Behind the Text, Beyond the Sound:

Investigations into processes of creative musical interpretation

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Compact Discs of the three published recordings are attached, and additionally the author's performance of the Lutoslawski *Concerto*. The Tippett CD also includes the author's performance of the *Sonata No. 2*.

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Statement of Authorship

This work has never been submitted for a degree or diploma in any University, and to the best of my knowledge and belief it contains no material previously published or written by any other person except where due reference is made.

Similarly, to the best of my knowledge and belief, my role in collaborative undertakings or jointly authored publications cited or submitted here has been fully and accurately described.
Acknowledgement

The author acknowledges the assistance of his academic supervisors, Prof. Peter Roennfeldt and Prof. Huib Schippers, of Griffith University. A special thanks to Julie Craven for her counsel and encouragement.
Abbreviations

The following abbreviations will be found in the text.

ABC  Australian Broadcasting Corporation
BBC  British Broadcasting Corporation
RCM  Royal College of Music, London
QPAC Queensland Performing Arts Centre, Brisbane
QPAT Queensland Performing Arts Trust
QSO  Queensland Symphony Orchestra
In writing, I was aware of the issue of gender parity. I have avoided reiterations of "he or she" and "his or hers" in the interest of clarity and ease of reading. The resultant use of the masculine pronoun and possessive is intended to be gender-inclusive.
List of Approved Publications

1 The Australian Premiere performance of Lutoslawski’s *Piano Concerto*, (June 24th, 1989)

2 The Commonwealth Bank Tippett Festival, Brisbane, (March 24th - 31st, 1990)

3 The Griffith University Ensemble, (1992-3)

4 The Kawai Keyboard Series, (1998-)

5 Published recordings


   iii Moussorgsky: Pictures at an Exhibition/ Liszt: Two Legends/ Debussy: Masques, ...d’un cahier d’esquisses..., L’isle joyeuse. (2004)
Abstract

These writings offer a view of performance practice from the perspective of a musician with over forty years in the profession. Although instrumental teaching of piano at tertiary level in leading music schools in the UK and Australia has been a continuing activity, the papers will focus on issues arising from the author's consideration of his experience as a performing pianist and conductor.

Part 1, A Musician at Work in his Community, offers autoethnographic material relating to the author's early development, training, and subsequent career. Accounts of particular activities as pianist, conductor, and as instigator and director or curator of events are presented, together with assessments of their contribution to creating new knowledge through their content as research and their contemporary significance.

Part 2, A Musician Considers his View, explores the closely woven network of knowledge, belief, attitudes and values which inform my work as a performer. Consideration of the nature of music and its communicable properties are followed by an assessment of the role of music in today's consumer society. Then follows an extensive investigation of the interdependent yet commonly discrete functions of composer, performer and listener which combine to bring musical expression to vibrant life.
General Introduction

In accordance with Griffith University regulations, this submission “will take the form of a collection of original published works and an introductory statement.”

The listed works were submitted for consideration in my application of November 30th, 2005, and subsequently approved upon my admission as a higher degree candidate, on January 30th, 2006.

Copies of the three commercially published recordings in the list are attached. A further CD of my Australian first performance of the Lutoslawski Piano Concerto is also included.

Part 1 of the supporting statement, *A Musician at Work in his Community*, begins with an autoethnographic survey in which I discuss my background and history as a musician, with an emphasis on demonstrating how my training reflected the principal trends in the development of piano playing in Europe, and the particular influence on me of Cyril Smith and his teaching methodology. This survey concludes with an account of the conditions and opportunities I found in Australia following my early career in England.

I then proceed to give a detailed account of the circumstances and scope of each of the five approved publications and their critical reception. The account will demonstrate that these works have developed in response to skills acquired and opportunities offered and taken and further, that their quality and significance have been
acknowledged by expert judges. The “contemporary relevance of each publication and its original scholarly contribution to research” will then be addressed.

Regarding the requirement to provide “a thematic overview which converts the publications into an integrated work,” Part 1 furnishes evidence that my public activity as a musician and animateur has constituted such a unity. Part 2, *A Musician Considers his View*, further explores this issue, by identifying and reflecting on the skills, knowledge, values and beliefs that inform and sustain my work.

Part 2 comprises two papers. *Player and Instrument* is a personal view of the acquired techniques that contribute to the development of a pianist. *Experiencing Music* is a wide-ranging paper which first addresses the nature of music, its uses and status in society and the way its emotional aspect is understood. Then follows a consideration of the relationship between composer and performer. This starts with sections that deal with ways of interpreting musical texts and acquiring a sure sense of style, before moving on to investigate the functions of composer, listener and performer and their mutual dependency. The final section of the paper describes what a performer can do in the act of performance to convey the content of a work. Then, in a General Conclusion, I look back on my thesis in the context of a consideration of music and its practice in the early twenty-first century.

The development of my thoughts and values has arisen directly from my work as a musician. Consequently, the reader may take it that the ideas and opinions expressed here derive from my experience and practice.
Part 1

A Musician at Work in His Community
Research into music still largely conforms to traditional patterns. In the Australian context, for example, the scholar and writer Huib Schippers, writing in the *Dutch Journal for Music Theory* (Bleij and Cobussen, 2007) cites data from the Australian Research Council which shows that in the eight years up to 2006, music research continued to be dominated by conventional musicological investigation concentrating primarily on analysis and the social and historical components of music. He goes on to make the distinction between such “… research into practice on the one hand, which implies an outsider's perspective, and on the other practice as research, where a reflective artistic practice is explored as a process akin to experimental forms of research.” (p.35)

Because these writings derive from reflection on my life and activity as a professional musician, they necessarily posit an insider's view. So it is relevant that I explain how my work connects with my professional life story. Accordingly I now offer some assessment of my own history and pianistic training followed by observations about my early career in the UK and the new conditions and opportunities that presented themselves in Australia.

The reader will find much material in other parts of these writings, (particularly the second paper of Part 2, entitled *Experiencing Music*) which will set out and clarify my ideas about working as a practicing musician. Attention is drawn particularly to the detailed examination of the aspects I perceive as crucial in developing insight into the nature of music and preparing works for performance. The section *What Performers Do* seeks to investigate the means by which a performer may communicate the
content of his chosen repertoire to listeners and is based very much on my own experience and views.

**Early Life**

From an early age, I was drawn to music through my fascination with its sound and with the feelings it evoked. I can still recall the impact of the small number of 78 rpm recordings that I heard from around the age of five, in the home. Specifically, I remember Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto No. 6*, Benno Moiseiwitch playing Debussy's *Jardins sous la pluie* and Bruno Walter conducting Schubert's *Symphony No. 9*. All of these works I still seem to hear against the image of those early performances and I am fairly sure I can recall where the ends of each side of the records of the Symphony fell.

I was also fortunate in being taken to hear live performances early on. I particularly remember my first experience of opera, a performance of Humperdink's *Hansel and Gretel*, which I was taken to for my seventh birthday. I was intoxicated by the richness of the sight and sound of the experience. Importantly, my piano teacher, Dorothy Hesse, had founded a local concert club in 1944, which presented wonderful artists in the intimate surroundings of the restaurant on the top floor of the town’s department store. The venue was only used for eating at lunchtimes, and I can still conjure up the lingering aroma of overcooked vegetables that assailed me as I climbed the stairs in the evening. I grew to appreciate this odour as a quasi-Pavlovian trigger point for the music I was to hear. String quartets and pianists were featured prominently: the Amadeus Quartet made annual visits in the 1950s and gave highly characterised performances of the classical repertoire, and the Juilliard Quartet
thrilled me with the Bartok quartets. Among pianists were stunning recitals from the then young Aldo Ciccolini and Bela Siki. Wilhelm Kempff gave inspiring performances that touched me deeply with their lucidity and poetry while Annie Fischer’s performances stood out for their passionate engagement. Both these artists were at the height of their powers in this decade of the 1950s. These experiences fuelled my appetite for music and provided me with powerful examples of vivid communicators in music. I identified with the feelings that music evoked in me to the point of being physically energised or drained. Later, my reactions moderated, but recently, in a period when after nearly forty years I have ceased intensive teaching activity, something of that early freshness and intensity of impact have returned.

At home there was an upright piano that my mother occasionally played. She had come from a musical family but was not provided with tuition in music, unlike her older siblings, about which she bore some resentment. Her parents had left their native Ukraine, probably after the unrest of 1905 and my mother was the first of their five children to be born in England, in 1910. She was a woman of great energy and volatility. In contrast, my father did not come from a cultured background and had left school early at the start of the Great Depression of the 1930s but after the War, when, as a conscientious objector he had worked on the railways, he trained as a secondary school teacher. His presence at home was quiet, and he was to become increasingly withdrawn, but nevertheless he was a man of high integrity.

Although I had exhibited early fascination by music it was not until the age of five that I gravitated towards the household instrument. I believe this may have been occasioned by the onset of the realisation that my younger brother, at around eighteen months old, had started to exhibit signs of severe autism. At that time, (1947) little
was known about this condition, and theories then current suggested poor parenting as a cause. The effect on my parents was severe. I believe I turned to the piano as the means to open up a world where I could be myself and avoid the tension arising from the unrelenting worry and guilt that my parents were experiencing. This was a time of which I have very few memories, which may indicate that I needed to block out difficult circumstances. For example, it appears, from the evidence of two early preschool reports, that I had a severe stammer, but I have never recalled this.

My progress at the instrument was very good if not prodigious. I recall playing the first movement of the Haydn *Concerto in D* at ten years old and the whole of the Beethoven *Concerto No. 1* two years later. As I grew towards adolescence, I became increasingly disturbed by the conditions I had for working at the piano. The quality of the instrument was not the issue, since my parents had provided me with a serviceable Petrov grand piano. However, we lived in a small end-of-terrace house with a thin party wall to the adjacent property, and to make matters worse, the piano was in the only reception room in the house, which meant that the room functioned as both a practice room and a living area for the rest of the family. Consequently, I became increasingly frustrated at not having a private working area and always being overheard, especially by my mother whom I experienced as intrusive. In addition to these problems, relations with the neighbours, a retired couple, became fraught. I wonder now why my parents did not move house, since they were both in full-time employment, but at the time I did not question the state of affairs.

These conditions often made me distracted, and unable to work sufficiently calmly and with undivided focus. In turn, my attitude toward performance became affected. My teacher was able to provide frequent opportunities for playing to an audience, in
regular practice concerts and summer events in the local restaurant venue. In the days
when the London concert season closed down at the end of June for a summer recess,
she was able to hire the famous Wigmore Hall in London, for two student concerts
eyear. These opportunities were invaluable, yet on the occasions when I felt I
had not done my best, I experienced a sense of failure that was damaging. I was in
danger of perceiving the audience as hostile. Only after leaving home and having
worked consistently under better conditions did I gradually come to experience an
audience positively. I was assisted greatly in acquiring knowledge of my playing
once I started to record in the 1960s. As I recount in my observations on recording
(see p.49 et seq.), this process provided me with a virtual laboratory where I could
discover more about my personal artistry and how to project it effectively in my
chosen repertoire.

When I consider the works to which I have been drawn, I am aware of certain factors
that have influenced my choices. One determinant is the nature of my own technical
equipment. This displays clarity and quick reflexes rather than the greatest range of
attack and weight of tone. My technique is serviceable rather than carrying the electric
charge that we experience from performers who revel in virtuosic daring.

Quality and character of sound is also highly important and relates directly to the
sensuous feedback I experience between sound and touch in the act of playing.
Another factor is that of being drawn to music that seems to speak to my condition. I
respond to the dialectic displayed in the central European classical tradition, but also
evident in all of the music from the Western tradition which I admire. This attribute,
of music that conveys the tension between a wide-ranging intensity of feeling while
being also convincingly structured is one that evokes a deep response from me. I take
this as a metaphor for successful living itself. A third factor arises from this. Although I have never composed, apart from some student exercises, I have a strong fascination for the compositional process. I believe that as a performer my task in preparing a work for performance is to retrace the composer’s creative process. Furtwängler (1953) writes of the “outer shell of signs and forms which [the performer] must pierce if he would penetrate the work he wishes to perform.” (p.48).

In turn, I have been drawn to work in collaboration with living composers, both as pianist and conductor. The experience of working successfully on new music has increased my authority in music of the past. (see p.132 et seq.)

**Approaches to Training**

It is clear to me now as a mature musician, that at a very early age, I was naturally and accurately sensitised to the emotional content of music. In other words I had an ability to penetrate the substance of music even when I was not in a position to understand it. I also possessed a natural sense of style and indeed, recall my mother telling me that at three years old I could distinguish the difference between Haydn and Mozart and identify them accurately. However, I do not consider myself to have been outstandingly gifted. For example, I did not display a particularly ready co-ordination between ear and hand enabling me to reproduce readily at the piano music that I had heard and in fact, I have never developed perfect pitch. Also, my reflexes cannot have been naturally outstanding, since I recall always having to practice carefully and diligently before playing quick music up to time.

Although supportive, my parents were not professional musicians and I was very fortunate that after a brief period with my first teacher, I was referred to a fine pianist
and teacher, Dorothy Hesse with whom I studied for more than ten years from the age of six.

Hesse had been a student of the then highly influential British pedagogue, Tobias Matthay who gained fame and some notoriety through his books about piano playing which were expressed in an unfortunately pseudo-scientific jargon of his own invention. Nevertheless, his influence as a teacher and trainer of teachers on British piano-playing and performance was very strong. His preoccupations with the quality of sound and the way this is linked to the sensation of manipulating the key, was thus reflected in my early training. His essential belief was that all sound must be made with a definite musical end in view and that the keys of the piano are the means through which the performer's intentions are made manifest. The final section of Matthay's "The Visible and Invisible in Piano-playing" (1932) is in the form of an Epitome, complete in itself and designed for separate publication. The first statements (1982) are unequivocal:

The sole purpose of Technique should be to express Music. It is useless therefore to practise Technique as such.

While trying to gain this technical equipment to express music you must unremittingly give close attention to Music itself. Not to do this is self-defeating and harmful (3E)

In holding this view, Matthay appears to ally himself with the tradition exemplified by Chopin in his teaching, as distinct from the highly athletic regime which Liszt adopted when he raised his levels of virtuosity to unsurpassed heights.

