self-doubt. Every project I go into I think, "Is this the one? Is this the one I can't think of anything for?" I go through about a week of purgatory, although I've got it down to two or three days. So I'm working on one day for the next project. Then, once I've discovered one idea, it might just be a few notes on a piano. Piano is my personal voice. I think the piano was designed more as a writing tool, it's now being put on a pedestal as an instrument, but it really is the original orchestra in a box in terms of having all the notes laid out, your scales are split into 12 nice, neat, well-tempered matrix to write on. And it has quite a good sound where if you hit one note, even if the piano's not

that good, it just sounds great. So I started with that acoustic model and then transferred that onto the electronic keyboard. Playing an electronic keyboard always feels like having sex with a condom on after playing a piano. But having said that, the facility that you have at your disposal with the technology now is fantastic.

I must admit I grew up in the '80s where everyone was saying, "Wow synthesisers, what a concept", and now they seem to be just stock standard tools of trade. But I still think of it as a joyful, magical thing to make the synthesisers sound kind of like an orchestra, and it gives me the chance of a bit of gratification after spending a few hours on something, where I can sit back and listen to a whole miasma of things that are going on, and think, "Well, that sounds OK". Also, it's great to be able to show your collaborators what is going on in your brain. I abandoned using pencil and paper about five years ago.

With the advent of technology I just thought, "What's the point", because with a bit of editing it looks like ready-to-publish music. There are some really good programs out there now. I've had the joy of being on the cutting edge, and sometimes it's been the leading edge with technology.

MA: *Where does your voice come through? I just watched the Master Album Series and Robbie Robertson was saying how his voice came through on the guitar.*

BD: I never really got to a high standard with piano. I started as an eight-year-old with classical piano and I persevered with that for about ten years. That is the only instrument that I can actually play. I can't even master two chords on the guitar but, as David was saying, with the advent

of synthesisers, plus the fact that I was actually quite influenced by electronic music, and by that I mean electronic music of the '70s. Particularly growing up in Germany, whether it was Kraftwerk, Tangerine Dream, other European things like Jean Michel Jarre, and Vangelis, to me that was what I was looking for and hearing, whether it was *Bat Out of Hell* and various other things where you had a rock instrumentation, they took it one step further and made it something bigger. Of course when you took that it was fused with electronic sounds, the space of the sounds became altered completely, so that immediately took me. Now it is a bit of both worlds, where I sometimes really enjoy and do purely electronic things and don't try to go into the orchestral area at all, and other times where I use it for mock-ups. As David was saying, technology has become better and better, so you're trying to refine it so that you can really

write orchestrally without being too influenced by the sounds. That was something that I was aware of, initially. I seem to cut corners or write certain things because that's what the sound let me do, which is, of course, not the right way to go about it, so I have pursued collecting the right sounds so that I can

hopefully cover all the bases so I can really write whatever I want to do without worrying about whether this sample will only work in this register.

MA: *When you sit down and are still hanging on this initial moment of dealing with the film, what is the first thing you are looking for? Is it a tune, texture, notes, approach? Are you looking for music straight away or do you look at the film as story and characters? What are you looking for in the film that is going to push you into the music?*

He would say, for example, "I want the sound of monks having a satanic orgy on the piano, burning all the incense, dancing around naked".

BD: My biggest fear is always getting the first cue happening. I can never relax until I've got the first idea. So I tend to not spend too much time looking at the overall film, but simply from the brief, the information that has been fed to me, and obviously by the time you are starting on the film you have had numerous conversations with the director, etc. I try to focus on one area where I think that is what they are after, and that correlates with something that is happening in my brain, and immediately get started. Not worry about the rest and how it will work out structurally, will it become a theme, or will it just be a one-off incidental cue, but simply latch onto whatever comes into my mind where I think, "Yes, I've got an idea", and then approach it like a jigsaw puzzle where I make various decisions because the parameters are mapped out by that stage and things will start making sense. Then I can see that this will become a theme that is working here or there. It is always the fear of the blank page, like any writer's.

MA: *Do you make note of the point of view of the music? Whether it is P.O.V. of a particular character, or storyteller? How far it is in or out of the film? Do these sort of questions come up?*

DH: It varies from project to project. For example, in *Elizabeth*, the first idea that I had was warmly received by the director, so much that he shot the film to it. I actually did a mock-up in my studio, and he really hammered me. He kept ringing me once a week and saying, "Where's my tape?" He actually inspired me to write something that was like a portrait of the character before he shot the material. I came up with that idea very quickly and put that down and he said he loved it. Once I eventually had the courage to send it to him, because I never worked that way before, I realised that you don't always have to write to the picture. You can actually take the images away, whether you have seen them or it's just a rough cut, or you've just concocted your own images from the script. Forget the film, just write the music.

The most successful writing session I've ever had was sitting at a piano. I went into a studio in London. There was a beautiful big Bosendorfer piano, that's when I fell in love with Bosendorfer pianos. We sat there and just pressed record and we recorded everything I played, and we also recorded everything he asked me to do. I felt like I was going through a therapy session. He would say, for example, "I want the sound of monks having a satanic orgy on the piano, burning all the incense, dancing around naked". I knew that it wasn't going to be in the movie, but that was how he got me going.

It's always a great feeling when you've got the opening theme. I'm never satisfied until I have it. The theme that sums up the piece. I never go chronologically.

MA: *When you do something like Elizabeth, when you've got a period piece, is it always a question of whether you steep yourself in the music of that time?*



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DH: I wanted to, but I got shot down in flames on that way of thinking in the first meeting because I started talking about a consort of viols and reinventing the sound. He said, “No, no this is a modern movie, I want modern music, I don’t want any early music”. And, in fact, I have been criticised. There was an article in the *LA Times*, which canned the use of non-period music and period songs. He was a professor from UCLA and he used two examples. One was *Elizabeth* and one was *Henry VIII* in which the composers wrote a great deal of music which didn’t have a lot of period resonances. The reviewer said how terrible this is and what beautiful music it was. My answer to that, I actually wrote into the *LA Times* and said, “It doesn’t matter what we think as academics and composers, I would have loved to take my viol consort and put it through twelve Marshall amps or something and make it modern, whatever, or do something really interesting”. But what the director wanted was something that framed the film in a contemporary feeling and that’s what he wanted to do with the music, so that it looked like you were looking into the camera in the past but you’re feeling it as a time of story. So, to answer your question, it really depends on what the brief is. I think the brief is ‘it’s their film’. They’re the director and that’s the excitement and sometimes the shock and horror of this job is that the brief isn’t always what you think it is.

MA: *One of the ways that directors communicate is to use ‘temp tracks’ and both these composers bought us some films to look at where we are going to look at a progression of a piece of film from the director’s sketch through to the final product. How do you find temping as a way of working?*

BD: The temp music issues have been around for a while now. I think the thing is that temp tracks are here to stay, so the whole issue of trying to fight it or say you can’t work with it is counterproductive because it’s not going to change. So I don’t think it is necessarily the trouble with temp music,

per se., it is the way temp music is perceived and used by the director, and there can be good ways and bad ways. The positives of temp music, if I can start with that, is often, to me, it cuts down a lot of the waffle from directors where it is like pulling teeth to try and get them to say what they like or don’t like or what they want. I’m sure everybody’s heard the same thing. I don’t think I’ve ever met a director who hasn’t said in the first five minutes, “Look, I don’t know how to express myself in music, and I don’t know what I like or what I don’t like”. And by the time you play them the first cue you get a twenty minute response. “I hate flutes and I don’t like this.” So a lot of the time, when directors pretend not knowing or being able to verbalise what they want, playing the temp music can reduce it down to twenty seconds where I can usually get what they are on about and what they like. If I don’t understand why they have used that style of music it gives me the chance to ask very specific questions. Or, if I see where it is going and that makes sense to me, then trying to forget it and keep the information that was essential to me from that.

Of course, where it can be a big problem is where directors fall in love with the temp music and play it 500,000 times during the course of post-production and editing, and everyone around them including yourselves get completely used to perceiving a scene with this particular music, and then you’ve got a battle on your hands, particularly if you don’t want to slavishly copy it. So I have had different experiences with temp music where I’ve realised, after going through it, where there was something that was not quite working, and I don’t think the director knew what wasn’t working, and it takes those things to finally work it out. But I think even if you didn’t have temp music then you’d be the one who first offered your vision or your interpretation of the director’s vision and that would be your starting point.

I think the only real problem I have is when they temp films with your own music and then you have to rewrite your own music. I think that can be really difficult because when it is your own

music there is so much of your own personal language involved and then it becomes very hard.

[BD shows a cue from the film, and says it was a progression of slowly working out what the scene needed.]

BD: It was the one time where I rewrote the cue about five times. It wasn’t actually a fight in terms of what was and wasn’t working. What is quite interesting about this scene is that it is not a very music-dominant scene, it is fairly much in the background. However, it was the opening theme of this particular film and it was temped with a track by Enya, and the problem was that it was for *The Truman Show* and Peter Weir had used Enya in his last film, *Green Card*, and he obviously liked the sound. But, because it was the opening scene where you have quite a lot of intimate dialogue, there were problems.

Jim Carey’s character is talking to himself in the mirror and does this fantasy thing, then you get the ‘mockumentary’ of Ed Harrison’s character, where the characters in the cast are talking about their roles in the *The Truman Show*, so there was quite a lot of dialogue and, obviously, the first mechanical problem to me was that you had a song which had lyrics playing underneath a scene that had quite intimate dialogue. It immediately draws the attention away from the dialogue because some people might actually try to listen to what the voices are singing. I tried to take the elements of it, it was one of those lilting percussive tracks, and I focussed very much on the pulse of it because I felt that was basically what was represented by the track. I wrote my original submission of the scene where I had elements of that, but then placed it more particularly to the change of scenery in between Jim Carey’s character talking to the mirror and intercutting with the mockumentary which the song didn’t do.

Peter Weir was quite happy with it, but eventually, when it came to seriously looking at the scene, he said that it wasn’t working. So I said, “Fair enough”, but he liked certain aspects of

it, so I continued along the line but made changes to it, but he still didn't think it was working. By that stage I had written other cues and, when it came to a particular cue that I had written for another scene, he said, "That might be our cue for the old theme". So he gave it to his music editor and they cut it up and placed it and he was really happy with it. I had my doubts, but because I still had so much other writing to do, it was the least of my worries. I thought, "He's happy, that's good". Then I was nearly ready to record, and he said, "About that opening scene: it's out. You have to come up with something else, or I have to license Enya". So I said, "Go ahead and license it, and find out it is going to cost you \$160,000 US dollars for a minute of Enya".