At this point, it is worth clarifying the pianistic state-of-affairs in the early 1830s:
Chopin’s most influential pupil, Karol Mikuli, who was responsible for the earliest authoritative edition of the composer’s works, wrote (quoted in Eigeldinger (2002) that Chopin “...never tired of inculcating that the appropriate exercises are not merely mechanical but claim the intelligence and entire will of the pupil”. (p.27)

But he also provided insight into Liszt’s working practices: “In complete opposition to Chopin, Liszt maintained that the fingers should be strengthened by working on a heavy, resistant touch, continually repeating the required exercises until one is completely exhausted and incapable of going on.” (ibid.)

Such was the regime that Liszt set for himself in 1832 when, under the shattering influence of hearing Paganini, he set about to systematically invent the equivalent extreme virtuosity for the piano that the Italian had for the violin. Far from paying attention to every note and phrase, Liszt would actually read literature while undertaking four to five hours of daily pianistic exercise in order to render highly complex patterns, totally automatic. In Piano Notes (2002:39), Rosen recalls being told by his teacher Moritz Rosenthal (who studied with Liszt from 1878) that, even late in life, Liszt was advising his students to read during practice.

The young pianist is likely to have been exposed to elements of both of the above approaches in his early training. Regardless of the emphasis, a secure and comprehensive technical foundation needs to be laid by the mid-teens. Pianistic equipment must be equal to the demands of an expanding understanding, growing imagination, ambition and capacity for professional success. The early training I had received was skilful and in particular musically enlightened. It enabled me to achieve some encouraging success, including a concerto appearance with the National Youth
Orchestra of Great Britain and a prize in a major national piano competition.

However, it was not until I was eighteen that I received a training which was systematic and rigorous when I commenced my studies with Cyril Smith at the Royal College of Music.

This outstanding virtuoso had an all too short career as a soloist. Following his London debut with the Brahms Concerto No. 2, at the age of 20, he was in demand particularly as a concerto soloist. His activity as a solo virtuoso was interrupted by the Second World War andtragically came to an early end in 1956, at a time when his international career was developing. He suffered a severe stroke, in the USSR, which permanently incapacitated his left side. His recorded legacy is small, but includes model performances of the Rachmaninoff Concerto Nos. 2 and 3 and Paganini Rhapsody. These interpretations were prepared and honed at a time when far fewer pianists were willing and able to present themselves in the extreme challenges represented by the Rachmaninoff No.3 and Brahms No.2 concertos in particular. Smith was virtually alone among British pianists from the 1930s onwards to be regularly heard in these works. For him, this achievement was possible only through the most stringent and intensive practice methods and indeed, his insistence on putting himself through these severely demanding routines may well have contributed to the breakdown of his health.

A model for Smith’s working methods was no doubt, Alfred Cortot, who in his edition of the Chopin Etudes precedes each one with preliminary exercises. However, as the British pianist and author, Peter Hill (a former pupil of Smith) recalls, (in Rink 2002),

Smith, who in his own playing was a master of Rachmaninoff concertos and
similar virtuoso repertoire, went further. He advocated a ferocious regime whereby as well as approaching the difficulty in stages (as Cortot did) one also exaggerated the problem, stretching the level of skill beyond what was called for. To take a simple example: if the problem was keyboard ‘geography’ – securely finding the right notes – the answer was to learn to play the passage with equal facility ‘blind’ without using the eyesight to direct the hands. (p.140).

By way of confirmation, I remember him telling me that in preparations for the Rachmaninoff Concerto No.3, he made himself play the big first movement cadenza, with its full chordal writing featuring extreme leaps at full speed, until he achieved total accuracy with his eyes shut.

It was highly unusual for a pianist at that time to come from a working class background, and this may well have contributed toward his fierce determination and attention to the craft of piano playing. I was fortunate that when I came to study with him he had become intensively engaged in teaching and that he approached this work with characteristic thoroughness and highest professionalism.

What he taught in essence was a working method where complementary approaches would provide the structure for building a level of security that would be proof against the effects of the pressures associated with public performance. At its simplest this might be on the not very original level of balancing time spent practicing at slow and fast tempi, or with hands separately and together. But his precepts on the relative emphasis between pure and applied technique was new for me. In my previous training, the main approach to acquire my technique had been through work arising directly from the music being studied. Now I was invited to consider the role of
intricate exercises in building up skill, strength and reliability. As discussed earlier, we see the need to treat piano playing as an athletic activity in the way that Liszt did in his Paganini-inspired quest to play the piano as well as it could possibly be played.

Smith had great insight into how the pathways from the brain to the muscles were linked to listening and a fine sense of keyboard geography. An intricate passage, such as the right-hand of the 15th variation of the Rachmaninoff *Paganini Rhapsody* would be played entirely without the obvious guidance system of the fingering by practising with only one finger. This developed the linkage between what the ear expected to hear, and the layout of the keys. Transposing the passage into another key would focus attention exclusively on the ear as guidance system. The passage would then be practised with the chosen fingering, but on the lid of the piano. Subsequently, it could be played normally but ‘blind’. Such work would of itself promote the memorisation of passages on an aural and physical level. Yet further work, away from the instrument, would develop the ability to hear the passage internally in an aural equivalent of visualisation.

Developing an acute sense of the area and width of the keyboard was ingeniously developed by moving one or another of a series of small objects, (usually chosen from Cyril’s smoking equipment) on command, to stimulate the memory of where one object was in relation to its neighbours. Thus: “move the matchbox to just beyond the cigarette pack” and “remember where you left the lighter? Move it to the left of the cigarettes”. Needless to say, this would be done with eyes shut and at increasing speeds. It was of particular value in developing the perception of distance covered in extreme shifts at fast tempi.
The choice of the most suitable fingerings was coupled with great attentiveness in adhering strictly to them, particularly in the early stages of learning a new work. All in all, the regime was valuable in training the reflexes and obtaining very close coordination between the mechanical aspects of playing and refined listening.

The ultimate manifestation of Smith's training that I took many years to fully implement was that of knowing when and how to willingly abandon these highly rationalised techniques of work. The process of practice which lays such emphasis on being fully conscious of detailed precision and fail-safe security, can prove treacherous in the performance context. Here, the task is to let go of these aspects of over-conscious thought and control and simply let the music happen. This state of mindlessness can be thought of as letting the music pass through one's being as light is refracted through a prism. The constitution of each individual will ensure that something unique will happen if the talent, vision, imagination and insight is present. The sensation for the performer, on occasions where preparation is thorough and has included sufficient practice in performing the repertoire, as distinct from being able to play it well in the studio, is one of feeling carefree and being carried along by the music as much as he might be by the waves and wind if he was a skilled sailor. It is in this state that creativity will flourish. Within the prepared structure of how the performer has determined the piece will go, moments of blessed intuition come unbidden in the act of communicating the sound to the listener or the microphone.

New Challenges and Opportunities

I now turn to consider the effect of my decision to live and work in Australia, following the establishment of an already viable career in the UK.
My first visit to Australia was a two-month period in 1981, as Visiting Artist at the Elder Conservatorium within the University of Adelaide. I experienced a stimulating time, where the intensity of professional activity was enhanced by the totally new living environment, with its feeling of space and clarity of light. During this period I flew to Brisbane for just 24 hours, to give a lunchtime recital and piano class. I was surprised when asked if I had considered applying for the vacant position in piano at the Queensland Conservatorium, at that time a College of Advanced Education. I knew nothing of this vacancy, and had not come to Australia in search of a new life. But I was intrigued and agreed to be considered for the appointment. A few days later, back in Adelaide, came the offer to take up the position in Brisbane. I paid another visit there with my family, and decided that the opportunity was too good to miss.

The decision to move was made a good deal easier by the willingness of the Royal College of Music to freeze my position as professor in piano and co-director of its Twentieth Century Ensemble during a three-year leave. However, it took not much more than a year to convince me that I was thriving professionally and artistically in a way that was superior to my existence in England.

Although employment conditions at the RCM and the other leading tertiary music-schools had improved to the point where I and other colleagues were finally offered tenured salaried positions in 1981, the levels of appointment were set at the levels of activity worked over the three preceding years. For me, this equated to a 70% fractional position, still not a level where I could make enough to liberate me from the freelance work which, in common with many colleagues, I had to undertake in order to put food on the table and a roof over the heads of my young family. I did indeed
have a fair amount of performance work as a pianist, both in concert and on BBC radio. But the amount earned is never in line with the quantity of unpaid time that must be spent in personal practice. Regular music examining and public adjudication provided useful and reliable employment, although not fulfilling artistically. I had developed a thriving private teaching practice, which was much more involving, since I had always loved teaching and was attracting some highly interesting and gifted students. The problem was that I found myself too fragmented, running around in pursuit of accumulating a viable livelihood, and becoming less able to spend time and energy at the piano. The Conservatorium position presented itself at a point in my life when I was inclined to respond positively to the chance to break free from my established pattern of professional activities.

The Brisbane of 1982 was just at the point of starting its transformation from a big, steamy ramshackle country town to the dazzling glass and concrete city of today. The political repression of the time was palpable, yet paradoxically it often seemed to contribute to the grit which spurred on the development of pearls in the form of radical young people of precious idealism, huge energy, and commitment. Particularly, there was a string quartet of four wonderfully gifted young musicians: John Rodgers, Warwick Adeney, Brett Dean and John Napier, with whom I was delighted to play Quintets. However, the level of talent and attainment among the student pianists at that time, was nothing like as rich as in London.

Having been appointed for my first period as Head of Keyboard, I was in a position to be able to improve standards and assist in introducing new areas of training through the use of curriculum development. It was heartening to witness these effects. This was something quite new in my experience. The richness of talent and tradition in the
London scene made for attitudes which were held with pride, but not without attendant inflexibility. In the Brisbane context, processes could be shaped and organised. There was a willingness to pursue new paths at a time when the Conservatorium was expanding at probably the fastest rate in its history. Between 1977 and 1987, the full-time staff almost doubled as student numbers climbed by over 60%. Newcomers such as myself were arriving from many parts of the world, as well as from Australia. My colleagues were a more cosmopolitan group than I had known at the RCM, and they brought a stimulating richness and diversity of experience with them.

Importantly, the position provided conditions in which I had sufficient time and energy to spend on my own development as a performer in Australia, and to respond to and serve the perceived needs of my local community. Indeed, this element of service, now formally recognised by the university sector, was already an implicit component of the appointment. In London, the concert-going public rarely looks to the Colleges for its needs, such is the richness of the musical offerings in the many venues of the city. Professional activity at the RCM was confined almost entirely to the functions of teaching and examining. In Brisbane there was, and remains, an audience for the concerts and events promoted by the Conservatorium. This interface with a lay public continues to be of fundamental importance and not only in nourishing the listeners who are the essential receivers of the performer's art and skill. Providing new experiences in performing for the people of his community reminds the professional that he is not only concerned with discourse among his peers or the pedagogic aspects of the training processes. His business is to move and challenge people, while speaking to their condition.
A Survey of the Publications for Consideration

What follows is a detailed exposition of the publications presented for consideration.

The final section will survey the ways in which new knowledge was created in the context of the contemporary relevance of the projects.

The Australian Premiere of Lutoslawski's Piano Concerto

In 1987, the Conservatorium was invited to collaborate with the first of two Musica Nova Festivals that the ABC mounted in collaboration with the Queensland Performing Arts Trust (QPAT), under the artistic direction of Anthony Fogg and Richard Mills. The leading visitor was the great Polish composer Witold Lutoslawski, of whom I already had happy memories following performing for him in London. In Brisbane, I organised a chamber concert of his works, which included the first Australian performance of his Partita for violin and piano, by Graeme Jennings and Max Olding. (Graeme was later to become second violin in the UK Arditti Quartet, the leading ensemble in new music for string quartet.) I had the unusual opportunity to spend time with the composer during his time in Brisbane, since I had also prepared the Queensland Philharmonic Orchestra for his performance of the Preludes and Fugue for 13 Solo Strings and attended his final rehearsal and performance. My acquaintance with the work dated from 1975 when I had conducted it for him in London, with the students of the RCM.

Within the Festival, which ran from August 9th to 14th, I also contributed a solo recital of works by Australian composers Nigel Butterley, Roger Smalley and Ross Edwards.
I was touched that Lutoslawski found the time to attend, and to praise it generously. Despite so much public activity over only one week in Brisbane, during which time he also prepared and conducted a wonderful programme of four major works with the QSO, he had mentioned that he was also spending time on completing the orchestration of his newest work, the Piano Concerto. Naturally I expressed interest in it and looked forward to getting to know it. But it was a thrilling surprise to find that Lutoslawski had recommended to Anthony Fogg at the ABC that I be given the opportunity to play the first Australian performance of the piece. This was scheduled for June 24th 1989 at Sydney Town Hall, with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra conducted by Ronald Zollman, only ten months after its world premiere in August 1988 at the Salzburg Festival by its dedicatee, Krystian Zimerman, with the composer conducting.

The preparation of a major new work of such provenance and quality was a challenge but also a joy. Elsewhere in these writings will be found my views about the preparation of musical works, in particular the importance of discovering pieces on their own terms. The fact that at the time of preparation I was obliged to start work from a facsimile of the composer’s handwritten score seemed to heighten the sense of making contact with a personal utterance, much as a we may find that a written letter of personal content seems to convey so much more than a printed one. Even when the printed score became available, (as ever, in the beautiful calligraphy of his devoted wife, Danuta) I was content to use the original to which I had become accustomed. The first commercial recording, by Krystian Zimerman with the composer conducting, was not to be made until the end of 1989, so I was essentially preparing a totally new work, with limited reference points.
I could discern that the concerto was highly characteristic of other major works of Lutoslawski, in that it began with music which was relatively diffuse, even capricious, and that as the work unfolded it appeared to come increasingly into focus, with the last of the four movements clearly the most rigorously organised, in allusion to the baroque form of the Chaconne, where the structure is based on reiterations of a harmonic or linear progression upon which an elaborate sequence of variations is built. The composer (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 1989) wrote of this movement that

This theme, repeated many times, provides only one layer of the musical discourse. Against this background the piano each time presents another episode. These two layers operate in the sense of the ‘chain-form’, i.e., the beginnings and endings of the piano episodes do not correspond with the beginnings and endings of the theme. They come together only once, towards the end of the work.

Though the harmonic language is not tonal, the textures often refer to romantic piano writing, particularly the use of octaves and chords. In this way aspects of balance between piano and orchestra were addressed, but such textures and the gestures associated with them also appeared to lend a sense of kinship with great predecessors of the genre. My impressions of the work at the time were expressed in a note I provided for the published concert programme. (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 1989):

Lutoslawski’s Piano Concerto is a remarkable work and it has been a deeply enriching experience to explore its expressive potential in these early months of its life. It is unusual among piano concertos of this century in bearing the stamp of a personal utterance; there is nothing here of a ‘display’ concerto. Although the
writing is always demanding it is totally idiomatic, transparent in texture and non­percussive with much cantabile. In the composer's words: 'I wanted to write something that would be the consequence of that tradition [the epoch of Chopin, Liszt and Brahms], something that had nothing to do with the pianism of the avant­garde composers of the 1950s'. The result may well be the finest addition to the repertoire since Bartok's Third Concerto. Yet the work is in no way neo-Romantic – there is an absence of indulgence and heroics. Indeed in the opening movement the soloist is given a shifting and indecisive role, moving to new ideas unpredictably. It leads to a headlong and nightmarish movement of great brilliance and energy. The reference point for the subsequent slow movement might almost be the Larghetto of Chopin's F minor Concerto, but Lutoslawski's nocturne is austere, avoiding a romantic glow to the texture in favour of a leaner spareness. The middle section is almost explicitly dramatic in its opposed gestures and painful climax, (the only point of orchestral prominence). The finale provides the counterbalance to the first – as concentrated and determined as the other had been wayward and capricious.

Knowing that rehearsal time would be limited to a two-hour session on the day prior to the performance, and not much more than a run-through on the day, I determined to prepare the score as if I was also to conduct it. I judged it important that I be acquainted in detail with the beating patterns that my conductor would be likely to use. I also insisted that before meeting the orchestra, he and I had a thorough rehearsal together where we could 'perform' the work as a duo for pianist and conductor. Although the piece was of course new to the orchestra, its splendid quality as well as Lutoslawski's practicality, ensured a highly concentrated experience within a task which was achievable in the time available.
The critical reaction to the performance was positive if guarded. It seems to me unrealistic that a critic be expected to write with authority on a new and unknown work based on hearing no more than the performance and perhaps the final rehearsal, supplemented by some study of the score, which was not however easily available in Australia at the time. In The Sydney Morning Herald, Peter McCallum wrote that,

Although bristling with orchestral colour and delightfully whimsical brilliance, the four-movements-in-one structure inhibited the development of the overall shape, sometimes giving the impression of a lack of content in climactic moments. For a composer with such an imagination for orchestral texture, the piano part, played with adroit efficiency by Stephen Savage, seemed a little lacklustre. (June 26, 1989)

The Australian (Laurie Strachan) wrote of a work which,

...as was pointed out in an introductory note by soloist Stephen Savage, seems to take up the torch laid down by Bartok in his three matchless concertos; there is the same rhythmic elan and the same harmonic pungency though the musical language used is, naturally, quite different. Certainly, Savage's clearly articulated performance made a good case for his argument. (June 26, 1989)

Since its early days, Lutoslawski's Concerto has indeed made its way in the repertoire and become increasingly regarded as the outstanding work that I originally judged it to be. There have been five CD recordings, with another, by the compelling Norwegian pianist, Leif Ove Andsnes, due for release in 2008. He is on record in regarding the Lutoslawski as "the great piano concerto from the second half of the twentieth century". (source: The New York Times, 14 January, 2002.) There have
been many public performances throughout the world.

The Commonwealth Bank Tippett Festival
Brisbane, March 24th – 31st 1990

This event came about through a fortunate convergence of circumstances and people. The result was, and remains, the most extensive survey of the work of a living composer to have been held in Australia. A survey of the factors that made it possible is an appropriate starting point.

My own association with Michael Tippett dated from 1965. As a student at the RCM, I was invited to perform the then new Sonata No. 2 in a concert celebrating his 60th birthday. I had the opportunity to work on the piece with him prior to the event. It will be recounted elsewhere in these writings that the encounter was decisive in establishing my artistic identity as a performer. When Tippett returned once more to the RCM for 75th birthday celebrations in 1980, I was a piano professor there, playing the then complete collection of three piano sonatas for him.

Some time after I came to Brisbane, Tippett was due to visit Australia, for the 1984 Adelaide Festival. A late reorganisation there, involving a new artistic director being appointed, left Tippett with a gap in his schedule. I recommended to the Conservatorium’s Director, Roy Wales that we invite him to Brisbane. The result was that I had the opportunity to devise a three-concert celebration (March 15 to 18) which included Tippett conducting his Concerto for Double String Orchestra with the Conservatorium’s Chamber Orchestra, and selections from his works for piano, and for voice, together with carefully chosen works by Purcell, Beethoven, Bartok and
Stravinsky. The success of this venture led to Tippett’s London publishers, Schott, approaching us when they began to organise his major tour of America, Australia and New Zealand for 1990.

At the time this opportunity arose, the Conservatorium’s Director was Anthony Camden. He had arrived in 1988 after a distinguished career as an oboist and a highly influential manager in England. As Chairman of the London Symphony from 1975 to 1987, he had put the Orchestra’s future on a secure footing following a difficult period. He brought an unusual perspective to the role of Director. He was a talented entrepreneur who had a highly developed ability to persuade influential people in business and government. He was instrumental in securing the personal backing of the new Queensland state premier Wayne Goss for the Brisbane Biennial International Music Festival (now known as the Queensland Music Festival) which started in 1991, and steered the campaign for the new Conservatorium building to be sited on Brisbane’s South Bank. His time as Director (1988 to 1993) saw notable artistic development and excitement. Once he was convinced that a proposed plan had the potential to generate an impact, he backed it to the hilt. His support for the idea of a major Tippett Festival was decisive, as he went about acquiring sponsorship, notably from the Commonwealth Bank and the British Council.

The other key figure in Brisbane at that time was the composer and conductor, Richard Mills. In his capacity as artistic director of the Musica Nova festivals of 1987 and 1990 and as ABC artist in residence (1989) and artistic consultant to the Queensland Symphony Orchestra (1991-94), he proved decisive in leading the development of local public taste at the time. Although he had opportunity to promote himself and his works, he was admirably inclusive in promoting other composers and
performers and in making liaisons with other Brisbane performing arts organisations. His co-operation with the Festival secured the services of the QSO who brought the Festival to its close with the first Australian performance of Tippett’s *Symphony No. 3* under Mills’ expert and decisive direction.

So it was that the Festival came into being in the city that had experienced the excitement of the six-month long 1988 World Expo not long before. This event had attracted the greatest ever influx of international and Australian visitors to Brisbane. It was a time when Brisbane people were taken out of themselves, and there was a palpable vitality in the air throughout the whole period. 1988 was the year that Brisbane took its most decisive step away from its ‘big country town’ image and perception of itself. There was a receptivity for manifestations of the new and the innovative. In music, the visit of Messiaen during the 1988 celebrations, for performances of his works, notably *Des Canyons aux Etoiles* and also for Gillian Weir’s traversal of his entire works for organ, stands out. The 60th birthday celebration for Peter Sculthorpe brought the composer to the Conservatorium for a memorable concert in 1989. The residencies of H.K. Gruber and Lutoslawski for the 1987 Musica Nova Festival and of John Corigliano, Sofia Gubaidulina, Kurt Schwertsik and David del Tredici in the second Festival of 1990 were of real importance, and not only for the public. These visits provided unusual stimulus for Brisbane musicians to function in a creative capacity. Working towards the successful realisation of often challenging scores, aided and encouraged by their creators, gave the musicians a huge lift. Here were tasks that banished any sense of the routine, and the experience often reconnected them with the spirit of idealism that had initially impelled them into the profession. For the students who had the chance to work and have contact with Peter Sculthorpe, Tippett and David del Tredici in
1989 and 1990, as with Lutoslawski in 1987, moments occurred which were decisive and of significance for their subsequent lives.

I acted as artistic director of the Festival. In planning it, I wished to draw on the Conservatorium’s performers, both staff and students, and present the widest possible range of Tippett’s music within the context of other music which had influenced him or which he was close to. My introduction in the Festival brochure read in part:

This Festival is the centrepiece of Tippett’s 1990 Australasian tour in his 85th year, undoubtedly reflecting the high reputation and distinction of the musicians and resources now to be found in Brisbane especially within the Conservatorium of Music and the Queensland Symphony Orchestra. We are happy that the Australian String Quartet and Gerald English will be giving a national dimension to this celebration of England’s greatest living composer. We look forward to visitors from other centres and states joining us to experience the radiant, life-enhancing achievement that is Sir Michael’s abiding gift to us.

The Festival, including two Australian premieres, is built around fourteen major works, written over fifty years of an amazingly creative life. Other works to be performed are either by composers having a special meaning for Tippett, or represent the America that has so stimulated him since the 1960s. Mahler’s romantic wanderer of the Songs of a Wayfarer acts as striking foil for Tippett’s protagonist, distinctly of our own time, in his Songs for Dov ...

The programmes are truly festive in setting familiar things in a new and exciting context with the unique presence and participation of Sir Michael as their special ingredient.

All events in the Tippett Festival were held in the Basil Jones Theatre of the
Conservatorium, (then in its home at Gardens Point, adjacent to the City Botanical Gardens), except the final concert, in the Concert Hall of the Queensland Performing Arts Complex. Full details of the programmes appear as Appendix A.

An essential element of the planning was to fully incorporate the students of the day and introduce them to Tippett’s complex yet compelling world, hence the involvement of the Conservatorium’s orchestras and student participation in the otherwise professional QCM Sinfonietta formed for the occasion. Clare Gormley, Dean Wilmington, Tony Vandermeer and Fiona Harris all seized their opportunities to feature in prominent roles. It was gratifying to have the participation of two leading singers with close connections to Tippett. Margreta Elkins had created the role of Helen of Troy in his second opera *King Priam*, and Gerald English had given the first performance of *Songs for Dov*.

The involvement of the ABC included Tippett’s discussion of his operas, as a contribution to the series *The Great Operas*, which explored aspects of performance and creativity in the genre. The ABC also broadcast three of the concerts, (the first and the final two), which gave an appropriate national outreach to the event as a whole. Unusual interest from across the country was a notable feature, with extensive press coverage. The local *Courier Mail* wrote of the Festival as “a landmark in Australia’s musical development” (March 28th, 1990) while The correspondent of *The Sydney Morning Herald* began his piece of the same date:

Move over cities of the south! This week the Australian centre of musical gravity is Brisbane. Here is the Tippett Festival of eight concerts and various related activities, including a foyer exhibition, and it is being held, mostly at the Queensland Conservatorium in the presence of the composer who carries his 85
years with a quite astonishing physical vitality and verbal luminosity.

In a later piece, (March 30th 1990) the writer commented truly that the composer's “presence at the festival has been a source of joy, help and inspiration never of intimidation or awe”.

The Festival brought forth tributes to the many outstanding performances, but above all they expressed the realisation that something special had been happening. The *Australian Jewish Times* wrote about the composer, “in Brisbane for a glorious Tippett Festival, arranged by the Queensland Conservatorium of Music...the standard was high and the fact that the composer attended...all [concerts], applauding the performers, graciously acknowledging his own applause, gave this rain-soaked festival (what happened to sunny Queensland?) a rare and memorable air of distinction” (April 6th 1990). The UK *Musical Times* carried a full report of the Festival in their June 1990 number, commenting that it “will have done much to establish Tippett's status in Australia”.

**The Griffith University Ensemble**

Activity in the promotion and performance of new music has been a particular feature of my work. I have always welcomed opportunities to lead audiences towards the unfamiliar, as well as to provide responsive interpretations of established repertoire. Further, artistic interactions with composers have provided me with highly enriching experiences that I associate with the growth of my musical perception and understanding.
My work as a teacher has provided the means to communicate my commitment to rising generations of professional musicians. It has been a particular joy to introduce gifted young pianists to the music of their time, which has assisted them to find their voice as performers. But it has been in the sphere of my activity as a director and conductor of student ensembles that I have had most outreach. Although I never formally studied conducting in my student days, I had the good fortune to become involved with coaching, and later, conducting the Twentieth Century Ensemble at the RCM, from 1968 when I had been appointed to the piano teaching staff. I normally shared programmes with its co-director, Edwin Roxburgh. We presented three concerts a year. So it was that I developed an extensive repertoire of modern music representative of the wide variety of the styles and musical language characteristic of the last century, including major works of Berg, Schoenberg, Webern, Messiaen, Lutoslawski, Stravinsky, Berio, Maderna, Ligeti and the first-ever student performance of Stockhausen’s *Gruppen*, as well as pieces by student composers.

When I came to Brisbane, Richard Mills was active at the Conservatorium and ran the Contemporary Music Ensemble, but after 1985 I became responsible for the group. In addition to twentieth-century classics, we presented a good deal of Australian music including Brophy (*Scintille, New Blood*), Cronin (*House Songs*), Edwards (*Laikan*), Sculthorpe (*Mangrove, Irkanda IV*), Smalley (*Strung Out*), and Wesley-Smith (*Snark Hunting*). The Ensemble gave the first performance of Raffaele Marcellino's *Canticle of St. Francis* in a programme which also included the *Laborintus II* by Berio.

Following the success of the Tippett Festival of 1990, in which I had conducted his *Songs for Dov* and Mahler's *Songs of a Wayfarer* with an ensemble mostly made up of QCM staff, I was pleased when Anthony Camden offered assistance for me to work
on my conducting for a short intensive period. His suggestion was that I go to the UK conductor and composer Elgar Howarth, particularly well known for his direction of many important works by Birtwistle and Ligeti who had entrusted major premieres to him. In May and June 1991, I studied with Howarth in London. He taught me a great deal about the successful choreography of conducting by drawing my attention to the effect of the conductor's gestures on the players in front of him. He emphasised the importance of clarity above all, in showing up-beats, and in being aware of the space within which the pattern of beats and gestures takes place. He also gave much invaluable advice on how to organise rehearsal time.

When I resumed conducting my group, I found that I had gained a greater technical control and freedom. The new sensation was rather like that of driving and steering a responsive vehicle. There was no feeling of having to push or pull the group along. I found that even after a three-hour rehearsal, I had no aches in my shoulders and my lower back was also quite free. Further, I could distance myself from the sound of the group and hear with greater clarity.