He was quite up-front about a number of scenes where he had temp music, and he said, "Look, I'll be honest with you, if you don't come up with something better, I'm going to license this". So at least I knew what I was up against.

I had to record the rest of the cues and we were final mixing and it was two days before the end of final mixing and I was sitting there and it was a 35-degree day in Melbourne and I was doodling on the keyboard and it suddenly occurred to me that what was wrong with the temp track and everything that I had done from that point was that I had approached it from this percussive pulse element of the Enya track. Whereas, if you have seen the *Truman Show*, Jim Carey's character does this thing where he wants to climb a mountain. I'm sure that's why Peter Weir went with this kind of music, because it had this adventure element in it. I thought, "It's all about Jim Carey's character being like a child, being in front of the mirror reading a bed-time story". So, I said, "What it needs is like a nursery rhyme". So I played this very simple melody on the piano, didn't develop it that musically, put a gentle pulse behind all that. I went down to Sound Firm in Melbourne and used the audio FX to send it to Sydney. By the time I got back, I had it established that if he liked something he would ring, if he didn't the music editor would ring. I get home and I knew that as soon as I got

home the telephone would ring. And, of course, five minutes after I walked in the door, it rang and it was the music editor. My heart sank. He said, "Not all is lost, he's pacing. There might be something there".

I had to go back to Sydney the next day because we had to do a tech check on all the other things. Basically, we decided that I would go back to Melbourne and record it and go back up on the final day of the mix. Then he said, "I have my doubts", and for the first time I said, "Look Peter, do you want to alienate half of your audience with an Enya track that has just been used on Ansett and soap commercials? Why do you want to run that risk?" He said, "You're absolutely right. We're going with your track!"

[BD then shows samples of his work in progress with *The Truman Show*. The Enya track, his original submission, his adaptation, the cue he took from another scene.]

MA: *Most musicians that I know think that their first thought is their best thought. Having considered what is going on, they come up with a solution that they think is probably the best. But we all know, having worked in film, that quite often your first solution will be rejected cruelly, brutally, or will need to be adjusted in some way that you can't quite work out. I want to ask Burkhard how he deals with rewriting.*

BD: It depends on the nature of the rewriting. In the example I talked about previously it was a fairly fluid, non-confrontational process and my work as a composer started as an instinctive one. With the last rewrite, it was a case of not thinking about anything, not what I'd done before, really letting the mind wander. Put the scene on a loop and let the melody come out. That seemed to feel

right.

There are other cases where a rewrite can be easy. One example was when the temp music that the director had chosen was completely rejected by the studio in the States. This threw the director, because he had his mind set on this approach as far as the music was concerned. When he could see that the opposition was such (mind you, it was temped with twentieth-century, avant-gard, electronic music for a 7 mm Hollywood sci-fi film), you could see where the panic stations started setting in. But this director was unable to come up with a new scenario. He handed it over to the young producers who were involved in the project who came from a completely different angle anyway. They hadn't said anything because this was a bedroom director and he was obviously going to get his way initially, so, in that case, it was such a 360 degree turn around that it wasn't all that difficult.

And then other times I've had situations where it has been a real struggle because I really didn't understand. I had a situation last year with a director in Germany and he kept saying to me, "That's a bass and I can hear the notes". I would say, "Yes, that's a bass and you can hear the notes". He said,

"Can't you take this note and that note out so it doesn't sound like a linear melody any more? I don't want anything that suggests music". I found out that he was the son of one of the founding members of Tangerine Dream. Very early on in Tangerine it went totally avant [gard], and that explains it. I had a really hard time trying to work with him because, unless you are given a really concrete set of examples of "this is what I don't like", the rhythm or instrumentation, it is very hard to re-conceive.

It's always a great feeling when you've got the opening theme. I'm never satisfied until I have it. The theme that sums up the piece.

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Hanna Barbera Telemovies Set on the Australian

Sven Libaek

is a Sydney composer, arranger and conductor. He is the President of the Music Arrangers' Guild of Australia (MAGA) and the conductor of the Sutherland Shire Symphony Orchestra (Sydney, NSW).

During the 17 years I lived and worked in Los Angeles (1977-1994), one of the most interesting and challenging projects I was involved with was scoring ten two-hour animated telemovies for Hanna Barbera. Creating music for all the famous cartoon characters that I grew up with, including The Flintstones, The Jetsons, Top Cat, Yogi Bear and Scooby Doo, was a thrill that many of my colleagues have envied ever since. What made this project especially interesting was the unique way the movies were put together. It was truly an international enterprise of immense proportions, and to this day I am still amazed that it all came together in the end.

Unique Production Schedule

The first step in the production of any movie, animated or not, is, of course, the script. The scripts for these ten films were written by American writers, living and working in the USA. When completed and accepted by the producer, they were passed on to Hanna Barbera's 'in-house' cartoonists, who turned them into storyboards. A cartoon storyboard can be likened to a comic book. All the dialogue appears under the pictures of the scene where it takes place. Not only is each scene timed to the tenth of a second, but each movement that a cartoon character makes during that scene is also perfectly timed. In a completed storyboard for a two-hour movie, this amounts to thousands of small time periods, all of great importance to both the artist who will draw the picture, and, of course, the composer.

After the storyboards were completed, the actors doing the cartoon characters' voices were hired, and all the dialogue was recorded and edited to fit the timings on the storyboard.

With any feature film the music is always the last ingredient to be added. Under normal circumstances the composer will be given a video cassette of the final edited film. After 'spotting' the movie with the director to decide where the music goes, the composer takes the film home and goes to work.

What was so unique (and scary) about these ten specials was that the cartoonist and the composer were working *at the same time*, using only the storyboard as a guide. And, to top it off, the composer and the cartoonist on this occasion were working *in different countries* and, thus, had no communication. All ten telemovies were drawn in places like Taiwan and the Philippines, and I was composing in Los Angeles and recording in Australia. The cartoon artists and the composer had to have complete trust in the storyboards, and, of course, make sure that we all got the timing one hundred percent accurate. In fact, I never saw the final product until it was actually shown on television.

Sydney Recording Sessions

Organising the recording of all this music was another major production in itself. My music producer, Ron Purvis, one of Australia's greatest music mixers ever, and I had decided early in the piece to record all the music in Sydney. In spite of all my expenses, it would save Hanna Barbera tens of thousands of dollars, and, being Australian, it was great for me to be able to bring all that money back home to pay Australian musicians and Australian studios. Ron, who had worked for Hanna Barbera before, actually negotiated the contract for these ten films. He based his negotiations on the fact that they had an Australian composer who lived in Los Angeles who could work closely with them on a daily basis. I knew the Australian recording scene, all the studio musicians, and was a member of all the necessary Australian unions to make me eligible to work in Australia. A contract based on this premise, however, caused some very demanding organisational problems. Luckily, Ron, who also acted as music contractor and coordinator, was an expert organiser. Sadly, Ron passed away 18 months ago. He is very much missed by the entire Australian film and recording industry, both for his enormous skills in his field, and for the fact that he was a really nice bloke who could never do enough for his clients.

movies: Soundstage

How We Did It

I would compose a batch of cues in LA, we would take photocopies of the scores (for safety reasons), and I would mail the originals to Ron. Ron hired 'master copyist' David Jones, who would then organise another bunch of expert music copyists, who immediately went to work copying orchestral parts. As soon as we had completed enough music to fill half a dozen recording sessions, I would jump on a plane for Sydney. On my arrival Ron would already have booked studio time and musicians. All the music was recorded at the Crystal Palace at Film Australia, which we turned into a scoring stage. This room was set up as a proper film dubbing suite at that time, with a big screen on the back wall, which of course we had no use for since we had no film. We had to record to click track and hope that I had been correct in my calculations of the storyboard details.

At the end of the six sessions we would go back into the studio and do a stereo mix of the music. I would then pack the tapes in aluminium foil in my specially designed music case (to save the tapes from the dreaded x-ray machines at the airports) and jump on a plane back to Los Angeles. The tapes would be delivered to Hanna Barbera, and I was ready to compose another batch of cues to repeat the whole process all over again. All in all I conducted 38 three-hour recording sessions, featuring more than eight and a half hours of music, which – I guess, in classical terms – would amount to 16 symphonies. It was a massive but challenging and satisfying undertaking. Hanna Barbera's head office in Burbank sent their Head of Music with me to Sydney on my first trip. She was very happy with what she saw and heard and, afterwards, they more or less left us alone to do our thing.

Many of Sydney's top musicians are still talking about the good times we had during these sessions. I remember on one occasion putting the music for the famous opening theme to *The Flintstones* in front of my xylophone player. He took one look at it, and his eyes lit up. He looked up at me and said with sheer happiness, "I HAVE ALWAYS WANTED TO PLAY THAT."

Music Editors Par Excellence

The music editors working on these ten pictures were the best. They could work miracles. I remember one morning my phone rang, and it was the supervising music editor. "Sven", he said. "One of the cartoonists in the Philippines decided he needed more time to do a certain Top Cat movement, and your music cue no longer fits the scene. We have edited something together. Could you please come in and have a listen to see what you think?"

I was in the editing suite in less than half-an-hour, and he played the scene for me. Mind you, I hadn't heard that music cue since I'd recorded it three weeks earlier, but there was no way I could pick out what he had done. It sounded absolutely perfect. These people were wizards.

Another thing that astounded me was the casual, matter-of-fact attitude that the company had to this enormous project. I had to report directly to Bill Hanna who made all the decisions regarding the music. Since I had never composed for animation before, I was more than a little nervous about his reaction to my contribution. The music editors told me that everything sounded "fantastic", "best we've ever done", etc. But, after composing and recording more than two hours of music, Bill hadn't said a thing. I finally worked up the nerve to ask him. "It all sounds great", he said, "you would have heard a long time ago if I didn't like it".

I can truly say that this project was one of the highlights in my long career. Also, as I found out in due course, since cartoons seem to live forever, the royalties ain't bad either. ■



Musical Mickey Mouse

The Techniques of Scoring

Guy Gross

is a Sydney-based film composer who has written music for a wide variety of film and television productions, including many hundreds of hours of animation for his parents' animation film studio. These are, most notably, *Blinky Bill*, *Flipper* and *Old Tom*.

In many ways composing music for animated films is much like composing for any other style of film – except it's more fun.

The general requirements that apply to regular film also apply to animation. Propelling the action, enhancing the story, illuminating the characters and setting the mood. Except with animation there is often an expectation of heightened realism and exaggerated statements. That's why it can be more fun. Of course there are occasionally non-animated films that require this approach, in genres such as comedy, sci-fi and horror, but animation almost always utilises 'over the top' and 'in your face' styles.