For some time from before 1990, I had cherished the ambition to create a professional ensemble in Australia that would have similar scope to leading international new-music groups such as the Ensemble Intercontemporaine in Paris, the London Sinfonietta, and the Ensemble Modern in Frankfurt. The size and disposition of these groups reflected the reality of developments in twentieth-century music. The first works to use such an ensemble, for example, Schoenberg's *Chamber Symphony, Op. 9*, were of around 15 woodwind and brass and string players, to which piano, percussion and harp became standard additions. While works were still being written for the traditional symphony orchestra, new genres were being created for such ensembles of
solo players. Composers could therefore write virtuosic music which explored new territory in terms of its instrumental and musical demands and which could be rehearsed and played in the spirit of chamber-music, by committed performers. These composers also became freed from the constraints of orchestral managements who were either unsympathetic to the avant garde or apprehensive about the effect of programming new music on their audiences and finances.

In Australia, the lack of such an ensemble meant that composers did not have the opportunity to write for forces relatively usual in Europe and America. Accordingly, there was a dearth of repertoire which could be exported, and it was more difficult for composers to make their reputations in the wider world. Given the progressive spirit which Brisbane was experiencing in the period from 1987, the time seemed right to embark on the creation of a new music ensemble which could present examples of the most characteristic and significant music of the day, in the context of a major emphasis on Australian music.

In 1991, the Conservatorium became amalgamated with Griffith University. In the newly created role of Provost and Director, Professor Camden backed my initiative, and the University responded with a foundation grant of $23,000 to create a group, to be called the Griffith University Ensemble.

The scope and ambition of the Ensemble may be expressed by quoting from the introduction I wrote, as Artistic Administrator, for the 1992 Inaugural Series brochure:

The Griffith University Ensemble is the result of the University Council's positive response to our proposal that a performing group be established which has the

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capacity to fulfill a unique role in musical life not only here in Brisbane but right across the country.

Drawing from the wealth of instrumental artistry to be found within the Queensland Conservatorium of Music faculty and Queensland's two major orchestras, we will have the potential to present a wide repertoire from the diverse instrumental combinations so characteristic of this century's music.

Our aim is to present concerts of the most distinctive voices of our time with a particular emphasis on Australian music. Indeed, this aspect predominates in our first season, as we begin by reflecting our particular origin, time and place. In future seasons the Ensemble will show its commitment to established classics which are not so often experienced in live performances.

We are honoured that Australia's most renowned composer, Peter Sculthorpe has responded to an invitation to become our Patron, and we look forward to greeting our three 1992 composer guests. They will participate fully in all performances, being on hand in rehearsals and by spending time with our students. In each event they will introduce their music, a feature which will greatly enhance the concert experience for listeners.

There was clearly a need to be very disciplined about the use of the University grant. The priority was to provide adequate payment to the performing musicians. Ensemble members who were salaried staff of the Conservatorium had their involvement included in their work schedule, as did I as conductor, but none of us received any remission from our duties. My additional administrative workload was absorbing, if intense and time-consuming. Fortunately, some office assistance was forthcoming.
I was particularly concerned that the effort of preparing new and complex scores should be rewarded by having performances heard by as wide an audience as possible. Accordingly, there was little inclination to expend resources on advertising events which would attract a small specialist audience, at least initially. The preferred outcome was for the concerts to be recorded for later transmission on the ABC FM radio network. Eventually, all three of the 1992 series were indeed transmitted, reaching the entire country.

In the first season, three composers were invited. Firstly, Richard Meale came for a 60th birthday celebration, attending rehearsals, and appearing in a public colloquium which provided fascinating background to his work and beliefs. He also introduced the May 15th concert of four major pieces, including a performance of a rare early piano work, *Orenda* (1959) which he played himself. The Australian Quartet, in residence at the time, provided his *Quartet No. 2* while the Ensemble made its debut in his 1971 *Incredible Floridas*, a major work of outstanding imagination and sophistication. Meale’s reaction was unequivocal. In his letter to me of 27 May 1992 he wrote of his impressions of the Ensemble:

> They are a stunning group indeed. Individually they play with great presence and character, whilst their sense of ensemble is already that of a group of long standing. They are going to be of considerable importance to music in Australia, not forgetting the boon they will be to music in Brisbane. With your outstanding assistance as conductor, the ensemble gave such a powerful performance of *Incredible Floridas* that I will remember it with great relish.

The press reaction too, was hearteningly positive. In *The Australian* (19 May 1992), Patricia Kelly wrote that,
...serious music lovers should not miss this project, a rare opportunity to make
contact with some of Australia's major musical voices, to see them in action and
hear them speak about their music, as Meale did at the first concert in his frank,
unassuming way. Informal as a Don Burrows jazz session, it became the
manifestation of one of the country's most mystical musical minds, an impact that
could not have been achieved simply by performing Meale's music.

In the *Brisbane Revue* (21 May 1992) Richard Mills wrote:

The newly formed Griffith ensemble under the distinguished direction of Stephen
Savage made their impressive debut with a performance of *Incredible Floridas*.
The foundation of this ensemble is an important initiative for Australian music and
their meticulous negotiation of this difficult and un forgiving score was an object
lesson in the performance of contemporary music... The University is to be
congratulated for taking the bold artistic decision to establish this fine ensemble in
these sombre economic times. The commitment to excellence in both programming
and performance, so evident in this initial appearance, will more than justify the
group's inception. Their birth is a cause for rejoicing.

In the following month, Roger Smalley was guest composer. An outstanding pianist
himself, he prepared and took part in a fine performance of his *Ceremony II* with the
Ensemble. He also played piano works by John White, Stockhausen, and himself (the
*Barcarolle*) while I performed his *Variations on a Theme of Chopin* which I was
shortly afterwards scheduled to play for the BBC in London. The Ensemble was
joined by tenor Gregory Massingham for Stephen Cronin's *House Songs*, which I
conducted.
Smalley had a productive two weeks in Brisbane, appearing with the Queensland Symphony in his Piano Concerto No. 1, and in open conversation with composers Stephen Cronin and Gerard Brophy. I had also been preparing my student Contemporary Music Ensemble in two further Smalley works which he then rehearsed and performed with them (Ten Scriabin Poems and Strung Out). The concept of a visiting composer having a considerable impact and generating artistic energy, was becoming realised.

Again, reactions were highly favorable. Smalley wrote (13 June 1992) to say

This was the first time I had actually performed in Ceremony II, and I found out at first hand how tricky it is! The players were very co-operative and the result was one of the best performances it has had... Hopefully there will be another chance in the future for me to work with the ensemble ....

Cronin wrote (undated),

to thank you for the Ensemble's performance of House Songs. I was pleased, not only that the work could be played again so soon after the Adelaide Festival premiere, but that it could be performed here in Brisbane by such a terrific ensemble.

Once again, The Australian covered the concert. On 8 June, 1992, Patricia Kelly wrote:

The highlight ...was House Songs, Stephen Cronin's award-winning song cycle, a setting of verses by New York poet Leon Waller composed for tenor Gregory Massingham. It was a perfect match, not just between singer and the image-laden text which Massingham vocalised and interpreted to perfection, but between the
soloist and instrumental ensemble in realising this vivid imagery.

For the final concert, on September 24th, we welcomed Vincent Plush. At the time he was based in the USA, where he actively championed Australian music. He had also introduced a wealth of American composers and their music to Australia, especially through the highly acclaimed Main Street USA series he made for ABC FM. The original Brisbane programme included two Plush works with a strong American background. One of them, Christobel Colon, Conqueror of Paradise was not fully finished, and was replaced by instrumental works. The Ensemble was however able to give the first Australian performance of Plush’s Florilegium II in a programme which also included Copland’s Appalachian Spring in its version for 13 instruments.

His comments, in a letter to me of 13 May 1993, reveal a perceptive appreciation of the positive effects which flowed from the presence of front-ranking composers within the Conservatorium:

I think you have assembled a fine band of players – alert, quick in response, enthusiastic, committed – the like of which may be without peer in Australia. I am speaking especially of the performance of Florilegium II; your handling of the piece certainly eclipses what I managed to achieve with the premiere in Pittsburgh in Feb.1992. And it is the recording of your performance that I have been sending to people with the view to mustering up further performances. The return comments have all been highly complimentary; in one instance, I was asked which of the top-flight New York ensembles had performed the piece!

I must applaud your decision to focus programs around individual composers and have them attend rehearsals and performances of their/our work. The exchange between the young violinist Sarah Curro and myself was especially noteworthy, I would say, and for my part I learnt a great deal from the experience of being able
to mould a performance of The Ludlow Lullabies around her impressive technique and presence. I do hope you'll continue to involve senior students of such stellar calibre in the Ensemble's activities in future seasons.

A major focus in 1992 was forward planning for the next year. The initial impact of the Ensemble was quickly decisive in attracting interest that translated into prestigious engagements. The 1993 season's events would all occur in collaboration with entities external to the University.

I had begun talking with the Brisbane Biennial International Music Festival director Anthony Steel in the middle of 1992, just after the Ensemble's first two concerts, and we subsequently exchanged ideas. I was keen to have Elgar Howarth direct the group, but Steel was conscious of the cost involved in including him in just one concert. I came up with the idea that as a leading conductor of brass bands, (he had early orchestral experience as a trumpeter, and had for many years conducted the famous Grimethorpe Colliery Band in the UK), the Festival should organise the brass bands active in and around Brisbane to come together and play a concert with him. So it became possible to make his visit viable. I particularly wanted him to work with the Ensemble on works by Birtwistle and Ligeti, composers with whom he had a long association.

Howarth's concert in the Festival on May 31st, and broadcast the following day, accordingly included the Birtwistle Ritual Fragment (1990) and Ligeti's wonderful Chamber Concerto for thirteen instrumentalists (1969-70) as well as two Australian works: the first performance in the country of Gerard Brophy's Vorrei baciarti (1991), and a world premiere, commissioned by the Festival, Michael Smetanin's ...if
you are not afraid..., with solo singers Merlyn Quaife and Lyndon Terracini. On June 5th they joined me in the Ensemble’s second concert, with staging, of Barry Conyngham’s *Bony Anderson* and Schoenberg’s *Pierrot Lunaire*.

Following his visit, Howarth wrote to me, on 11 June 1993,

to say how very impressed I was by the standard of the Griffith Ensemble in my recent concert with them for the Brisbane Bi-ennual [sic]. Their attitude was impressive too, a most important factor in the rehearsal of this kind of repertoire: without complete commitment it is impossible to perform complex virtuoso scores in a satisfactory way. They deserve every encouragement and I do hope they will get the support they need to establish themselves in Australia.

He went on to praise the Australian composers whose works he had performed:

...but they do need an ensemble like this to achieve their true potential. It was after all... the existence of the London Sinfonietta which more than anything else paved the way for Birtwistle, Knussen and a dozen more in Britain, and gave a continuing platform for the big names of Europe – Ligeti, Henze, Berio, Boulez et alia all have enjoyed fruitful relationships with the London Sinfonietta. The Griffith Ensemble could do this for your many talented young (and not-so-young!) composers. Let’s hope it can happen.

Another fruitful contact was with Belinda Webster, the founder and moving force of the Sydney record label Tall Poppies. She proposed that the Ensemble prepare and record two major works written by the Australian composer Andrew Ford, for the tenor Gerald English: *Sacred Places* and *Whispers*. On September 22nd the Conservatorium’s Basil Jones Theatre was set up as a recording venue. We played
before an invited audience, mainly of students, so the performances were recorded in long takes, with any necessary patching done as we went along. Miraculously, we were able to put down nearly forty minutes of demanding music during the afternoon. The results may be heard on the Tall Poppies CD *Whispers.* (TP053)

The final event of 1993 featured collaboration with the outstanding Expressions Dance Company. Richard Mills was curating an ABC festival entitled Sound in Movement. After discussion with Expressions’ artistic director, Maggi Sietsma, we decided on using two pieces by the Ensemble’s patron, Peter Sculthorpe. One was a haunting piano piece, *Djilile,* which I had originally played in the 60th birthday concert for the composer I had organised in 1989. The other was a chamber piece, *Landscape II.* Sietsma created a ravishing ballet, *Landscapes,* from Sculthorpe’s music. This was described as “the best Australian-made ‘non-narrative’ I’ve seen this year” by their correspondent, Robin Rattray-Wood in *The Bulletin* (November 23rd 1993). The Ensemble contributed the *Harpsichord Concerto* by de Falla and Ravel’s *Introduction and Allegro* in concert performances that comprised the first part of the programme. The two performances took place on November 5th and 6th, 1993.

From the inception of this project, I was conscious of the need to think ahead, not only regarding artistic planning, but to find ways of securing funding for continued operation. We had no management infrastructure, and needed particularly to develop audiences and acquire commercial sponsorship. We had achieved impressively on our initial grant, which, with fees from the ABC and the Brisbane Biennial, had totaled around $35 000. However, we had to attract further support, sufficient in fact to plan ahead for at least three years. In 1993, we submitted an application for financial assistance to the Australia Council, supported by a comprehensive portfolio
of our achievements together with critical and peer-group assessments. We outlined our priorities, the programme for 1993, and the proposals for 1994. These included the world premiere of a work that Richard Meale had agreed to write for the Ensemble, which had already attracted Australia Council support in the form of a commissioning fee. We were also planning to engage David Stock, director of the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble in a proposed reciprocal arrangement. Roger Smalley had agreed to return and have the Ensemble give the first performance of a new work. Tall Poppies was keen to record further.

The result of our application was not successful, in a year that saw cuts made to existing Australia Council recipients. It seemed not to be a propitious time for a new performing arts group. More disappointing however was the University’s decision not to grant further assistance, in the knowledge that it would lead to the demise of the group. Determined attempts were made to persuade. In my own petition to the then Vice-Chancellor, Roy Webb, I pointed out that the University of Queensland was funding three 50% positions for the musicians of the Perihelion Quartet and the University of New South Wales was supporting the salaries of seven musicians of the Australia Ensemble. In both cases arrangements had been fixed for a five-year period allowing certainty of planning, and the cost of the salaries was a good deal more than the $32,000 per annum for three years that we were proposing.

Our Patron, Peter Sculthorpe, wrote to the Vice-Chancellor (March 14, 1994) that...it seems to me that the group, especially through ABC broadcasts, has done a very great deal to enhance the profile of Griffith University, and this has been achieved in a mere two years. Certainly the group could not have achieved this without the initial grant from Griffith. I realise that the University, like all our
tertiary institutions, has limited funds. All the same, I believe the group has proved its worth. I do, therefore, wholeheartedly support Stephen's request for continued funding.

In his reply of May 23, the Vice-Chancellor wrote:

I readily concur with your view that the Ensemble has done much to enhance the University's profile over the past two years. I am delighted with the achievements of the Ensemble and I am particularly pleased that its work has the notice and support of such a distinguished Australian as Peter Sculthorpe! Of course, funds are scarce. My initial grant was intended as a 'seeding' grant and was not intended to be renewed. I am keen that the Ensemble continue and will, with colleagues at the Conservatorium, do my best to achieve this.

However, conditions were not favourable. Professor Camden had become Director of the School of Music at the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, and the Conservatorium was facing the need for financial tightening. The Ensemble was accorded a low priority.

If University policy had been geared to the development of a research environment, as now, it is likely that the outcome would have been different. The Ensemble had already proved itself as a resource, which, had it continued, would have quickly established Griffith as Australia's leading centre for the development and propagation of new music. Research into music grows well from its practice in realising new compositions, an activity totally appropriate to a School targeting the training of musicians. The study and evaluation of musical material and its performance should not take place in an aural vacuum.
The Ensemble’s activities were developmental for those students who participated in performances and had the opportunity to discover the workings of the creative process at first hand from foremost practitioners. As discussed in Part 2, such experiences are central in determining outlook and sparking creative vitality in the aspiring musician at the formative stage.

The Kawai Keyboard Series (1998–)

Within my work at the Queensland Conservatorium, opportunities were also emerging to acquire experience in the initiation and administration of artistic and educational projects. In particular, between 1985 and 1990 I was in charge of the annual Performance Weeks, virtually in-house festivals. In later years they culminated in the Gala Concert, held in the Concert Hall of the Queensland Performing Arts Centre (QPAC). The purpose of the Weeks was to present students with opportunities for experiences outside of the usual curriculum. In addition to the Gala night, which featured leading student ensembles and soloists, I was able to organise chamber music collaborations between students and staff, and to feature special projects in the presentation of new music. I also invited external lecturers and presenters who shared their expertise in a range of life-skills of real importance to musicians, including health and stress management, running a freelance business, and building up a teaching practice. I became skilled at constructing such programmes and co-operating with my colleagues.

Such experience undoubtedly provided training for my curatorship of the Kawai Keyboard series, currently (2008) in its eleventh season of activity. The
circumstances of its birth were twofold. In 1997 I was starting my second period as Head of Keyboard. I wanted very much to initiate recitals which would showcase the performance artistry of the Conservatorium’s own Keyboard Department.

Concurrently, a decision was made that the marketing and promotion of all the Conservatorium’s public concerts should become more tightly organised. In place of individual events, which would often attract insufficient public attention and response, a plan for the entire year was constructed. The concept of presenting events in the context of generic series was introduced. The entire performance programme would be available at the start of each year in the shape of an attractive Concert Calendar. Suddenly, it seemed there was an opportunity to initiate a significant offering.

Already, some years earlier, the Conservatorium had entered into an agreement with the Kawai corporation which resulted in its becoming the sole supplier of pianos to the School. Approaching Kawai’s Australian management was an obvious initial move. We were subsequently successful in securing its sponsorship in return for the naming rights of the Series. This also promoted the relationship. As the Series became established, Kawai saw that it was in its best interest that artists were heard on their finest pianos. The University was eventually able to purchase an excellent hand-built Shigeru Kawai concert grand on favourable terms. The relationship between Kawai and the Series has been harmonious over the years, aided throughout by the assistance of John Blanch as Kawai’s Australian Sales and Marketing Manager. It was pleasing to have his published message of congratulation in the Series’ 10th anniversary brochure in 2007.

The success of the Series has been built on the support of my colleagues in the Department who have embraced it by contributing annual recitals. They have their
particular public following, and their concerts provide the opportunity to grow and renew these relationships. Those of us who hold salaried positions donate our services, while sessional staff receive only a small fee. The benefits are mutual however. The University is in effect providing a public platform for its staff, and implicitly acknowledging their work as performers and artists.

It soon became clear that the Series had more significant scope. Each year the Department was granted a small sum to be spent on visiting artist/teachers. We could now give a more prominent role to our colleagues, by featuring them within the Series, in concerts, and in public masterclasses which also provided a platform for leading students. In recent years there have been memorable public interactions between students and such renowned artists as Boris Berman, Howard Shelley, Paul Lewis, John Perry and Geoffrey Tozer.

Under my artistic direction, the Conservatorium has been able to develop the Series as a national entity rather than as a purely local event. Unlike Brisbane's other professional piano series, the Medici Concerts, which usually presents four recitals by visiting international artists, the Kawai Series focuses principally on Australian performers. In such a vast land, with its state-based infrastructures and identities, it is difficult for an artist to regard himself as a potentially national resource. For example, I read of myself more than once, in press coverage from interstate, as “the Brisbane pianist.” It seemed that only when I traveled overseas was I an “Australian” artist! Accordingly, it is satisfying that the Series has built its reputation for inclusiveness. Giving other Australian keyboard artists exposure in Brisbane has had mutually beneficial results, facilitating exchanges between individuals and Schools.
The Series is unusual in featuring artists from the start of their careers alongside their established colleagues. It has become a recognised platform for presenting the best of the Conservatorium’s alumni as they become established, and it has a commitment to featuring the winners of leading competitions, particularly the Brisbane-based Lev Vlassenko Piano Competition, also supported by Griffith University and Kawai Australia since its inception in 1999. Since 2002 we have collaborated with the prestigious Sydney International Piano Competition of Australia, in presenting their first prizewinners in the only Brisbane appearances within the nationwide tours that follow the contest. We are giving an example that needs to be heeded: outstanding talent of every generation must have the opportunity to make contact with listeners and to build and maintain its skill in communicating musical sense and feeling.

As the Series became established as the most extensive in Australia, it consequently attracted wider attention. A major development occurred with the decision by QPAC to collaborate with the Series. In 2005, two recitals of the Series were presented by it in the Concert Hall. A feature we had suggested was also acted upon. The recitals were presented in ‘reverse mode’. Thus, the audience was seated in the choir stalls at the back of the stage and the piano was turned around so the sound was directed toward this audience. With subdued lighting, this created an intimate performance space, but retained the acoustic richness of the large auditorium that was kept in darkness, beyond the stage. In subsequent years, as the QPAC season enlarged to three recitals, this format has been maintained, except for the highly successful organ recitals of Christopher Wrench. Until we suggested his inclusion, the magnificent Klais organ in the Concert Hall had rarely been heard in recital repertoire since its installation in 1986.
The collaboration with QPAC brings with it a contribution of great value in providing increased certainty in forward planning. Viability cannot rest only with receipts from our audiences, which although healthy and quite consistent, are rarely very large in real terms. It is a matter of speculation as to how we might break through to regular attendances of the around 200 capacity of the Ian Hangar Recital Hall at the Conservatorium, let alone the 400 at QPAC. Two points are certain: Firstly, Brisbane lacks the media coverage of concerts by locally-based artists which is enjoyed by most other state capitals; secondly, there is a larger audience in evidence for equivalent events, in my experience as a performer and listener, in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. I cannot prove that these conditions are linked, but it does seem to me that a press that gives scant attention to the performance offerings of artists, unless they come as visiting personalities, is not doing its duty to the local community. If people see little coverage in the media, they will assume it is because little is happening. If, even in the face of the continuing achievement of a decade, there is still virtually no critical reaction to the Kawai Series (and much else in Brisbane), discerning but busy people, who rely on the media for information and endorsement, will once again take it that nothing worth mentioning is happening.

No-one would seriously make the case that a concert be reviewed in the press or elsewhere, as an item of news. Nor should coverage be a matter of flattering an artist by anodyne references to such attributes as a powerful technique or beautiful tone, let alone an exhibition of the reviewer’s own inherent or acquired attitudes and prejudices. Rather, there is a place for responsible and well-informed writing, which establishes and maintains a discourse with its readership. Furthermore, criticism gives the opportunity to shape taste, to encourage, and to take and express pride when it is manifestly due. Now that the technology is so widely in use, reviews can be
published on the websites of leading daily newspapers. This is proving to be the starting point for interested parties to contribute their views in the way that current affairs attract so much blog debate and comment. A wider forum for debate and opinion concerning the arts could develop into a positive influence in promoting cultural matters.

In considering the value of this activity in its time, we cite its unmatched status as by far the most extensive and comprehensive Australian concert series devoted to the public presentation of the fullest range of keyboard music from the 17th to 21st centuries. This Series exerts its influence on local audiences, and has proved itself a major promotional resource for the Keyboard Department, the Queensland Conservatorium and Griffith University. Its inspiration to emerging musicians was perceptively expressed by Griffith Chancellor, Leneen Forde. In her generous message of congratulation published in the 2007 10th anniversary Series brochure, she wrote of its role “in leading the musicians of tomorrow by the example of its locally, nationally and internationally recognised artists”. She also endorsed the artistic quality of the enterprise by declaring the Series to be “widely recognised for providing audiences with divine live performances”. QPAC Artistic Director John Kotzas wrote that “QPAC is proud to partner with the Queensland Conservatorium in continuing to bring you this dynamic series of keyboard concerts that offer the best in classical keyboard programming”.

The ongoing effectiveness of this activity may be measured by the manner in which having started with the established format of the public event, the Series has developed a distinctive model of activity in which all stakeholders receive the fullest benefit through continued careful planning of both artistic and business aspects.
Thus, the desirability for innovative programming is balanced by the need to maintain an audience that may be less inclined to respond to newer music. Student listeners have come to appreciate frequent opportunities to hear and witness live performances as a training ground in developing their critical responses. They learn how performers communicate with a live audience, a very different matter to experiencing the same music on a recording. Local performers have a well-recognised context in which to present their programmes. They may also appreciate the positive associations that derive from being presented alongside their interstate and international colleagues. In turn, our visiting artists value appearing in this context, with a responsive audience and good performing conditions. Participation in the Series assists in their carrying away unusually positive impressions of the Department. Young performers especially appreciate the opportunity to play a recital within a prestigious Series as they seek to establish their musical individuality. QPAC has come to welcome its association with the Series, integrating it into the offerings it presents to its own public.

**Published Recordings**

As a pianist, I had early opportunities to broadcast for the radio both live to air, and in studio recordings. I was a frequent recital performer for the BBC from the 1960s and also broadcast overseas from time to time. Such experience is essential in coming to terms with the notion of performing for the microphone rather than an audience. It also gave training in acquiring the skill of pacing one's concentration through a recording session, usually of three hours.

In my experience, it was rare that a session would proceed on one level of concentration and inspiration from start to finish. But I learnt that recording long
sections or whole movements was the most secure way of working. It ensured that in
the early part of the session, a basic performance had been captured. There would
then be time to hear at least part of it, and to check that the reality of one's playing
was in line with the intention. Then, it was possible to go over parts that were faulty,
and these inserts would be later incorporated into the final performance. For this task,
the services of an expert producer are vital. Not only will s/he keep an exact written
record, in a copy of the score, of sections, usually very short, which needed to be re­
recorded. The function is more fundamental. A good producer will be adept at
monitoring the mental and emotional state of the artist during the session, knowing
the right moments to encourage and push forward, and when to ease off.

In the context of the radio recording there is not the opportunity or necessity to create
the level of absolute perfection which is possible and indeed highly desirable for the
commercial recording. The occasional intrusive noise or audible breath is quite
tolerable in a radio recording that is not destined to be heard frequently or repeatedly.
In a modern commercial recording, the aim is to entirely eliminate such glitches.

However, it is also vital that a recording conveys an aural image of the music which
communicates something magical. Quoting the leading producer Walter Legge, who
founded London's famous Philharmonia Orchestra, a distinguished successor, Andrew
Keener (Philip, 2004) says

...that one of the roles of a producer is to collect the jewels. I firmly believe this.
It's one of the reasons to make a record, as distinct from holding a microphone up
in front of a concert – which can also work wonderfully. We never know whether
it will or not: a concert can be electrifying, a recording boring, or vice versa. But
one of the reasons for making a record in the studio is indeed to collect all the
jewels as far as I'm concerned. And even in the very first take, where the musician hasn't settled quite, there may be a nuance, there may be a group of notes which are most beautiful, which the person didn't play in quite that most beautiful, spontaneous, coloured way in any subsequent takes, when he or she was going after accuracy. (p.55)

For my Tippett and Moussorgsky/Liszt /Debussy albums I took the decision to be my own producer. In the first case, I judged that I could not easily have found a local producer who was familiar with the material, particularly the complex Sonata No. 3. In the second, I was working at a time when the technology of digital editing made for a highly sensitive degree of editing that gave enhanced scope for creative solutions.

As in a concert performance one must balance the need for the most refined detail with a concept of the whole. Due to my conducting experience, I had developed the ability to carry the concept of a performance very clearly within me. Even when, as with the Moussorgsky recording, I played sessions more than two months apart, my tempi and concept of pacing and rubato for the same music would be identical, unless I had decided to modify them. I could focus on aspects of timing, nuance and tone-colouring to build up the ideal result.

It seems to me that digital editing opens up the most satisfying aspect of the recording process. In a concert, the performance is over at the end of the evening. Even if it were recorded, it is no more than the equivalent of an untouched photograph of the occasion. But through painstaking and repeated listening, potentially to many hours of material, it is possible to become so familiar with one's playing, that possible solutions present themselves, which can then be tested through digital editing. For
me, the essential aspect of a recording is that the creative process of communication through performance can continue beyond the moment when the artist has played the final note.