When I speak of animated films, I am generally referring to TV series. This is because most animated feature films are underscored quite conventionally. The producers Disney and DreamWorks are at the forefront of these feature films, and their films like *Shrek*, *Aladdin*, *Toy Story*, *Tarzan* and *A Bug's Life* contain superb underscores that quite conventionally help tell the story and would not be out of place in many live-action movies.

Animated TV series generally call for a 'wilder' approach to the music. The master and pioneer of music for animation was Carl Stalling. He composed for hundreds of Warner Brothers television episodes and early Disney work. For Warners, most notably, *The Road Runner*, *Bugs Bunny* and *Daffy Duck*. Incredibly, almost all of these scores were composed not to picture, but to the timing sheets created by the animators. As the pictures were finished, so too was the music, and the two came together at the end of the filmmaking process. Stalling invented many new musical approaches that are still widely used today. His ability to use explosive musical phrases with a 60-piece orchestra playing extremely loud for

only two beats and then bring in a piccolo playing a very soft theme made his music exciting, wonderful and perfectly suited for the ever-changing action of the Warner Brothers films. He is also often credited with the invention of the click track, without which his music would have been impossible to create. His music is also associated with the phrase 'mickey mousing' which refers to the very tight correlation between music and on-screen action. (A character falls, we hear a xylophone glissando. A person tiptoes around, we hear pizzicato strings for each footstep).

Today, music for animated television programs can be as wide and varied as there are styles of music. Contemporary and popular styles are commonly used, as was also true in Stalling's days. The day-to-day challenges of scoring to animation can be daunting for an inexperienced composer, especially when they are trying to 'mickey mouse'. The

ability to create a score that satisfies both the frame-by-frame action and also adheres to the ongoing flow of the drama is not easily mastered.

Thankfully, part of the technical hurdle of synchronisation can be overcome with the aid of a good computer sequencing package, such as Performer or Logic. But careful

planning and musical construction is a must for well-executed animation music.

Most television animation is created with synthesisers, samplers and sequencers. This is generally due to budget and time constraints. There are very few animated TV programs that afford live instruments, as the television animation industry works on very tight budgets. In Australia a music budget for a half-hour animated television episode is between \$2,000 and \$6,000. And, typically, a composer would have 5 days or less to complete composition and production of a score for one episode.

The master and pioneer of music for animation was Carl Stalling. He composed for hundreds of Warner Brothers television episodes and early Disney work.

Scoring to Animation

A combination of music editing and original scoring to picture is an effective way to deal with time and financial constraints. For a series I recently scored, called *Old Tom*, I composed a music library unique to the program and produced it with live players. I then used this library to cover anywhere between 60 to 80 percent of a particular episode and scored the remainder with synthesisers and samplers. However, having most of the episode's music created live gave the project a dynamic energy that otherwise could not have been achieved with synthesisers alone.

I have limited experience when it comes to a wide variety of directors for animation as my father, Yoram Gross, directed almost all of the work I have done. As it happens, he is a competent musician himself and would have probably become a composer had the Second World War not interrupted his youth. As a result, he is both knowledgeable and trusting when it comes to musical styles for his films. The briefs are quite simple and much like a

brief for regular film or television. That is, the music must help tell the story, keep the audience in their seat, and entertain. These underlying factors must still be achieved whether the score is bluegrass, orchestral, synth, or any other style that may suit the show.

Selecting the style appropriate for an animated show can be fraught with problems. Conflicting messages can come from directors, producers, investors and TV networks. This problem is not unique to animation, except that one has a much wider pallet of styles from which to choose. Another unfortunate reality is that practically all TV animation is funded by pre-sales, which include non-Australian distributors and investors. This means that, often, care must be taken to appeal to an international audience in order to maximise the potential success of the show. In most instances, therefore, an 'Australian sound' is discouraged. Two notable exceptions to this are the TV series *Blinky Bill* and *Crocadoo*.

Cultural bias can also be a factor in

choosing a style for an animated (or for that matter any other) TV program. In a recent project I was working on, I decided to underscore the show with a 'Stephane Grapelli-style' jazz approach. This was approved and enjoyed by the Australian and American partners in the project, but loathed by the French partners. It seemed to come down to an overuse of this style in old French films. My argument that "the children who are our audience probably don't have this historical baggage" did not win favour. The French partners cited Jimi Hendrix as a good example of what they're after. Go figure! After threats of re-scoring, and our attempts to find a common ground, my score remained.

Ultimately, with the complete history of musical styles at your disposal, the process of scoring animation can be a highly rewarding experience. Combined with the joy on the faces of your audience, and the royalties received from internationally successful shows, animation music can indeed be a lot of fun. ■

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Educating the Screen in Australia

Michael Atherton

is a member of the Australian Guild of Screen Composers and Professor of Music at the University of Western Sydney (Sydney, NSW), where he teaches modules in composition for the screen, collaborative projects, ethnomusicology, and music business. He has substantial screen music, choral composition and recording credits, and is published by BMG Music.

Film music by itself is like the hand of a Javanese dancer. In its isolation, it can be a thing of exquisite beauty. But its greater expression happens in non-isolation. In fact, it occurs when it is no longer a hand.

When integrated in movement with all the other elements of the dancer's body- the feet, the arms, the torso, the mouth and the eyes – the hand becomes something else. It becomes part of the whole that has far greater capacity for expression than any of its single parts.

The whole body has the capacity to move the audience profoundly and transform the audience. The same is true of the relationship between film music and the film itself as a whole.

Alec Morgan, filmmaker

Music departments around the country are gradually adapting to the demands of increasing musical pluralism, to meet the needs of students who seek broader training options for their career aspirations. The impact of digital technologies on music making has been dramatic over ten years. A shift away from traditional studio-based practices in the fine arts, to electronic and temporal arts, is also a shift that involves music, as the linking of sound and image becomes more prominent in performance. So, where does screen (moving image) composition fit into our tertiary music education? This is the subject of my enquiry.

The interest in and commitment to new technologies is challenging the very core of undergraduate and postgraduate music education. A shift to technology-based careers is on. As shown in destination surveys, more graduates are gravitating to multimedia work. And there is a growing interest in screen composition. The now broad acceptance and implementation of music technology as part of the undergraduate curriculum is facilitating these career paths. However, the study of screen composition is still in the shadows. It ought to be better served in a country that has a stake in international screen industries. While there is some interest in educating the screen composer,

opportunities are limited. We have nothing as comprehensive as the Scoring for Motion Pictures and Television course at UCLA or Screen Music at England's national Film and Television School. Why is the study of screen music so neglected in a country recognised internationally for unique films, prolific directors and big audiences hungry for cinema? Why do the screen composers receive the least mention in film and TV industry hoopla? Is it to do with ingrained attitudes?

Producers and directors in Australia have tended to undervalue the composer as filmmaker: firstly because the composer is introduced very late in the complex collaborative process of screen production; secondly because there has been a low priority given to the education of the filmmaker about screen music. The composer is, therefore, always at risk of being misunderstood and devalued where there is no shared language. From personal experience, when you find a producer or director who has some knowledge of screen music, you try to build a career-long partnership, building on the common ground and rapport achieved in the first collaboration. It might sound obsequious, but one of the screen composer's first questions is to ask a producer or director about their pet hates in music. This encourages the sort of discussion that reveals a lot about one's collaborators, and noticeably about how often they show limited knowledge of how a composer works. The problem is bluntly presented in the words of prolific screen composer Michael Kamen (*Brazil*, et al.) and resonates with the experience of many Australian composers:

Part art, part artifice, a great movie score can give a picture an operatic, larger-than-life quality that elevates both the senses and the emotions, while working primarily on the level of the subconscious. The relatively anonymous film composers are some of the best – and the longest-suffering – talents in the music business, subject to the vagaries of whimsical producers, ham-fisted editors and tone-deaf directors. "It's a brutal business", says [Michael] Kamen, 45.

Composer

“They don’t care about your musical ambitions, or even if the oboe is in tune. They care whether the music is delivered on time and on budget”.

Richard Walsh

Too many producers and directors still want the commodity and not the intelligence of the composer. Many are suspicious about the composer’s capacity to create the ‘invisible character’ in moving images and powerfully manipulate emotion and meaning. Is this why Australian composers are rarely blessed with decent budgets and are compelled to take on multiple tasks that, in the USA, for example, are handled by a team of specialists – composer, orchestrator, conductor, music editor, music co-ordinator, music programmer, music contractor, studio / soundstage musicians, music supervisor and music engineer?

However, negativity and suspicion are not only the province of filmmakers. I have seen concert reviews that use the term ‘film music’ pejoratively. I recall the rhythmic vitality and colour of an oboe concerto being described by the reviewer as film music because of its resonances of popular music. Ironically the composer under question is actually one of our prolific symphonists and also a successful screen composer. I suspect there is still a view prevalent in some traditional academic composition circles that the screen composer is someone who is unable to compose a major work. This is not only arrant nonsense but betrays a lack of understanding of the role and function of screen music.

In my view, screen composition is an artform that demands a better deal, and the establishment of high level tertiary training is the direction to take. Let’s engage in strategic curriculum development and implementation that allows us to train both the composer and filmmaker, whenever possible under the same roof. In the following discussion I provide a brief survey of educational opportunities for the screen composer, and follow with suggestions for further developments.

Who educates the screen composer?

The obvious answer is that most Australian screen composers are self-educated / ing. They are self-taught, multi-skilled artists, who are deeply committed to the vicissitudes of synchronising music to moving images. Typically, they commence their careers in popular music genres as singer / songwriters, guitar or keyboard players and synthesiser programmers. Collectively they are the first to explore leading edge technology and invest in the same. Their experiences as touring musicians and recording artists equip them with excellent communication and business skills, as well as priceless industry knowledge and networks. These self-taught composers are life-long learners who pursue personal study and undertake research projects to support their work. For example, several screen composers have become excellent self-taught orchestrators, born of necessity as they move up the film ‘food chain’ into budgets that allow larger ensembles. Some have developed conducting skills in order to ensure the synchronisation of music and image on the sound stage. The screen composer is someone who composes for fiction, documentary, animation and the commercial, someone who is passionate about images, about theatre and dance, and is intensely curious about languages, rhythms and timbres from around the globe.