In turn, the finished performance provides a further starting point from which more ideal live performances may eventuate. Because there are limited opportunities to give public concerts, all too often repertoire is performed infrequently, and rarely in a sequence of performances. An artist will be able to devote more of his attention to the content of the music and how to convey it, if he can give consecutive performances. The UK chamber-music pianist Susan Tomes' (2005) account of her meeting with the great theatre director, Peter Brook, is illuminating on this matter:

... so many performances are arrested at the stage of preparation... Even if they pass from preparation to development, very few people know how to get the impetus which turns development into fruition... Brook says he has always envied music its attitude to each performance as a fresh and unique event, and says actors could learn from that, but he thinks musicians could learn from the momentum that develops from a performance given many times, as happens in the theatre. ...Brook thinks... that it's a pity to deny the work the chance of gathering its own speed and finding its own proportions in a long 'run' of performances. (p.39)

If these conditions are not commonly found, the ability to realise a fully developed interpretation in the studio is of great value in furthering and accelerating the maturing process of which Brook speaks. The process is not confined only to the works which have been recorded, since the experience of constructing a successful studio recording expands the range of possibilities in one's playing to the point of influencing the performance of other repertoire under public concert conditions.
The role of acting as producer to one's own playing, raises the issue of how to separate the two roles. I found that I was initially reluctant to hear all the recorded material in close detail until enough time has passed for me to become sufficiently dissociated from my own playing. Only when I could hear it as if played by some artist unknown to me could I comfortably commence the process of detailed listening and evaluation. In the case of the Moussorgsky CD I needed around six weeks between the last of the playing and the first serious listening. For the Tippett disc, in 1984, there was a tight schedule for producing the LPs, so we had to proceed more quickly. With the Beethoven album, which Belinda Webster produced most ably, I found that I appreciated the time that passed, during which I became well acquainted with all the recorded material, before we collaborated on the editing.

I will now turn to survey the three published recordings under consideration.

**Tippett: Piano Sonatas Nos. 1 and 3.**

Recorded Brisbane City Hall, January 1984.

Recording: Denis Tonks, Dan Bridges.

Producer: Stephen Savage.

Editing: Colin Timms.

Issued as an LP record on Musicon TAM 0639, in 1984.

It should be noted that the attached CD transfer of these performances also includes a performance of the *Sonata No. 2* recorded in the Conservatorium Theatre, in December, 2002.
This recording came about in relation to Sir Michael Tippett’s visit to the Conservatorium in March 1984. I was to play these Sonatas within the Tippett weekend and wished to record them prior to the concerts, and have them available for purchase and for broadcasting. I approached the Utah Foundation who generously provided assistance, and the LP record was issued on the Conservatorium’s own label, Musicon.

At the time, there was a dearth of venues in Brisbane with first-class pianos. The best I discovered was the Steinway in the City Hall, which had however an indistinct acoustic. We recorded in two evening sessions and in the first, time had to be spent in finding microphone placement which optimised clarity. The resulting recording was not ideal, though digital remastering of the original tape, by David Spearritt in 2005, has clarified the texture somewhat.

Despite the acoustic problems of the recording venue, the disc achieved recognition. 24 Hours, then the ABC’s monthly music magazine, carried a review from Elizabeth Creese in the December 1985 edition:

This is Michael Tippett’s 80th year, and for some reason Australia has been slow to fully recognise the eminent English composer. Tippett may be like Elgar, who was said not to travel well beyond his native England: people outside the country of a composer’s origin are often slow to accept or perhaps understand new composers. Stephen Savage has the expertise to guide the uninitiated... His empathy with the music of Tippett is obvious.

Of particular significance was the appearance of a review in the UK Gramophone magazine. This publication is accepted internationally as among the leading journals
in its field. In the May 1986 edition there appeared a very positive critique by Michael Oliver:

Stephen Savage is a British pianist currently teaching at the Queensland Conservatory [sic] of Music in Brisbane, where a Tippett Festival was held in March 1984; this recording was made as a memento of that occasion, and would deserve applause for its enterprise even if the performances were no more than worthy. They are a great deal more than that. Savage’s technique and stamina are formidable, he can maintain concentration over long spans (important in the slow movement of the First Sonata, indispensable in that of the Third) and he has substantial reserves of power and dexterity. He has studied these works with the composer, but that does not make his readings carbon copies of Paul Crossley’s, who recorded all four of them...

Savage has evidently thought about the sonatas deeply and come to his own conclusions: in the first movement of the First Sonata, for example, the foreshadowings of an involvement with Beethoven are even clearer than in Crossley’s account, and he occasionally allows time for a point to register where Crossley, more mercurially, bounds ahead to the next event. Crossley has the edge in terms of sheer steely-fingered attack, and there is rather more light and shade in his performances...at times a touch more fantasy and panache. But these sonatas deserve a variety of approaches: one should be able to look at them from different interpretative standpoints, as one can look at a Beethoven sonata from the recorded perspectives of a Brendel and an Arrau, an Ashkenazy and a Gilels, and Savage provides a perfectly valid alternative to Crossley. In the Third Sonata especially his love and admiration for the music are evident not only in his enthusiastic sleeve-note but in the range of sonority and expressive nuance he lavishes upon it...


Recording, Production, Editing: Belinda Webster.

Issued on Tall Poppies TP076, in 1995.

The great tryptich which concludes Beethoven's matchless cycle of 32 piano sonatas had long been close to me. They collectively represent perhaps the foremost example of works which have the capacity to reveal more of their identity and spirit as one grows in capacity and understanding as a thinking and experiencing musician and human being. When the chance came to record them, it was at a point when I believed I could do them justice. However, from the vantage point of writing some thirteen years later, I perceive that in the intervening years, the capacity of this music to reveal ever further layers of meaning has not been exhausted.

In 1995, the project was significant as the first CD recording of these works undertaken by an Australian artist. (Gerard Willems' complete Beethoven cycle was started in 1997). The circumstances were propitious, with a fine instrument available in a big radio studio. (Studio 200, otherwise known as Eugene Goossens Hall, can be used by large forces, including full symphony orchestra.) The venue possessed the conditions within which to find a sound that combined clarity, warmth, and immediacy with a sense of perspective. I am unhappy when recorded sound appears to be emerging from a point too close to the instrument. It is also desirable that the recording captures the characteristic sonority of the venue, with its own resonance. Rosen (2002) speculates interestingly on this topic.
We think today of all music as being played in public, as presented to an audience of some considerable size. Records, however, are largely played in more modest venues, privately, for the pleasure of one or two people. The acoustics of the record are therefore always an illusion. What illusion should we settle for? The decision is almost always to give the impression that the sound is being created in a space larger than the average living room. ... The recording engineer does not ask what the most authentic sound would be for each piece, but – and rightly – what sound will give the most pleasure to modern ears. We are no longer accustomed to an acoustic with too much intimacy. Alone in the room with the record player, we like to imagine that we are part of the mass audience that we think indispensable to classical music. But we also like to think that we have privileged seats close enough to the performers to give us the extra clarity rarely granted us in public performances. (p.150).

Preparation in the months prior to the recording involved a good deal of revision based on close study of the texts, particularly different editions. Even when idiosyncratic, a perceptive performing edition can direct attention to points of detail one may have overlooked. The Schnabel edition was particularly stimulating, as was Arrau's. In both, there was much to consider, even to the point of provocation, particularly when considering the implications of fingering on the sound and sensation of particular passages, and interpretations of tempi and dynamics, including their modifications. The Australian Allan edition by the distinguished UK scholar, pedagogue and pianist Kendall Taylor, whom I had much valued as a mentor when I was a young staff member at the RCM, was also a point of illuminating reference, as were manuscript facsimiles.
The reception of the CD was gratifying in that reviewers seemed to have perceived aspects of the music that I was particularly concerned to reveal. Andrew Ford, in 24 Hours (January, 1996) wrote of "Moments of phrasing, contrasts of dynamic that one hasn't noticed before, harmonic emphases: all emerge naturally, spontaneously from Savage's playing. The recorded sound is equally natural."

In Soundscapes International Review, Cyrus Meher-Homji (1996) wrote of,

...a calmness that seems to radiate strength, a poetic quality that nevertheless doesn't fall into the trap of self-indulgence...He displays...a visionary approach to the music-making, a simplicity born of strength ... Moreover, what struck me time and time again, was Savage's ability to maintain linearity in such things as the sublime Arietta that opens Op. 111's second movement and the hymn-like theme in the third movement of Op. 109. At the same time, he remains ever-conscious of the harmonic implications of the theme as his balancing of voices in the texture reveals. And especial mention must be made of Richard Toop's fascinating and probing liner notes: to already sublime performances they add yet a further level of excellence to the recording. It is also one of the most faithful and beautifully recorded accounts of piano sound. (Vol. 3 No. 1)

Laurie Strachan (1996) in The Australian Weekend Review wrote:

With the very best in the world to choose from, with Alfred Brendel, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Sviatoslav Richter and Maurizio Pollini sitting there on the shelves, why would you want to buy a locally produced disc of Beethoven's last three piano sonatas played by a relative unknown?

That's the $30 question. But you'll never find out if you don't try and I would
strongly recommend you try Steven [sic] Savage’s Tall Poppies disc. You will find that this is playing of the highest class – as it needs to be in music that represents some of the high peaks of the piano repertoire.

Savage... delivers three thoroughly thought-out and beautifully played performances. At all times there is a sense that the music is moving purposefully on: the end is clearly in sight and the pleasures of the journey can be enjoyed all the more for that.

It would be possible to go through these performances section by section, dissect them and compare them with their many rivals, but this would really be beside the point. The point is that they are coherent interpretations which give enormous pleasure at every level – and you really can't ask for more than that. (April 6-7)

**Moussorgsky: Pictures at an Exhibition.**

**Liszt: Two Legends**

**Debussy: Masques; ...d'un cahier d'esquisses; L'isle joyeuse.**

- Recording: David Spearritt, David Starr.
- Editing: David Spearritt.
- Producer: Stephen Savage.
- Issued by Move Records, Melbourne on MD 3290, in 2004

This recording represents a project to which I was particularly committed. It was not commissioned, and when I undertook it there was no guarantee it would be published. My motivation was to record an album that would demonstrate the quality of both the Conservatorium’s Theatre, and its Steinway concert grand piano, which I had chosen on a visit to their Hamburg factory in 1999. There had been no solo piano recording
attempted in the venue, which from the time it opened in 1996, had gained renown for its clear yet rich acoustic. The repertoire I chose was of music which was highly coloured, works where the textures and timbres were in themselves integral to the content. In my liner notes for the published CD, I wrote:

The works to be heard here all have as their point of departure the idea of expressing the visual in sound and of finding a musical means to evoke the sensory, not in a picturesque manner, but so as to reveal a wide range of experience drawn from the natural, human and spiritual worlds. This is clear in Liszt’s *Legends*, studies in high luminous colours and deep surging textures respectively, which are perhaps his most totally realized work in a genre he invented, the religious piano piece. (In this his successor is the Messiaen of the *Vingt Regards sur l’Enfant Jésus*). Debussy is constantly evocative of the senses, particularly the visual, in the way objects are seen through the refraction of light or the depths of shadow or changes in perspective. The piano itself seems to liquefy before our ears. The least painterly are the Moussorgsky, for though they derive from the work of his artist friend Victor Hartman, his imaginative fantasy appropriates the images and imbues them with an often vehement realism which compels the performer to characterise as an actor as much as a musician.

In making the music happen, performers are commonly stimulated by metaphors concerning the visual. Many concepts are shared with art: line, texture, perspective, balance, form, light and shade, articulation. Given the circumstances of recording, a further parallel can be drawn. How the works are to be heard is the equivalent of the most effective hanging of pictures in the gallery, how they are lit, where the viewer might stand. So the venue as well as the instrument and the microphone placement become integrated components in determining how the
music will sound, and may also further stimulate the performer's response during the recording process.

An unusual feature of the recording in my experience was that the sessions were played over a considerable period, due to restricted access to the Theatre which is in constant use as a public venue, in addition to its function as a rehearsal and performance space for the Conservatorium. I did not find this disconcerting. It was stimulating to come to a session with the experience I had gained from studying the material previously recorded. It is not possible while in the act of performing to hear as the microphones do, given their placement away from, and some distance above the piano. So, experiencing the sound as captured in the performance space and heard in playbacks, provided a good deal of information on the character of the Theatre. I began my next session knowing more about how I might exploit such properties in my playing. The possibility to collect more of Walter Legge’s ‘jewels’ (see p. 50) was enhanced.

It was gratifying to find that critics pointed to the degree of perception and insight they perceived in the performances. Thus, Rita Crews in *The Studio*, wrote of the Moussorgsky performance demonstrating “a wonderful insight into the sense of the dramatic”. (May, 2005). Gillian Wills in *2MBS Fine Music* also commented on the “acutely sensitive and psychologically perceptive portrayal” of the work, before going on to praise a recording which “reflects Savage’s qualities as pianist, teacher, and scholar…” Patricia Kelly in the Brisbane *Courier Mail* commented that in the performance of *Pictures at an Exhibition*, “Savage [gave] them majestic treatment in his detailed performance, each image etched in sound to convey the images on canvas, and to capture on the keyboard the breadth of colours familiar through
In his *Limelight* review, Andrew Ford wrote:

Stephen Savage has obviously given Moussorgsky's suite a great deal of thought, because it isn't easy to play such familiar music with such a range of new insights and nuances. Right from the moment Moussorgsky's spectator strides purposefully into the art gallery we are hearing the music with fresh ears. The gnome is even more sinister than usual; the old castle suddenly feels unbearably sad; the children arguing in the Tuileries are oddly sophisticated (of course they are Parisians); the unhatched chicks stagger unsteadily, their shells ruling out anything less ungainly. At every turn there are surprises, and Savage achieves them not with wild exaggeration, but by playing movements just a little faster, slower or straighter than usual, and finding a chord to delay here, a phrase to pull back there... (December, 2004)

Vincent Plush in the *Weekend Australian* asked:

What more can be said about Moussorgsky's *Pictures* that has not already been said in the 50-plus versions for solo piano that are available? Well, an Australian recording is pretty rare and this version emphasizes the darker, neo-gothic undertones of Viktor Hartmann's pictures that inspired Moussorgsky to take his famous promenades down memory lane. Head of keyboard studies at the Queensland Conservatorium since 1982 Stephen Savage confirms his reputation as an authoritative, even magisterial interpreter, bringing characteristic luminosity and uncommon intelligence to works often glossified as showpieces for digital pyrotechnics. Keyboard aficionados will relish the splashy splendour of the two St. Francis legends by Liszt and the uncommon musculature of three Debussy
pieces. The glorious acoustic of the Conservatorium's Theatre and Savage's insightful notes in the accompanying booklet place this CD on top of the pack.

(October 9-10, 2004)

Creating New Knowledge

At this point I turn to a consideration of the content of the cited publications, which were selected to demonstrate the characteristics of research. They all broke new and innovative ground in different ways, and achieved contemporary relevance in their time.

In my role as pianist, I commonly draw on my knowledge and experience of the entire output of a particular composer. For the preparation of the first Australian performance of the Lutoslawski Piano Concerto, there were no previous major piano works to consult, but my acquaintance with the composer's style and content had been close. Apart from hearing most of his major works as they were composed, since first hearing Jeux venetiens in the early 1960s, I had closely studied and conducted Mi Parti and, on two occasions, the Preludes and Fugue for 13 Solo Strings. Having also prepared Lutoslawski's Brisbane performance of this work in 1987 and been present for his own rehearsal and performance, I understood at first hand the composer's characteristic lucidity in both sound and structure, and his very human concern to ensure that the experience of playing his work would be pleasing for the performers. I recall him telling me that if he was ever in any doubt about the practicality of any detail he had written, he would consult with a performer. Consequently, even when his writing is challenging it is never awkward. His treatment of the Brisbane players in rehearsal was considerate
and sensitive. The result was that textures and colours were achieved fluently since
the musicians were encouraged to be relaxed yet alert, and to listen to each other.

In my preparation and performance of the Concerto too, I was struck by the
beautiful balance and ease displayed by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

As a project, the preparation and performance of this work was of demonstrable
significance in that it introduced a masterpiece to Australia less than a year after its
world premiere. The preparation and performance constituted a major research
project by providing the circumstance for a systematic investigation into important
new musical material. It assisted in establishing the concerto as a communicated
entity. I am proud to have justified the composer's confidence when he made the
suggestion I perform the piece, and recommended me to the music management at
the ABC. I sent him a recording of the Sydney performance. In his letter to me, of
December 26th, 1989, he wrote, "...I am very grateful for the cassette, but above
all for your so beautiful playing my concerto. I feel happy having such an
interpreter of my piece."

Tippett's approach to instrumental writing stands at an extreme to Lutoslawski's. It
is tough and demanding, often challenging. Yet I went willingly down this thorny
path such was the radiance of his vision and the sheer energy and intensity of his
creative will that I perceived. I had occasional contacts with the composer over the
years following my first meeting with him, preparing my first performances of his
Sonata No.2. It was a great opportunity when the chance came to host him at the
Queensland Conservatorium for a week and prepare or supervise the performance
no fewer than fifteen of his works for the 1990 Festival. This included the first
Australian performances of the Sonata No.4 for piano and the Symphony No.3.
As director for the Festival I devised the content of the programmes. Where possible my aim was to present Tippett’s works in telling contexts. The juxtaposition of his quartets with those of Bartok was particularly illuminating and revealed their composers as masters of equal stature in this medium, both seeming to breathe the spirit of Beethoven. Tippett’s *Songs for Dov* and Mahler’s *Songs of a Wayfarer* also provided experiences that were intense through their standing together and reflecting each other in the same programme. The protagonists in the song-cycles came across as totally of their own time and culture, yet united in their alienation and the search for a land of fulfillment somewhere beyond. In another programme, the utopian idealism of Tippett was brought into focus by placing his *Sonata No.3* after a movement from Ives’ *Concord Sonata*. Such innovative programme planning can best occur within the context of a special event, much as perceptive conjunctions of artworks are often seen to startling effect in the context of a themed exhibition.

I was concerned to draw in as many staff and students as possible in order to touch and involve the Conservatorium as a whole. Tippett’s own participation with many of them in conducting workshops with the performers, displaying a wonderful energy and enthusiasm and clearly radiating huge enjoyment, played its part in giving the week a special distinction that was publicly acknowledged.

I was also heavily involved as a performer, giving an evening piano recital of Tippett, Beethoven and Ives, and in rehearsing a staff and student ensemble towards the performances of the Mahler and Tippett songs.

Here was a project of major significance in its time and place that attracted expert
recognition for its contribution to the appreciation and knowledge of a composer of international stature. The scale and scope of the survey of his works during the preparation and subsequent performances, the composer's own presence and contribution as a teacher, together with a programme book containing introductions to the composer and the music, amounted to a comprehensive study and course of critical investigation fully equivalent to original research in other contexts and disciplines. As a survey of a then living composer the Festival remains unmatched in its scale within Australia, and it was acknowledged there and internationally, for the degree of its scope and significance.

My involvement in the foundation and running of the Griffith University Ensemble was of itself demanding. With no administrator and quite limited assistance in this area, I organised players and rehearsals. I undertook the negotiations with outside bodies such as the ABC, the Brisbane Biennial International Music Festival and Expressions Dance Company that rapidly resulted in recognition and engagements for the group. I was also responsible for financial aspects. As Artistic Administrator I had the ultimate decision on which composers would be invited, and the programmes to be presented. I conducted all but one of the concerts. (The other event was Elgar Howarth's concert within the 1993 Brisbane Festival.) I also appeared as pianist on two occasions, in works by leading Australian composers, Peter Sculthorpe and Roger Smalley.

The activity of the Griffith University Ensemble over only two years was very extensive. It presented 18 Australian works, including 10 performed by the Ensemble. These included one world premiere and two Australian first performances. From the outset we were clearly recognised as a resource of immediate contemporary
relevance, with nearly all concerts being broadcast nationally and the first of what promised to be a continuing series of commercial CDs having been already issued. The work of the Ensemble in presenting leading voices in new music, both local and international, together with performances of twentieth century masterpieces, contributed uniquely to the cultural environment of its time. It has not since been replicated in Australia.

The Kawai Keyboard Series, which started in 1998, had presented 158 events in its first ten years, to the end of 2007. The performers have included 45 Australian artists, of whom 26 have been Conservatorium staff and alumni, and 19 from elsewhere in the country. A further 22 have been visitors to Australia, including leading artists and teachers from the USA, UK, Italy, Germany, Holland, Finland, Russia, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, South Africa and New Zealand.

My task as Artistic Curator has been to plan each season, paying particular attention to ensuring that the Conservatorium had opportunities to experience the artistry of distinguished visitors. Repertoire also has to be considered carefully. I am conscious that a balance must be kept between the mainstream classics and the innovative styles that need exposure if music as an artform is to move forward and be renewed. I am pleased to have achieved this within the single series. Too often, new music is presented in isolation. The Series has however heard artists such as Michael Kieran Harvey, in recitals of Messiaen and of works largely written in the 21st century and Stephen Emmerson in Cage's Sonatas and Interludes. Mark Kruger has presented major works by George Crumb and Ives, while the Japanese pianist Noriko Ogawa provided a telling sequence of music by Takemitsu and Debussy. Over the years I have featured works by Tippett, Messiaen and Schoenberg in my annual recitals. The
Conservatorium’s staff Jazz pianists have been regular contributors, and Mark Isaacs and Paul Grabowsky have contributed their characteristic improvised music.

One particularly memorable instance of collaboration with an eminent visiting artist was during 2003, when the Series promoted a survey of the cycle of the nine sonatas of Prokofieff, conducted by Boris Berman, Head of Piano at Yale University, USA. He worked through this wonderful sequence with invited students and alumni of the Conservatorium in the year of the 50th anniversary of the composer’s death. We were able to attract additional funding from the University and the Conservatorium’s own Sleath Bequest to preserve these sessions on DVD, as an invaluable teaching and research resource. Professor Berman had been the first pianist to record Prokofieff’s entire output for piano on CD, and as a student had worked with Lev Oborin, who was professionally very close to the composer. One week following the classes the young artists returned to the Series to give the cycle in three recitals. The Series presented these in collaboration with the Queensland Music Festival.

Beside contributing to new knowledge, especially through presenting often innovative repertoire in the context of the most comprehensive survey of the repertoire, the Series is a work in progress that is directed toward continuing achievement in outcome for all its stakeholders: the public, the musicians and the students. The fact that the Series has thrived at a high level of activity for so long, as a viable artistic and business model, is the ultimate measure of its success and achievement.

The quoted critical reception of all three of my published recordings here presented have consistently drawn attention to the original insights their writers have discerned in these performances, while acknowledging my attentiveness to the source material
represented by the composer’s texts. The search for imaginative meaning is a strong motivation for me as an artist. As I will describe in Part 2, this meaning derives from close study of the details of texts, and occurs within a continually developing appreciation of a particular composer’s style, his characteristic way of clarifying his own ideas and feelings. Prolonged exposure to particular works leads to greater understanding over time. In common with much scientific research, data needs to be accurately gathered and subsequently absorbed as a condition of producing original findings.

The Tippett recording of 1984 was significant then since it was the first alternative interpretation on disc of the Sonata No.3 to become available following the performance of its dedicatee, Paul Crossley. It therefore contributed to establishing the work’s identity at a time when it was not widely known and performed. The Sonata No.1 was available in only two other recorded versions at the time.

The Beethoven CD was the first to be made of these masterpieces in Australia. I had performed the three sonatas regularly for many years, and judged that I had assimilated them to a point where I was justified in recording them in the public domain. I cite this publication as significant for its research component. My preparation for the recording involved fresh investigation into musical texts and sources. This activity assisted me in finding and realising my own insights during the process of refining an interpretation that was also true and sensitive to the composer’s intentions as manifest in the text. The expert critical reception that the recording received supports this perception, as have reactions to it from listeners over the years since its publication.
In citing the recording of the works by Moussorgsky, Liszt and Debussy, I draw attention to the concept of bringing together musical works that had their origins in visual images. This constitutes a unity that enables the listener to draw parallels between them, although their treatments of the potential of the piano for tone-colouring is highly varied. The spare, yet often massive textures of the Moussorgsky contrast with the luminous sensuality of Debussy, while the two Liszt pieces juxtapose high, bright colours with dark, tawny splendour. I also draw attention to the significance of the project in first establishing Griffith University’s Conservatorium Theatre as an outstanding venue for solo piano recording. The technical investigation into the auditorium’s acoustic properties, which my collaborators, David Spearritt and David Starr acquired during the project, will prove of great value to those performers and sound technicians who will follow us. I gratefully acknowledge their patience and expertise.

**Afterword**

I am struck when reading the foregoing account that all the activities presented for detailed consideration arose from my engagement with fellow professionals, and with the audiences of my community in Brisbane, and beyond. Full-time employment conditions, firstly with the Conservatorium as a College of Advanced Education, and from 1991, with Griffith University, ensured that in addition to the teaching function which was central to my appointment, I had time, energy and opportunity to engage with the public, and not only as a performer. I was able also to develop my skills as an instigator, organiser and administrator of events and ambitious programmes of artistic endeavour.
I am aware that an important element in my professional life has been the propagation of new art, in addition to exploration of the old and familiar. I have assisted in forming and challenging musical taste in my community as well as following it. Working conditions that have included access to the infrastructure, both human and logistic, which the Conservatorium has provided, have furnished the laboratory in which I have been able to carry out these researches into performance, and present their results in the form of communicated sound, which carries its own unique meaning. The common element in the publications here presented for consideration, (and much further activity besides), has been the opportunity to pursue and develop these lines of artistic enquiry, and to give them expression in my own performances, and by facilitating those of my fellow artists and student performers. Thus, an aspect of the integrity of my work as a whole lies in this manifestation of public activity. Part 2 of this study will address another integrity, that of the complex network of skills, knowledge, values and beliefs that inform and sustain my work. The focus on public and institutional activity in Part 1, now gives way to reflective considerations on the nature of my thinking as a pianist and musician.
PART 2

A Musician Considers His View
Player and Instrument

Introduction

In this paper, I explore the means by which a developing pianist may acquire mastery of the technical infrastructure of playing the instrument, and how various approaches to practice provide preparation towards the actuality of performing. I examine the relationship between the pianist and the piano, drawing on my experiences both as teacher and as performer. When the piano is a musician's chosen instrument, that choice influences his outlook and development. The instrument is wonderfully self-reliant with its matchless repertoire, both solo and ensemble. Yet the complex mechanism of the instrument that intervenes between the player and the sound, can make it difficult to establish the sensation that the piano is a seamless extension of oneself. Players of string and wind instruments, and above all, singers, have a much closer sensory contact with their sound. Further, they can control tone throughout the entire duration of tonal production. The pianist can only suggest much of the character to be conveyed since he can influence only the initial instant of each sound. However, a great advantage of the instrument is that in standing on its own feet, it may give the performer a greater freedom to listen to himself and his collaborators.

The Influence of Training

It is a common experience for the listener in hearing a sequence of pianists on the same instrument in the same venue to be struck by the differences in how each of them sounds. While the reasons for this may remain a matter of speculation to the
untrained listener, it is possible to identify certain characteristics that have a bearing on creating the conditions for various results. For example, a pianist trained to play with a highly active finger-articulation will be inclined to produce a clear, brilliant sound. Another, whose technique (while just as developed in terms of the strength and articulacy of the fingers) is modified by the transfer of arm-weight between the keys, would exhibit enhanced shading of the various articulations to be encountered in musical language. The condition of the wrist and forearm will probably be tighter in the first case, the joints more flexible in the second. Such varied approaches will over time provide a context in which a player will acquire not only a personal sound but also contribute to form the particular way he tends to imagine music. The player’s perception of how his body is functioning, his propensity to hear and experience the music in terms influenced by his predominant technique and his characteristic physique; all such considerations play their part. As the distinguished pianist and teacher, Boris Berman (2000) points out, “...so many of a pianist’s physical actions are conditioned by individual physical makeup. Technique is equally the result of a pianist’s musical tastes and ideals, the repertoire that is dear to him, and other factors”. (p.24)

Charles Rosen, (2002) acclaimed as a leading scholar and writer on music, as well as for his penetrating performances, regrets that,

our interpretations of music are conditioned and determined as much by the physical habits of playing we have developed over the years as by any emotional or intellectual understanding of the individual works. But perhaps, on second thought, we should not deplore the pianist’s dependence on the body, but celebrate it: music is not limited to sentiment or to the intellect, to emotional commitment or to the critical sense, but engages, at the moment of performance, the whole being.
Characteristics of the Instrument

Piano repertoire has been profoundly influenced by the instrument’s characteristics. We can consider the fact that the whole of a musical texture and discourse can be conveyed by the intelligence and sensibility of the single performer. The modern grand piano gives scope for a wide tonal response that, in a well-developed player, enhances expression of intensity and involvement. Only the conductor has a similar autonomy and potential for bringing the music to life, with the significant difference that he makes none of the sounds personally.