In writing the above, I realise that I am likely describing many stalwarts of the Australian Guild of Screen Composers, an organisation that has done much over ten years to ameliorate the status and profile of the screen composer. Guild members are actively involved in teaching and mentoring at a handful of

institutions. This is providing momentum for the development of screen composition in tertiary music curricula.

Looking at the *Sounds Australian* issue on Australian tertiary music education (Number 60, 2002), it was not surprising that screen music was hardly mentioned at all. However, it was encouraging to see the growth of courses and subjects focusing on music technology and crossovers into new media, all of which provide a platform for screen composition. In October 2002, I undertook a quick survey of our tertiary providers, including the Australian Film Television and Radio School. The following is a summary of programs of study ranging from a single module to a graduate diploma in screen composition.

Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS) (North Ryde, NSW)

Why is the study of screen music so neglected in a country recognised internationally for unique films, prolific directors and big audiences hungry for cinema?

Following a few years of negotiation with AFTRS, a composer-in-residence scheme was established by the Australian Guild of Screen Composers. This then became the catalyst for the current specialist course, a Graduate Diploma in Screen

Composition. The Australian Performing Right Association (APRA) also lent its support, as did a number of screen composers, in particular Edward Primrose, Jan Preston, Art Phillips, John Charles and Martin Armiger. Introducing music to the AFTRS curriculum was a major undertaking, one that required convincing all the various heads of department of its value. It seems unbelievable that as recently as 1995 our national training institution was still operating without any music faculty.

Today, the diploma course is co-ordinated and taught by Martin Armiger. (Martin is a former President of the AGSC. His career is the subject of an article by Michael Hannan and Jude Magee, in *Screen Sounds*, edited by Rebecca Coyle). The course is described on the AFTRS website as being “unique in the world ... offering hands on training by creating music scores for AFTRS productions”. (<http://www.aftrs.edu.au/courses/fulltime/grad_cert_scrcomp.html>). The diploma covers several forms of screen composition through a suite of units that include “classical film music culture through to the most contemporary approaches in film music influenced by ‘popular culture’”. Conceptual studies, recent Australian filmmaking, criticism and collaborative processes are covered, as well as instrumentation and arranging, music dramaturgy, studio recording and mixing.

Flexible learning is part of the program, in which a student can negotiate a learning contract for working in collaboration with drama and documentary filmmakers in the School. The work is intensive and the numbers small. Only 3 to 4 students are enrolled each year. They are selected on merit, and judged on criteria such as composing ability, communication skills, relevant experience, professional attitude and commitment to working in the screen industry.

Central Queensland University, Faculty of Education & Creative Arts, Central Queensland Conservatorium of Music (CQCM) (Mackay, QLD)

CQCM offers screen music opportunities within its Bachelor of Music / Performing Arts degree. The intensively taught elective Music and Moving Image provides students with the opportunity to participate in the scoring and performance of music to a silent movie. Art Phillips, President of the AGSC, is the principal lecturer and music director of the performances. CQCM’s Mackay campus has the facilities to support such projects: it has a full

working studio, theatre spaces, computer resources and musical instruments. It has strong links with industry practitioners and is one of the AGSC Awards sponsors.

Queensland University of Technology (QUT), Faculty of Creative Industries (Kelvin Grove, QLD)

QUT has specialist offerings in its undergraduate and postgraduate courses. The Bachelor of Music offers Production Studies 1-4, Music Project 1 and 2, and electives such as Composing for Film and TV or Music and Sound for Multimedia. The Master of Music includes Composing for Moving Pictures, and Music and Sound for Digital Media. Both courses are attracting healthy numbers of students. This is clearly a consequence of QUT’s staffing profile: it has specialist staff in Andy Arthurs, Richard Vella and Ross McLennan, all

acclaimed screen composers. Other staff include specialists in music for computer games and multimedia. Such a staffing profile with an emphasis on interdisciplinary music activity with film, TV, multimedia, dance and theatre makes this course an attractive option for the screen composer.

James Cook University, Faculty of Law, Business and the Creative Arts, College of Music, Visual Arts & Theatre (Townsville, QLD)

JCU provides a one-semester module called Creating the Music, offered to 3rd year Bachelor of Music students. The primary objective is to provide students with a working knowledge of the process and aesthetics of film music composition, skills-based training.

A student is engaged in an analysis of repertoire and applies this knowledge to two specific tasks: a composition of scores (orchestral, ensemble etc., depending on context) for a variety of pre-existing short films and the composition and preparation of music and foley for a range of QuickTime movies (30 seconds’ to circa 5 minutes’ duration). This is done via various software packages that assist the creation and synchronisation of soundtracks. Two academic staff and casuals cover the teaching of between ten and fifteen students per year.

Facilities include the Department’s recording studio, portable audio recording facilities and a computer lab configured with appropriate software. The Music Department is considering collaborating with JCU’s Bachelor of Communication Design, which intends expanding its film and multimedia studies from 2003.

Macquarie University, Division of Humanities, Department of Contemporary Music (North Ryde, NSW)

While the Department of Contemporary Music offers no specific compositional training, Rebecca

Coyle convenes and teaches the unit Screen Soundtracks, an analysis of music, sound design and dialogue in film. Currently, the unit attracts about 35 music majors. It offers an important critical-analytical focus of the music dimension. Coyle’s book, *Screen Scores*, published by AFTRS in 1998, is an excellent addition to the literature.

The development of music technology within tertiary music courses has provided a positive platform for screen music.

Southern Cross University, Centre for Contemporary Music (Lismore, NSW)

The Bachelor of Contemporary Music (composition specialisation with 35-40 students enrolled) has a specific component of screen composition technique. Second year students study the development of a theme in different styles and moods in preparation for a more concentrated study of scoring in first semester third year.

The strand takes the form of learning practical skills in synchronisation of MIDI sequencing to video and then scoring a 5-minute film. At the same time there is a series of lectures on film scoring, film sound theory and an analysis assignment of the soundtrack of a feature film. Other relevant skills covered in the composition specialisation include Arranging, Orchestration, Electronic orchestration and an Audio-engineering elective for composition majors. The program is staffed by Peter Martin, screen composer and advertising music composer; Fred Cole, composition technology expert and documentary composer; and Michael Hannan, who publishes on film music and has some screen composing credits.

The facilities available include a well-equipped composition technology studio and a suite of recording studios. There is also a television studio with television lighting, analogue recording and editing facilities for three-camera shoots, plus digital cameras and digital editing suites.

The School regularly invites industry professionals to present seminars and workshops. It also encourages screen composition as a postgraduate research field, and a number of its graduates are active screen composers.

University of Newcastle, School of Music and Drama, The Conservatorium (Newcastle, NSW)

Newcastle offers an undergraduate unit entitled Film Music: Soundtrack Creation, as well as units in music technology and scoring. Areas covered include the compositional and technical aspects, aesthetics, and psychology of

composing music for film, video and other visual media. The major focus is on film music. However, the principles and techniques of film scoring transfer to other collaborative art forms using music. Essentially the primary emphasis is on the creation of a musical soundtrack with secondary study areas, including the basics of filmmaking and associated technical matters.

University of Western Sydney, College of Arts, Education and Social Sciences, School of Contemporary Arts, Music (Penrith, NSW)

Music technology is emphasised in both the Bachelor of Music and the Bachelor of Electronic Arts programs. Students can work in a variety of combinations, for example, music technology / composition or music technology and performance. The Bachelor of Electronic Arts emerged from links between the music technology units and digital media units in the Bachelor of Fine Arts. The Bachelor of Electronic Arts is a cross-disciplinary degree for technologists working across time-based arts such as sound, video, graphics, animation, installation and performance art. The School of Contemporary Arts has substantial high-level facilities such as live and anechoic studios, MIDI and multimedia laboratories, editing and mixdown suites (5.1, 7.1 and 9.1). Units such as Sonic Landscapes, Electric Sound and Pictures and Spatial Audio emphasise the screen medium. There is a well-established module in film composition in the composition major. Michael Atherton, Julian Knowles and Andrée Greenwell, as well as industry professionals, including Edward Primrose, have taught this. The music technology and electronic arts strands are looking at future synergies with animation and film production, as offered by the School of Communication, Design and Media. Contemporary Arts also has a well-established acting course, which will be a bonus for the development of filmmaking. Graduates who majored in composition and music technology are emerging as screen composers. For

example, Amanda Brown, who also completed the inaugural AFTRS Diploma in Screen Composition, and John Green are both UWS music graduates.

University of Melbourne, Victorian College of the Arts, School of Music (Melbourne, VIC)

The Victorian College of the Arts offers a screen subject to twelve students in its practical composition stream: Cross Media Composing for Film, TV and Radio. This provides a hands-on introduction to collaboration, working with a script, creating sound and locking in exact time points. It culminates in a student having to produce a completed score for a short film / animation.

Others

The survey shows that other institutions are considering the introduction of courses for screen composition. The Queensland Conservatorium reports that it does not have a course yet but acknowledges increasing interest in the field, indicating that music and soundtrack subjects will likely be offered in conjunction with the film school at Griffith University.

Melba Memorial Conservatorium has recently begun new degree programs in contemporary music performance / composition and music technology / composition. This is in affiliation with Victoria University. There is an interest in the future development of screen composition.

Edith Cowan University and the University of Tasmania report no specific courses as yet but are exploring options for the future.

Where to from here?

The development of music technology within tertiary music courses has provided a positive platform for screen music, so too the readiness to attract professional screen composers as teachers and mentors.

continued on page 37

Scoring Opportunities

Leah Curtis

is a graduate of the University of New South Wales in Music and Music Education, the Australian Film, Television & Radio School in Screen Composition and UCLA's Film Scoring Program. She is currently the UCLA / BMI Jerry Goldsmith Film Scoring Fellow, and is composing for a number of film and concert projects.

Los Angeles has such a unique history in screen music. I arrived almost two years ago bringing experiences of writing for the concert hall, theatre, and film, and having just graduated from the Australian Film Television and Radio School's graduate screen composition course. I set myself the goals of soaking up the best wisdom and practices of Hollywood's film music industry, engaging in as many quality film and music activities as possible, and most importantly, getting involved.

On my initial list were the University of California (Los Angeles) film scoring extension program, for which I won a fellowship, and the ASCAP film scoring workshop, a month-long program devoted entirely to the professional development of film composers. Along with these was the desire to put my scoring well into practice and compose for some diverse and challenging projects with local creative teams.

Composing, Conducting and Recording at UCLA

Among the many advantages of the UCLA film scoring program is a core series of recording sessions every two weeks for 12 months. Each student is required to compose and conduct film and television cues for genres including

drama, horror, animation and comedy. The studio time is an intense training ground and, through this evaluation and practice, you gain excellent experience in conducting recording sessions, working with musicians, and dealing with technical and creative outcomes in a time-pressured situation. It is an ideal place to see some hard lessons learnt without the implications of ruining a career.

I have found this program extremely useful in developing highly specific film scoring skills. Practical training in conducting to click and free time, and combinations of these, to working with pops and streamers (visual markers on the film to indicate to the conductor things like the start of the cue, a fermata's end, or a moment of emphasis, for example) has been exceptional.

The only factor missing in these situations is a producer and / or director adding their input, or requesting changes, although the course professor often makes requests for changes on the stand, giving you added confidence and practice at making immediate and efficient musical changes under pressure. The variation in lecturers is excellent and, because of the location, the lecturers and players are either currently engaged in film and TV scoring work, or have had a long history of it.



Photograph (right): Leah Curtis conducting a motion picture cue at Newman Scoring Stage, Fox Studios, Los Angeles, USA.

s in Los Angeles

Conducting to Picture

Supplementing many composing experiences here in LA, has been the UCLA film conducting course with Jeffrey Schindler. The class is run in a masterclass style over 12 weeks. Eight of these sessions are conducting live musicians, complete with video taping of your time at the podium, an excellent tool for evaluation and review after class. There is nothing quite like seeing your conducting from the orchestra's perspective. These classes concentrate on standard classical repertoire, and extend to the unique challenges of film score conducting techniques for the most musical and effective result. The course also requires that you write two original compositions, allowing further conducting experience of your own compositions, an essential skill in screen music.

The ASCAP film scoring workshop also led me through a film conducting masterclass, and then followed up with the experience of conducting the recording session of my own cue with a forty-piece orchestra. The culmination of this program is the composing and conducting of a major motion picture cue at Fox Studios Scoring Stage – a truly excellent experience, closely emulating current feature film practices for orchestral scoring.

Technical Tools

The technical side of film scoring can be incredibly stimulating. There are many times when highly technical aspects of the work need to correlate perfectly with the creative side, where it takes a special balance of both aspects for success.

Tasks extend from synchronising with picture, working out tempos to correspond accurately with a sequence, to hitting specific points exactly while retaining a natural musical flow. They also include digitising and compressing videos, patching studio equipment, and developing a working knowledge of recording engineering so that you can create a quality sample track for director collaboration.

Los Angeles has been an excellent environment in which to set up a studio,

with so many resources at hand, and highly specific technical courses and contacts available to cover everything from using specific film scoring software and plug-ins, to microphone techniques for recording and mixing techniques for digital audio.

To be competitive in Los Angeles, it seems critical to have a digital studio set up, engineering skills, and the ability to create and mix high quality music in your studio. Setting up and developing my own digital studio has enabled some excellent collaborations on a number of film projects, and the completion of a songwriting project that incorporates a contemporary dance style, a genre that is so technologically reliant.

Passing the Baton: Meeting the Maestros

It has been inspiring to meet a number of composers who have had a significant impact on the Hollywood industry. Starting out in the profession of film scoring, and meeting those who have spent their working life devoted to it, gives you the comfort of seeing the full circle, and hearing that their first years weren't so different from your own.

I was fortunate enough to meet David Raksin, most famous for his score to *Laura*. A year before meeting him, I was in Australia, discussing *Laura* at film school as part of a film history and analysis class. His stories included his time working with Charlie Chaplin, making him an immediate link - standing right in front of me - to the very early days of the medium.

His shared recollections of his work and life as a film composer were invaluable. He explained his compositional process for the theme and score to *Laura*, and described musically and emotionally how he wrote for the

famous apartment scene from this film, and then we listened to his evocative and very famous melody.

I also met Shirley Walker whose personal advice to me was that a "fearless approach" was the only way to enter the industry, particularly in Los Angeles. She was another topic of discussion in our Australian film scoring class, making her break into the industry as synthesist in Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*. James Newton-Howard discussed his score for the newly released *Signs* to a few of us from UCLA, allowing incredible access to his studio, his work practices, and philosophies of film scoring in general. It was so encouraging to have the opportunity to ask questions, originally raised in the classroom, directly of the source.

Hollywood Mentors

I have had three very generous, experienced and completely diverse

Hollywood composers as mentors. The first studio sessions I attended as an intern were for the television series *Seventh Heaven* under the direction of the composer Dan Foliart. These sessions were with an intimate and well-established ensemble, and showed me the

inside workings of music on a family drama.

The next sessions I attended were for the large orchestral recordings for *JAG*, under Steve Bramson. These were intense and generally complex scores, with vast use of ethnic percussion, plenty of thick orchestral writing and highly charged emotional content. These two shows certainly provided contrast in content, style and methods of session recording and composition, and both mentors were extremely generous with their encouragement, advice and involvement in the session.

Australia seems to offer a much more self-critical view of practices for creation and collaboration ... contrasting with LA's highly established practices.



Scoring Skills: The Challenge

The challenge can be exhilarating – you need to be a technician, an emotional interpreter, business professional and, above all, an artisan, serving the drama.

Writing music for the screen seems to be so much like the master actor who has to be incredibly adaptable, transforming for a range of highly distinct genres. A traditional education in music has been so useful in my daily work. Having that fundamental knowledge and understanding of music, composition and performance enables you to change the mask, and make this transformation into whatever character, emotional quality, genre, atmosphere or stylistic period is desired. Projects I have worked on require this diversity, demanding everything from Argentinean tango, pointillistic serial composition to a grungy rock, techno dance and romantic-period orchestral.

My time in Los Angeles has certainly added significantly to my professional development in screen music, and definitely broadened my work experience in the industry. It has offered a thorough training ground of many special and generous people, historic places, intense work experiences and many stories all revolving around a core of musical storytelling. The most rewarding has been my own creative collaborations, composing music in a town that has produced so many stories and soundtracks before. ■

The majority of my time, however, was spent with Alf Clausen at many scoring sessions as composer intern for *The Simpsons*. This experience was exceptional.

Clausen made sure that I was exposed to the full cycle of creating the music for the show. This process started at Fox Studios at a spotting session for an episode. Initial ideas, discussion and final agreement on what role the music was to play at a particular moment all occurred at this meeting. The next step was to attend the music editor's studio. Chris Ledesma demonstrated his work requirements for each episode, from breakdown notes for each musical cue, to spotting notes for the entire episode. He then prepared for the recording session, where he is responsible for the hard disk recording of the episode's cues.

Clausen then had a week to compose for the show, and finally three to four hours in the studio with the orchestra to rehearse and record the cues at a major scoring stage for the episode.

Attending these recording sessions gave me a detailed working insight into the highly specific recording process for the screen. Styles within the episodes I was involved in stretched from jazz, songs, very short orchestral transitions, to classical orchestral pieces. Clausen

switches from one to the next with a conviction that stems from years of experience in a range of genres. The atmosphere in these sessions is very high energy, positive, and, in the spirit of the show, full of many laughs, yet with high attention to detail in the music.

Following this, I attended the final dubbing session, complete with executive producer Matt Groening, whereby all of the music and sound elements were combined and approved, ready for broadcast.

The Best of Both Worlds

Experience from both of these very distinct worlds has proven very useful. From my unique perspective, Australia seems to offer a much more self-critical view of practices for creation and collaboration in film music, contrasting with Los Angeles' highly established practices. Arriving in LA with Australian education and work experiences behind me, I brought a natural questioning of these established practices. It has proven to be refreshing for both creative relationships and projects, while a respect and openness towards local techniques is constantly maintained.

Photograph (above): Leah Curtis conducting a motion picture cue at Newman Scoring Stage, Fox Studios, Los Angeles, USA.

That Strange Ringing Sound

Peter Miller

is a graduate of the Australian Film Television and Radio School. In 1992 Peter founded the music and sound design company Perpetual Ocean. His credits include sound design for the DreamWorks feature film *The Ring*, Malcolm McDonald's award winning documentaries *Gumshoe* and *Watch the Watch* and Lilyfield Productions animation films *Darwin's Evolutionary Race* and *Leunig: Doom & Gloom*. He composed the theme for the 1996 season of the ABC's *Quantum* and also for the animated series of Karl Kruszelnicki's *Great Moments in Science*.

Early in 2002 I found myself in the position of being invited to do the sound design for the DreamWorks horror thriller *The Ring*. I am by profession a music composer for film and TV, but the concept of creating sound design for a major Hollywood feature wasn't as scary as it might first appear (despite the subject matter of the film).

There are two reasons for this: one, that I've actually done a fair bit of sound design work in the past, and two, because, fundamentally, I don't draw too many lines between 'music' and 'sound' in the first place. I knew also that I would be working with director Gore Verbinski and editor Craig Wood, both of whom have a great sensibility for sound and a similar reluctance to pre-define the role of sound in a film.

The Ring takes the form of a more-or-less classic horror story, with a mystery that needs to be solved in an all-too-short time-frame, and a few serious nightmares along the way.

I was fortunate enough to be brought onto the project while the script was still being written, so sound was not just a concept left until the last moments of post-production as it so often is. I was able to create libraries of sounds and atmospheres before the picture edit had even commenced, which allowed Craig some great flexibilities and opportunities as he assembled the cut. The brilliant team at Skywalker Sound who came onto the project at post-production were then able to build on the framework we'd made and allow us to refine and expand our concepts for the final mixes. It was truly a team effort.

The horror genre is a tricky one, something like comedy in that you need to be very careful not to overplay your hand. Too much too early and it can become melodrama. Too much deliberation, on the other hand, and you risk defusing any tension you might have built. We were always aware of walking that fine line.

There is 'conventional' music in the film (a great score by Hans Zimmer) but, rather than underscore the 'scares', it is intended to lend a melancholy atmosphere to the story, or sometimes provide a 'ticking clock' to keep up the

nervous tension. In the early parts of the film, the music is used very sparingly; no cues to the audience to tell them what to think. Instead, the sound design does most of the work, an uncomfortable polyphony of slightly melodic textures, watery ambiances, and breathy tones. Cut loose from a sense of the familiar, the audience is slowly but deliberately drawn into a very spooky world. Of course, all that was in theory until we were able to screen the film in the cinema. Working constantly on the project for the best part of eight months, determining if something was scary or not was not altogether easy. As it turns out, audiences have agreed with our decisions pretty well, and the film is officially a box office success.

For me, being in the role of sound designer on *The Ring* was a very fulfilling experience. In filmmaking, the language of sound, for some reason, tends to be a bit more flexible than the language of music often is. Everyone has an opinion when it comes to music, but the territory for sound design seems a little less mapped out. The funny thing is, much of what I was doing was, to me, rather musical anyway.

I think that's what you call a win / win situation. ■

... continued

Yantra de Vilder

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MA: *You have done a lot of pictures where it is not just the score, it is the source. Strictly Ballroom for example, where you have to come up with music before the film actually shoots and then score on top of that. Shine is like that. There is a given there that there is a piano player who is going to play a repertoire and you've got to get your head around that and work out how that is going to be performed and recorded and then add a score to that. To my mind, that is a good way to do it, but it also has a lot of problems. How do you find that? Do you find rewrites and critiques coming in those sorts of situations?*

DH: Those two films it was the case that I was very much the musical director or, as the music supervisor, as I was the composer and normally the music supervisor does things that you're not always happy with. If they want to license a song and they can't afford it. That was the case in *Strictly Ballroom*. There was a whole lot of songs, and Baz had to choose one because of the budget, and he chose *Time After Time*. Having talked Miss Lauper into a modest fee, because it was a small arthouse film, he milked it for all it was worth, using several minutes of it in various orchestrations. That was fun. I liked doing that. I like arranging, it's fun because someone else has written it and you can make it sound better, I also enjoy the opportunity of melding all the different styles.

In the case of *Shine*, where the styles and music were pretty formidable, it was an interesting proposition. Which way do I go in terms of how do I find my voice, how do I find the emotional subtext of the movie, which is giving a very meaningful support, without actually being a musical voice unto itself that distracts you, and how do we blend all those elements? In that sense it becomes a collage, you become a sound designer of music in the same way that a sound editor works with a whole lot of

sound effects and brings them together to make a symphony of textures that support a movie in an abstract or, sometimes, in a very real way.

With the music, I liked the responsibility and the challenge of having to meld all those styles together and, to answer the question of rewrites, I've often found rewriting very difficult, and there is one example in *Shine*. Two days before the recording session, Scott, the director, after having a theme called Catherine's theme, which I had written several weeks before, finally confessed to me, he said, "David, I don't think that Catherine's theme is right. It's just not emotional enough, my eyes don't well up in this scene as they should. You need to rewrite it". This is not just one cue, it is a whole theme, which is several cues, and was one of the most important themes. So instead of being in a beatific transcendental state of inspiration, I was in sheer panic because we had booked all the players and it had to be done in two days, not only rewritten but orchestrated as well. So I chained myself to the piano. It's amazing. I don't know how I wrote it, but my manager still tells me it is one of the best things I've ever written, the most heartfelt things.

So I think sometimes sheer pain and panic and torture can actually produce results. So, as much as we try to avoid them and stick to a comfort zone of everything being nice and rosy and transcendental and "I'm entering the blue light where I am going to receive the gracious sounds of the cosmos", it doesn't always work like that. Sometimes it is a very down-to-earth, pragmatic, hard core situation where someone has told you at the last minute to do it again and you have got no time to justify or argue. Your job is to be able to let go of the thing you held dear and say, "Well, I liked writing that and I love that, but I have to let go of that and do it all again, really, really quickly".

Editorial Conclusion

David Hirschfelder's words have a strong resonance: to be able to let go, and do it again really quickly. This in fact seems to be at the core of many artistic disciplines and, indeed, pivotal to the

process of making music for film which is subject to the director's demands and constantly changing needs.

To be able to identify what is precious and what isn't can be a difficult question, when all music springs from the well of creativity and, to that end, each note is unique and valid. However, at the end of the day, we all tend to need a context, and perhaps this is why writing for film is such a rewarding skill. To be able to seamlessly weave evocative textures and nuances into a tapestry of colour and vision, culminating in being a vital part of a greater process. This is both rewarding and challenging.

Many lessons are learned by viewing the world from someone else's eyes. The process of listening to and transcribing these anecdotes of David Hirschfelder and Burkhard Dallwitz has given me a broader understanding of the trials and tribulations that are all part of the artistic process of making music for film. To comprehend the stress of deadlines, the inevitable disappointments of rejections and failures, and the triumph of finally completing the project and hearing one's original music on screen, is something that can only be gained through experience.

What we gain from these seminars is another perspective and a shared camaraderie. The opportunity to learn from two of Australia's most-experienced composers is an invaluable one. Fortunately, through projects such as this, a solid foundation of diverse, yet united, screen composers is emerging as one of the faces of contemporary Australian musical culture.

Music and theatre were originally designed as healing rites for the community, a way to bring together otherwise disparate sections of society and the broader collective. By reflecting on strategies and disciplines with which to improve and develop the climate for and conditions of Australian composers, an impetus for the creation of an even stronger Australian contribution to the international world of film and music-making is achieved. ■

Michael Atherton

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Both indicate a readiness to support screen composition as a career path. Institutions recognise the need to focus on the skilled composer / sound designer and graduate.

Most of the training focuses on the creation and production of the music soundtrack itself. However, there is only limited exposure to discourses on film music aesthetics, music psychology and critical perspectives. Issues of professional practice, such as communicating with producers and directors, are only touched on. Collaborative contact between the composer and filmmaker is minimal, except at AFTRS, where one would expect maximum opportunity.

A national perspective is desirable, to look at developing cross-institutional course initiatives as well as shared musical projects with the screen music industry. It seems that a balance between a pedagogy that emphasises a one-to-one approach and group project-based learning, with the emphasis on mentoring and individualised coaching, is the ideal pathway.

Ideally, specialist courses or trajectories though combinations of study already available at some institutions should lead to a more comprehensive theoretical, practical and experiential learning in all aspects of screen composition. These broad areas must be included:

Screen music aesthetics and historical perspectives;
Psychological and emotional effect of a music score in dramatic contexts;
'Spotting' a film for music cues;
Theoretical and practical exercises in screen composition;
Acoustic and electronic orchestration;
Conducting and communicating;
MIDI;
Digital controllers and audio processors;
Navigating the recording studio;
Business—budgets, legal issues and administration.
Internship under a screen composer, music editor or production facility.

Project-based training should enable a student to be part of a larger group of filmmakers, in order to understand and appreciate the collaborative process. Getting students involved in all stages of production is paramount. And learning environments that encourage music composition for film and cinema, video and television, computer screen and virtual environments are the ideal, as are facilities that enable the recording of performing musicians as well as electronically generated scores or combinations of both.

The screen composer must be familiar with the history and aesthetics of screen composition, and should also appreciate the almost cinematic scope and detail of Wagner's operas, as well as the collaborations of Stravinsky or Cage. A screen composer should be able to develop a 'sonic landscape' for a laptop performance as well as compose for performing musicians. Then there is also the need to have a broad appreciation of popular culture.

The student composer should prepare case studies of local and overseas composers, for example Nigel Westlake, Laurie Anderson, Nerida Tyson-Chew, Ennio Morricone, Christopher Gordon, Rachel Portman, David Hirschfelder, Philip Brophy, Felicity Fox and James Horner, to name a few. A critical study of the contiguity of music and sound in major works such as *Romper Stomper* (John Clifford White) and *Bladerunner* (Vangelis) are indispensable.

Spotting and analysis of screen icons is invaluable – for example, *The Sea Hawk*, *Psycho* and *Star Wars*. Spotting TV series such as *Twin Peaks*, *Brides of Christ*, *Sea Change* and a raft of documentaries is a desirable habit, rather akin to ethnomusicological transcription, to bring the student close to what is going on.

We need to establish programs of sponsorship and collaboration with producers and directors, as part of a two-way educational strategy. The AGSC has done a great job, but it needs the backing of institutions to develop its contact with students through seminars, mentoring and work experience programs. Screen music study might also be assisted by staff-student exchanges

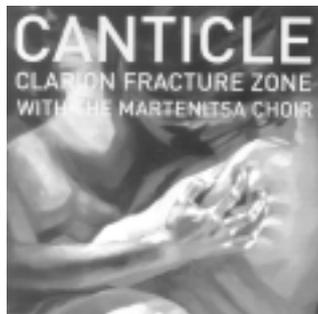
between our tertiary providers. And let us encourage more postgraduate research and writing in the field.

A national view of the performance and recording of music for the screen would identify special ensembles and musicians with specific expertise. I have long felt that the collection of Australian orchestras should be designated in particular ways. For example, the Tasmanian Symphony might also become our national film music orchestra. Of course, it needs a soundstage – one of the biggest deficits in the Australian film industry. More cross-institutional initiatives and networking might add to the cause to develop at least one decent soundstage. This might also be the impetus for recognising a national standard for facilities and teaching environments.

The challenge ahead will be to engage all our tertiary music providers in a discussion aimed at developing the study of screen composition to the extent that it deserves. The signs are there that a national summit involving universities, the AGSC, APRA and filmmakers might be achievable.

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Canticle

Clarion Fracture Zone with the Martenista Choir. Rufus Records, RF060. RRP \$29.00. Reviewed by Tony Gould

Initially, I was caught by a kind of surprised disappointment. Probably my problem and no one else's.

There is some very beautiful music here, but at the time of listening – and on repeated listening, I emphasise – was left with the feeling that the various juxtaposed musical languages did not always succeed next to one another. “A Religious Celebration of the Erotic”? Well, maybe. And in terms of the ‘blowing’ sections – listen to the opening track as an example – from a band which is one of the most innovative and original groups in Australia, is this particularly innovative or original? Not to my ears.

This first track sounds to me like a very American, very McCoy Tynerish ‘blow’ which is, in many ways, the antithesis of what is commonly described as a ‘canticle’ – that is, a little song, or hymn. Clarion Fracture Zone can and have often gone artistically way beyond the opening material.

But there are musicians / composers involved on this project who are outstanding and dedicated Australian artists. Tony Gorman, Alistair Spence – one of the Zone’s inspiring members – and the marvelous Sandy Evans, who contributes splendidly though compositions which are full of interest and deep in passion. This is especially true in the last two tracks where the idioms come together well. In this sense at least, there is an overall journey to the end, so to speak, and the last minutes are inspirational.

So perhaps it may be a question of the individual composers involved doing what they do best, without too much concern about the ‘whole’. This

seems reasonable on one level, and problematic on another.

But what a wonderful and imaginative thing the Paddington Uniting Church has done, and indeed a brave thing as well, in commissioning this work of jazz, sexuality and the church? At last we are growing up!

Bravo to the composers, and I hope this recording succeeds handsomely. What it does do more than anything else is to demonstrate the wonderful character, adventure and creativity of musicians in this country.

Dr Tony Gould is the Head and Associate Professor at the School of Music, Victorian College of the Arts. He is also Deputy Chair of the Music Board, Australia Council for the Arts. His career embraces performance of a wide cross-section of music throughout Australia and the world as well as composition, arranging, conducting, teaching, music criticism, contributions to literature and adjudicating on international judging panels. He was chief music critic for the Herald Sun for 20 years. ■



Devils of the Night

Ron Nagorcka and Robert Williams. Move Records, MD3259. RRP \$29.00. Reviewed by Roz Cheney

This is very special music: I think of it as a great song for Tasmania.

In one way the method of construction of the pieces is well understood: it involves recording birds, frogs and other wildlife in the bush, editing, arranging, maybe filtering or treating the sounds, composing them by way of sampler, and possibly extending the ideas or sounds using sympathetic musical instruments.

But for many years Ron Nagorcka has been interested in the ancient system of tuning known as just intonation. For the

last couple of hundred years the musical tuning system in common use has been known as equal temperament, consisting of twelve equally spaced notes per octave. Just intonation is mathematically complex, but supporters argue it is a more mathematically correct and natural tuning system. In any event Ron Nagorcka relishes an intellectual challenge. He has taken to working with just intonation in much of this music. He usually designs a specific scale for each piece, based on an analysis of the birdsong that is the inspiration for the music and then explores its peculiar melodic and harmonic possibilities.

Ron Nagorcka is a composer, performer and maker of musical instruments (particularly the didjeridu) who lives and works in a remote forest in Tasmania. His work displays a deep affinity with the bush, and with environmental and ecological concerns. He has built his own house and solar-powered studio in this forest.

Robert Williams has collaborated with Ron Nagorcka for many years, most particularly as a pianist and an influential music producer. He has taught music and music therapy, has actively promoted Australian contemporary music, is a music writer and critic, and restores and rebuilds pianos.

Some of the pieces on this CD are collaborations between the two in terms of composition, but in large part their composer is Ron Nagorcka and it helps to better appreciate his work to understand some of its influences.

He grew up on a sheep farm in western Victoria in a Lutheran household. His mother was a singer. As a child he sang the liturgy as well as singing in church choirs and this interest in song I think suffuses his compositions. And perhaps his abiding interest in spiritual concerns also comes through from his upbringing. He later trained as an organist, and it's possible to see the influence of Messiaen's ideas.

In 1973, he began to play the didjeridu, initially for its musical qualities. Through playing it, he developed a deep interest in Aboriginal culture and mythology: “Nagorcka dreamed of a community music in which the composer played a more active role” (NMA Publications).

In 1976 Ron Nagorcka and other musicians opened the Clifton Hill Community Centre in Melbourne to put some of

these ideas about community and art into practice. Anyone could perform, no one was paid and there was no entry fee. It became one of the great performance venues of its time.

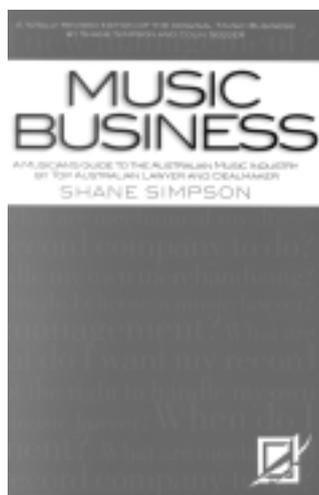
All these influences have come together in this collection of pieces written during the nineties, sometimes since re-worked and re-recorded. One was commissioned by harpsichordist Elizabeth Anderson for the Organs of the Goldfields Festival in Ballarat, and another by ABC Radio's *The Listening Room*. Some of them are early experiments with the harmonic logic of just intonation while others play with rhythm. But nearly all of them have the calls of Tasmanian birds as their creative well-spring. There's a Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, a Bassian Thrush, a Crested Bellbird, a Striated Fieldwren, a Fan-tailed Cuckoo, a Masked Lapwing, a Crescent Honeyeater, various magpies, owls, galahs, parrots, cockatoos and crows, as well as the most beautiful song of a Pied Butcherbird from Hart's Range in the Northern Territory. And of course not forgetting the cross Tasmanian Devil.

These pieces have complex rhythms, they are sometimes dense in texture and have beautiful harmonies. There is very fine harpsichord from Elizabeth Anderson on *Zygodactyl Dance*, and electric guitar from Larry Polansky on *Mood from Lake Mungo*. The most deeply satisfying piece for me is *This Beauteous Wicked Place*: the tones of the bird calls and harpsichord are particularly pleasing, together with the dramatic force of the didjeridu.

The cover of the accompanying booklet is of a marvellous painting by Philip Wolfhagen (the original is oil and beeswax on linen). He has a particular love of Tasmania's coast and landscape. Unfortunately, on the inside pages of the CD booklet the music notes are printed over (I presume) another work by Wolfhagen with the result that it's not possible to see the painting, nor easily decipher the words.

However this does not detract from music that repays repeated listening.

Roz Cheney is an independent editor and producer of acoustic art and features. ■



Music Business

by Shane Simpson.
Omnibus Press, 2002.
Reviewed by Michael Hannan

This is a new edition of a book initially published in 1994, which in turn was reworked from a book titled *Music: the Business and the Law*, published in 1986. Shane Simpson has been the most prolific writer of reference books on arts and entertainment law in Australia. He founded the Arts Law Centre of Australia and has served on many boards of support organisations for the arts industry. He is the principal of Simpson's Solicitors, one of the most prominent entertainment law firms in Australia.

Music Business is generally recognised as the bible of the music industry in Australia. It systematically deals with all aspects of the operation of the industry and its connection with other industries such as the media and film industries. Significantly, its subtitle includes the phrase "A Musician's Guide", indicating that it is principally directed towards the needs of musicians rather than other operatives such as managers, promoters, and merchandisers, for example.

The book starts with the basics of selecting and protecting a business name, and choosing a business structure. After a detour that discusses the operation of not-for-profit arts organisations, it then deals with how the musician interfaces with agents and managers. The book is always focused on the agreements and business relationships that are formed between musicians and their music industry associates. A chapter on performing live covers getting gigs, touring, self organisation or

working with promoters, and different kinds of performance deals. Attention then turns to the composer, with sections on music copyright, what music publishers do, collaborative writing, and analysis of publishing contracts. From here the book describes the impact of digital communications technologies on the music industry and the associated challenges to the security of copyrights.

A large section of the book is devoted to the record industry, starting with a brief history of the Australian scene, then looking at what record companies do, and how to get a record deal. There is an analysis of the key aspects of record contracts, a description of different kinds of record distribution deals and an explanation of the royalties flowing from record contracts.

The rest of the book is made up of chapters dealing with record producers, music video, collecting societies, merchandising, sponsorship and product endorsement, music in advertising, music in film, insurance, music lawyers, industrial awards, bookkeeping, taxation, international deals, and the 'art of the deal'.

Music Business is naturally focused on the popular and commercial side of music rather than not-for-profit or subsidised areas of musical activity. As mentioned before it does include a section on not-for-profit arts organisations of the kind typically found in the classical music world. But these kinds of structures are also commonly found in the commercial field in the form of support organisations (such as music industry associations), collection societies (such as the Australasian Performing Right Association), and advocacy organisations (such as the Australian Independent Record Association). The book's index reveals only a few references to classical composers (Orff and Puccini), but many scores of popular music artists. Some other classical artists are mentioned in order to make particular points. Although music publishing is now mostly concerned with revenue from the licensing of works on recordings, Simpson points out that sheet music sales are still a significant part of the publishing business, particularly in the music education area. You can tell that the book is aimed at the popular musician when the point is exemplified by the statement: "A Messiaen quartet

is not something you can learn just by listening to a record". Another classical musician briefly mentioned in the text is Pavarotti, but only in a discussion of the business ethics of using a Pavarotti sound-alike for a recording of *Nessun dorma* in a commercial.

Despite the book's underlying focus on the popular and the commercial, there is no reason why its contents should not apply equally to the activities of classical performers and composers. Basically it is about how to generate income from musical activities and to do so without making too many mistakes. Thus the book should be compulsory reading for all musicians, not just popular musicians. The pity is that for too long the music curriculum in conservatoriums and university music departments has largely ignored the topic of music as a business and also music teaching as a business. This situation is changing gradually, so the appearance of this new edition of *Music Business* is timely for educators. It's time to bite the bullet in this essential area of instruction for would-be professionals.

I have a number of minor criticisms. More could be said, for example, about grants and grant applications. Although this source of funding has been the traditional mainstay of the classical musician, government and industry grants are also available to assist potentially viable music businesses (such as bands) to do overseas promotions, for example, particularly in the early stages of careers.

Another improvement would be the inclusion of more sample contracts such as artist management contracts, record contracts, and record distribution contracts. These kinds of contracts are discussed in detail but it would be good to see what they actually look like. Examples of publishing contracts and agency contracts, for example, are included, so why not apply the same format for other types of agreements? Maybe it was a space problem, as the book is very lengthy without these suggested additions.

Despite these criticisms the book is comprehensive, well written and entertaining. For an area of activity that can be very dry it helps greatly to have relief from time to time in the form of amusing anecdotes and humorous perspectives. While discussing ways of proving copyright,

for example, Simpson suggests not to “bother posting songs to yourself and leaving the envelopes unopened, unless you have some glandular urge to do so”. He adds: “You will soon need a larger apartment to store all the envelopes and the increased rental will outweigh any advantage”. There are hundreds of gems like this making the book a surprisingly enjoyable read. Highly recommended.

Michael Hannan is a composer, performer and music researcher based in Nimbin, NSW. He is the author of Australian Guide to Careers in Music to be published by UNSW Press in February 2003. ■



Peggy Glanville-Hicks: A Transposed Life

by James Murdoch.
Hillsdale, New York:
Pendragon Press, 2002.
Reviewed by Gordon Kerry.

On a rendered wall in the back yard of her Paddington, Sydney, terrace, Peggy Glanville-Hicks painted a mural. In the style of ancient Greek reliefs, it shows a chariot race. Out in front, looking resolutely ahead, is a female figure; behind her, a male looks back over his shoulder. It might have been the story of her life.

Born in Melbourne in 1912, educated at MLC, Clyde and the Albert Street (later Melba) Conservatorium, young Peggy Hicks (as she then was) headed off to London's Royal College of Music where she studied, *inter alia*, composition with Ralph Vaughan Williams, followed by a brief foray into Vienna for

unfulfilling study with Egon Wellesz, and then to Paris for serious work with Nadia Boulanger. She married fellow RCM composer Stanley Bate (who, it seems, drank, picked up men for sex and beat his wife) with whom she travelled to Australia in 1939, before heading off to New York (like Grainger, she became a US citizen). After a statutory period of penury, she became a respected music critic for the *Herald-Tribune* with Virgil Thomson as her editor, and wrote a number of entries on US composers for *The Grove Dictionary*. Her composing career flourished and her collaborators in opera included Thomas Mann, Robert Graves and Lawrence Durrell. Having finally divorced Bate, P G-H (as she had now become) settled in Greece, where her opera *Nausicaa* was a triumph at the Athens Festival in 1961. She experienced various personal and professional successes and disappointments but, saddest, surgery for a brain tumour left her without the urge to compose. She returned to Australia, holding court at the Australian Music Centre, disappointed that she was not more widely feted. Having known the hand to mouth existence of the freelancer, she left the Paddington house as a haven for composers after her death in 1990.

A long-time friend of the composer, James Murdoch should be a household name for anyone interested in Australian music. As adviser to the fledgling Music Board of the Australia Council he advocated the creation of what is now the Australian Music Centre, and went on to be its founding director. His writings on this country's music, notably *A Handbook of Australian Music* and *Australia's Contemporary Composers*, were important documents of an increasing cultural confidence.

Murdoch's is the second biography of P G-H to appear. Wendy Beckett's *Peggy Glanville-Hicks* appeared a decade ago, with no pretensions to being a work of musical scholarship (which was just as well: "surrealism, a method of composition based on the serial ordering of pitches".) Beckett's work was further notable for a touching credulousness when it came to some more improbable anecdotes, like dinner at "Government House in India" with Indira Gandhi, Nehru, and

the Mahatma Gandhi, at which P G-H was distracted by the raga music in the background. Then there are some which are simply untrue: that P G-H was the fair-copyist for Vaughan Williams' *Tallis' Fantasia*, or that the performance of her *Concertino da camera* at the 1989 Melbourne Spoleto Festival was merely the "initiative of a filmmaker whose sole purpose was to use the footage as part of his documentary". At one point Beckett seems genuinely surprised that "rather than revealing all to a female biographer as she had promised me, [P G-H] was editing her life story".

Murdoch, with a longer acquaintance with composers in general, and P G-H in particular, is alive to the phenomenon of embroidered memory and self-editing; to the P G-H-defining list of verbs like "crowed", "sniffed" and "spat", he freely adds "lied", and points out (with regard, as it happens, to Indira Gandhi) that "some of [P G-H's] stories were hardly plausible and not verifiable, but they were always good".

Which makes for a fascinating story, especially when we throw in affairs with swashbuckling sea-captains, Greek fishermen and Errol Flynn's father, the odd life-threatening illness, friendships with the great and good, and so on. But, generally speaking, the best parts of Murdoch's book are those for which he can adduce at least the documentary evidence of diaries, if not newspaper articles and letters. Not that people don't massage what they say in print, of course, but those pieces of evidence are, in the main, contemporary (unlike reminiscences from many years later). Where he is forced to speculate it gets a bit Literary: "One can only assume", "Clearly ...", "One can almost hear ...". The mannerisms of the single word sentence or single sentence paragraph can be distracting, and are sometimes misleadingly simplistic. There are one of two sins of omission: we might, for instance, add pianist Stephen McIntyre to the list of antipodean Boulanger students.

Moreover, it is as a writer that P G-H made her name (quite literally, as it was only in her New York years that the hyphen became official), and her criticism was praised being "free from any touch of coteries, even those to which she belongs". Reading her own words gives us

a very strong sense of her personality. She was proud of her skill with prosody and that rhythmic sensitivity is nowhere more evident than in a 1958 letter to Paul Bowles (another man in her life who looked the wrong way) offering him any assistance she can: "for as I'm sure you know, I love you and only you, always have, always will, as I realised long ago".

Sadly, neither the author nor his subject has been well served by his publisher. As well as badly scanned graphics, there are appalling production mistakes: missing and frequently misspelled words, (look no further than the dust jacket), and absurd results of the cut-and-paste function (there's a corker on page 77) which shouldn't have got through a spell-checker let alone past a sub-editor. Further, Murdoch has lived with much of the material for a long time (though, paradoxically, some of his source material only became available late in the day – the subject of an unedifying turf war), so he occasionally repeats information but then forgets that we haven't been introduced to this or that character, who is often granted a footnote many pages later. The editor should have picked this up.

Still, we get a warts and all image (Murdoch is up front about some of P G-H's less admirable machinations) but it remains, inevitably, a curious mixture of fact and fantasy. Like many of the people who have written about P G-H, Murdoch concentrates on the Life rather than the Works. It's certainly time for a critical account of the music, though reading both Beckett and Murdoch one suspects that P G-H herself was her greatest composition.

Gordon Kerry was awarded the inaugural Peggy Glanville-Hicks Fellowship in 1994. ■



Undue Noise: Words about Music

by Andrew Ford. Sydney:
ABC Books, 2002. RRP
\$27.95. Reviewed by
Malcolm Gillies

Composers do not necessarily make good music commentators. The creative concentration of the composer often does not sit happily with the understanding of context and breadth of content required of the successful commentator. *Undue Noise* provides the collective evidence of what most of us already knew: that Andrew Ford is one of those rare masters of both the musical and the verbal genres. And more: his writings are not just some verbal accompaniment to the music in question, but mysteriously resonate with the music. Sometimes they even become a kind of verbal music.

Undue Noise – “undue” because classical music (unlike most other forms of music) ultimately has no dues to anything beyond itself – is Ford’s own selection of writings, lectures and broadcasts delivered between 1986 and 2001. It is primarily about classical music, but touches strongly upon popular music and finishes up with music education. Ford does not fashion his many writings into chapters. Rather, he simply throws down over sixty writings which modulate at varying paces across themes of compositional aesthetics, American music, British music, performing interpretation, Australian music, Romantic classics, and the avant-garde, with a good few intervening passages on popular music, ‘light’ music, film music, and

particular essays on The Beatles, Bruce Springsteen, Bob Dylan (four articles), and Elvis.

Ford’s themes are sometimes dialectical, and they make for good journalism: tolerant versus ‘tabloid’ societies, parochial versus universal artistic tendencies, high art versus entertainment, freedom of choice versus standardisation in education, even Australia versus Finland in their respect for opera. Then again, he brings together apparent antitheses by pointing out their similarities: Wagner and Bob Dylan, Elvis and Amadeus. And Ford makes good use of the most obvious aspects of music to highlight his arguments, with frequent use of size (of operas and opera houses), length (of musical works), or speed (of conductor Celibidache’s interpretations).

Because Ford normally approaches his musical commentaries from the basics of music, he comes across as an unpretentious companion, whether in an ABC program note, a *24 Hours* CD review or a ‘think piece’ in the daily press. So, there are simple gems aplenty in *Undue Noise*. In an article on “The Erotics of Music” he makes the brilliant (and overlooked) point that it is aural memory that makes many of us above the age of mid-forties remember our multiplication tables – because we chanted them. And there is his strong argument about the resilience of Bach’s music in whatever format or instrumentation it is presented, a resilience which reveals Bach’s as perhaps the purest music of all, “so performance style hardly matters” (p. 44). From his study of recordings of Vaughan Williams’s symphonies he draws the memorable point that innovation and originality are not the same: “Anyone can innovate, but originality is rare” (p. 96).

Because Ford and I are much of the same generation, and both with a British musical training of the late 1970s, I suspect that this collection arouses many sympathies and nostalgias in me which other readers might not experience. The key events and personalities identified in recent music, the approach to musical values, and the analysis of artistic change – even the identification of vestiges of Australia’s post-colonial cringe – all resonate rather too comfortably with my own. A reviewer twenty years younger, or older, would undoubtedly come up

with quite a different critique. I identified this ‘over-resonance’ of mine especially with Ford’s reviews of two books of the late 1990s, Richard Taruskin’s *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions* and Nicholas Cook’s *Music: A Very Short Introduction*. I could only agree with every word of his reviews. These are books which should change thinking about music and music scholarship.

That said, there are trends in this book, not all of which are in Ford’s favour. The two essays I liked above all were “Wagner and Cricket” and “The Trouble with Parties” (raising that eternal problem for musicians: how do you answer the casual cocktail-party question, “what do you do?”). I only realised later that both these essays were among Ford’s earliest writings. Although the book’s materials are chronologically jumbled, there is a definite progression over time in Ford’s writing, from the delightfully precise (and slightly self-conscious), through an elegant phase in the early 1990s, to something more mellow in the later 1990s, and on to something verging on the verbally indulgent in most recent times. Some of the most recent pieces just started to remind me of the racy, witty, smart but unfocussed style of Phillip Adams, which is always ‘a good read’ but somehow now lacks real fire in the belly.

Then there is a feeling which emerges from the book of commentary at second hand. By this I mean that so many of Ford’s verbal pieces are not direct critiques of performances, artists or movements, but reviews of recordings of performances of works, and reviews of books or writings about artists or artistic movements. This is often commentary upon others’ interpretations, whether musical or verbal. Of course, this is what the magazines and newspapers have tended to ask Ford to do. And he is well aware of the issue. Later in the volume, there is a greater variety of direct sources – program notes, radio talks, concert introductions – which present more directly his own artistic evaluations. The volume’s last essay, Ford’s final lecture to students before leaving the University of Wollongong in 1995, addresses trends in arts criticism. “Rather than examine works of art themselves, we are tending to examine critical writings about art”, he comments. He identifies a general

retreat from candid evaluation of art works and artists, because of the politicisation of education and of the arts. The rise of cultural studies, he believes, has caused a retreat from evaluation of art as art. On the book’s penultimate page, he asks his students: “All art is of its time; all art is historical documentation. But if it isn’t more than that, then why have I spent the last twelve years in a creative arts faculty and not a history department?”

Undue Noise is well produced, but irritating in a couple of aspects of presentation. It is neither thematic nor chronological in ordering, and that is fair enough. But the reader does then need the source information for each essay up front, and it needs to be more precise. Just year, date and name of publication at the end of, sometimes long essays, is not good enough, for a book that makes important scholarly contributions to Australian music history, and deserves a reception beyond the coffee table. “The Danger of John Lennon” makes early reference to “the very day that President Bush began to ‘soften up’ Iraq”, but these days even that statement does not help much in identifying the year, which turned out at article’s end to be 1991.

Malcolm Gillies is a Deputy Vice-Chancellor at The Australian National University, and a former Dean of Music at the University of Queensland. ■

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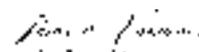
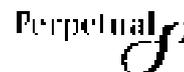
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