From Bach through to Messiaen, via Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, Liszt, Brahms, Rachmaninov and Debussy, we find composers whose genius was bound up with, and expressed, through their skills as keyboard virtuosi and improvisers of the front rank. For them, the piano was the essential tool in assisting them to find their distinctive contemporary voices and sounds. We may note that developments in piano manufacture including fuller and more effective accumulation of sound through the sustaining pedal, were paralleled by the development of an orchestra of greater weight and sonority. For example, the *Eroica* Symphony and the *Appassionata* Sonata were created concurrently at a time when Beethoven was expanding the significance of musical utterance to an unprecedented degree. Again, the saturated textures in the music of Rachmaninoff or extremely refined colours of Debussy are likely to have originated in their genius for the piano which found at least equal expression in their orchestral writing.
It may be maintained that the organ too, possesses this self-contained comprehensiveness, yet the character of its sound is so much itself and its function so associated with the acoustic properties and ecclesiastical functions of churches that it has never lent itself to the unrivaled range of musical expression which is the domain of the piano. We may consider, on the one hand, the symphonic discourses of the Viennese masters of the late 18th and early 19th centuries that culminated in the achievement of Beethoven who created masterworks for the piano of an ambitious scope, comparable with his symphonies. On the other hand, the piano has also been the chosen medium for the intimate poetic utterances of Chopin, Schumann and Debussy. Additionally, the concept of the single performer playing music of technical complexity and emotional allure has given rise to much of the repertoire that can thrill an audience and provide a performer of rich temperament and daring a potent outlet for his virtuosity.

The piano then is not only capable of the widest range of musical use but also has a unique and subtle power to evoke. For myself, early training and musical experiences either assisted in creating, or at least in reinforcing, a certain attraction to music which was not only engaging to play, or successful with audiences, but which aroused and sustained my interest because of its content. In my view, it is significant that I was drawn to listen to chamber and orchestral music from an early age and that this listening provided a rich store of sounds and textures which I would then seek to emulate at the piano. I remember clearly, around the age of 7, hearing, for the first time a live string quartet and being entranced at how the discourse was played out, with the musical motifs being thrown from one instrument to another before my delighted ears and eyes. Going to the piano and realising that I could create that quartet texture in my own hands, I suddenly became aware that my 'weak' right-hand
fingers (3,4,5) represented that beautiful first violin, partnered by the equivalent in the left, as cello, with the inner parts usually supporting. It was a moment when my thumbs ceased to feel heavy and the fingers acquired at least the idea of autonomy. If the player has the aural image of the string quartet that I first experienced as a 7 year-old, the resultant sound will be not be the same as it would be if another instrumental combination were in his aural mind, or indeed none at all. The fact is that the piano, in the right hands and guided by a vivid and precise aural imagination and acute listening, can be the vehicle for a highly personal view of the musical content embodied within the work. As a teacher, much of my effort goes in this very direction: nourishing the responses of the student so that musical, emotional, intellectual and imaginative aspects are identified internally, and allowed to grow and to connect through the unifying influence of creating sound. In this way the young player becomes more conscious of his own musical personality.

Physical States in Playing

Let us examine more closely the relationship between player and instrument. The image I propose is that of the piano being an extension of the player, the means by which his ideas and feelings become manifest in sound. He will be sitting at the keyboard in a particular way: ‘up’ as we say in English rather than ‘down’. This type of sitting is more akin to riding a horse than it is to the passive attitude of relaxation. As in riding, the trunk should be upright and free of slumping. The player should be aware of sitting on the pelvic bones and the hips must be free. The address, at least for the adult will be open, with the feet, not too close together, supporting the body above. The feet will rest on the floor with no pressure, but perhaps feeling that they provide the emergent point for the body, just as a tree grows out of the ground. The
width of the keyboard and the need to cover its full range without changing the seat position means that the arms must be able to extend outwards with ease, at the shoulder as well as the elbow. A homely comparison might be with the activity of pressing clothes at an ironing board where the ease of stroking or gliding the iron across the garment is the main factor. Even in the early stages, a beginner should be encouraged to reach out away from the center of the keyboard, although this area will be the most suitable for initial training of the fingers.

The piano’s volubility of utterance makes it possible to play without considering respiratory freedom. Not only with wind playing and singing is the breath of fundamental importance. String players too are aware of its equivalence in bowing patterns and in the way a stream of sound is sustained through the flow and pressure of the bow on the string. The pianist also needs to evoke this melodic continuity through and across adjacent tones, despite the apparent intractability of the piano’s mechanism, which allows the player control only over the onset of each note. All the more reason therefore that the pianist should emulate his colleagues and ‘breathe’ with the music in order to counteract the essential verticality of hammer against string as well as to be in contact with the very impulse of the music. Free breathing will also be conducive to fostering a sense of expansion in the body as a whole, with no cramping or unwanted tensions.

This prompts us to look at the vexed question of so-called ‘relaxation’ in piano playing. It is a term too loosely used, and clearly an attitude of total relaxation would lead to very little. It will be more appropriate to consider in what way various parts of the body contribute to aspects of support or activity.
The condition of the legs is not often considered. Their only active function is to operate the pedals which sustain and colour the sound and texture, (right pedal) or mute the sound by shifting the action of the keyboard so that the hammers are striking fewer strings, reducing the tonal output, thinning the sound, and, if the pedal is well regulated, providing a characteristic colour. (left pedal). Problems can arise when the action involves a pushing or treading action on the pedals which leads to a good deal of tension in the leg and stiffening of the back and hips. It is desirable that the action is localised in the ankle, with care taken that the foot contact is limited to the area adjacent to and just below the big toe.

Moving up the body, seating is highly important in establishing a well-balanced and freely poised positioning in which to function. Sitting on the front of the stool, quite near the edge ensures the ‘upward’ sensation referred to earlier and ensures that the forearm can move laterally without colliding with the body, while careful choice of height will lead to the arm being well balanced and self supporting. In seeking this balance, it is helpful to pretend that the piano is being played standing up, with the legs of the instrument being telescopically adjustable. The player should experiment with different positions of the arms so that they are neither reaching up toward the imaginary keyboard, nor down, and thus below the balance point when they would need to be tensed to prevent them from freely falling away to the side of the body.

When transferring to the sitting position, care needs to be taken so that the hand does not simply reach out for the keys thus altering the chosen position. It is therefore essential to use an adjustable bench. The ideal sensation is for the wrist to be at held at a mean position just above the point it would, unchecked, fall away into the player’s lap. The location of these different sensations is also important as an example of the sensory awareness the pianist must develop in pursuit of becoming
ever more at one with the instrument.

These physical conditions contribute positively to a sensation of ease in the arm, and by extension, the shoulders and neck, which will have a decisive impact on freedom and resilience in piano-playing. The player should feel that his back can widen in sympathy with the actual reaching out performed by the arms in any linear playing (such as scalar and arpeggiated writing) which exceeds a basic five-finger position. Furthermore, the weight of the arm can also act without restriction from the shoulder or elbow, in the vertical context associated with chord and octave playing and in situations where the arm oscillates (i.e. the so-called ‘rotation’ activity used in tremolo as well as Alberti basses).

Active Elements in Playing

We now need to consider the active elements in piano-playing and how they may integrate within the conditions as outlined previously. How is it possible for intense and finely-tuned muscular activity to co-exist within the proposed framework? Moreover, these technical skills do not operate only mechanically, but as the embodiment of imagination and feeling. In the context of performance, the player will be subject to the often acute excitement generated by the music and the sense of occasion associated with concerts in particular.

Most of the pianist’s training focuses on the development of very strong but supple hands, fingers and wrists. Of fundamental importance but too often neglected is the need to build up a tensile resilience in the wrist which has to act as the shock-absorber in vigorous playing as well as providing the essential cushioning within which the
production of beautiful singing tone can function. Here, the essential concept is that
the hand shall ‘take hold’ of the keys. So the sensation within the limb is that of
holding and grasping, as distinct from squeezing. If a good habit becomes
established, the wrist will never become locked even when the hand is firmly held as
if carrying a small but dense object. Naturally, the imagined weight of this object will
be appropriate to the player’s age and state of muscular development.

I confess an aversion to the usual descriptions of the keys as being ‘struck’ or
‘pressed’. Although a sudden striking action may indeed be employed, this is only
one possible response, and as for pressure, it is a dangerous concept in playing.

Running further with the notion of handling the keys, we may ask where the effort is
directed? The answer must be, to the sounding point at the bottom of the key, but no
further. This is no simple matter however. There will often be a tendency in the early
stages for certain faulty habits to be acquired. (This is one compelling reason for
beginners to have the most enlightened and stringent training. Commonly, there is a
serious wastage of talent brought about by the prevalence of teachers who grew up
with extremely limited playing skills.) A common problem is a faulty adjustment of
touch: playing too much on the top of the key in piano and, as an attempt at dynamic
contrast, employing a constricted pushing into the keys. Discomfort and poor tonal
quality and technical control are the outcome. The player needs to become
accustomed to playing through the surface of the key to the bed. The image I often
use in teaching is that of walking through long grass, where the foot feels its way to
the unseen surface of the ground but does not press into the soil.

Further, the pianist will associate various approaches to the keys with different
sounds. Sometimes, as when the player wants deep, fully sustained tone in rich chordal textures, the keys need to feel heavy as if the hands were kneading bread dough. At another point the demand may be for playing of dazzlingly electric excitement, where the fingers are volatile and sharp, and the keys and the repetition action of the piano are at their most immediate in response. In all cases, the prime consideration is an acutely precise appreciation of exactly where the key bed lies. This appreciation is a sensory one, where touch and sound are fused.

Developmental Strategies

It is not within the scope of this survey to look at the vast range of pedagogical exercises and studies which provide so much material toward the development of a strong pianistic technique in a 'pure' sense as opposed to the applications of this skill whereby the expressive content of musical works is realised. We can however consider the main developmental strategies that will prove fruitful.

As a rule, ease of movement needs to take precedence over strength, so that work designed to increase muscular thrust and energy does not compromise suppleness. The parallel with dancing or athletics is pertinent. Talented young practitioners in these activities will exhibit gracefulness and economy of movement, which must not be lost as they train for strength and stamina in acquiring the ability for the muscles to act with near explosive immediacy. For example, training as a runner will include developing the muscles in the upper leg through exaggeratedly high-action exercises where the knees will come up to chest level. But such work to develop the maximum thrust and output from every stride must not be permitted to interfere with the natural ease and economy of his action. Similarly, at a certain stage the pianist will be well
advised to train the fingers to work much higher than he would ever play normally. Finger independence is best acquired through the practicing of studies, carefully chosen also to cultivate the internal stretches of the hand. This skill is further encouraged by the use of exercises which combine held and articulated fingers. Through such work, precise neural pathways from brain to finger are built. There can surely be no other human activity requiring such individual control of each finger, which needs to achieve equality of output with its neighbour, despite inherent initial disparity. This regime should be closely supervised as to its extent in particular. The stretching of young muscles will give rise to some passing discomfort, but this work must be counterbalanced by playing which focuses on the use of the fingers within an easy flow of the limb as a unit.

The shape and strength of the hand can be worked at by leaning the standing body toward a wall on which the fingertips are placed with the outstretched hand in the normal playing position. As the weight is applied, neither the knuckle ‘bridge’ nor the end joints of the fingers must collapse and the sides of the hand must support the bridge, as buttresses support the walls of a cathedral. Often we see players whose hands show little muscular development particularly behind the 5th finger, despite having undergone years of training. The leading Russian pedagogue, Heinrich Neuhaus writes (1983) that,

...if we need a great, an enormous volume of sound, the fingers are transformed and from being independently active units they become strong supports capable of bearing any amount of weight; they become pillars, or rather arches under the dome of the hand... That is the main task of the fingers! (p.94)

We note that the above exercise is an example of work to improve muscular strength
which does involve pressure, in this case against the wall. A common activity intended to promote fitness is the use of weights that improve muscular output. For pianists too, this type of training may be a useful adjunct to work at the instrument. If the arms, shoulders and back are strong, the mechanism of playing can ‘cruise’ rather than be under pressure.

Much attention needs to be given to the thumb. It is the means by which the fingers are smoothly delivered to new positions over the keys, as may be seen as soon as playing moves out of the five-finger position and into preliminary work toward scale-playing. The thumb performs three distinct functions that are all indispensable in developing the machinery of the hand:

1. When it is used as a finger we notice that its action originates at its base: there is no independent articulation from its knuckle, as with the fingers.

2. When we turn the hand back and forth over the thumb resting at a fixed point, we become aware that it acts as a pivot.

3. If we then turn the hand over and inspect the movement of the thumb across the palm we note that its action originates at the wrist.

It is vital that these movements acquire a well-oiled ease with no tension at the thumb’s base. The sensation should be of folding the thumb, not forcing it. In scale playing the essential skill is to have the thumb move under the neighbouring fingers exactly as it releases its first key, so that it is actually in position just before it is due to play its second note.
This approach not only lays the basis for securely controlled playing, but introduces the student to the concept of playing with anticipation, of acting slightly ahead of where he actually is in terms of the next sounds. Such enhanced reactions are the key to superior physical co-ordination in all pianistic situations, and to the pianist having sufficient time to listen and to play with plenty of 'room' to control and express to the fullest. For the performer, no tempo should be perceived as overly quick. In my own experience, because I possess a strong sense of onward movement in my playing, I have to guard against impetuosity - a certain sense of jumping ahead particularly toward downbeats, and not giving fast music time to breathe. As I say to students: "You must be like a driver of a sports car who wishes to give his passenger an exciting and exhilarating ride. By all means go fast and revel in showing your skill and the capability of the machine, but do not make the passenger scared. Your job is to convey excitement, not to become excited yourself.” Another image is that of the striker in football or the tennis player executing breathtaking moves with total control at a speed that to the onlooker is impossible to take in. Such superior co-ordination is one of the basic attributes of the professional pianist and the means by which he can acquire the detachment needed to listen and monitor his playing continuously even while being caught up in the expressive act of making the music happen for the listener. One more sporting analogy! The pianist must be both the fully committed player and the eagle-eyed referee.

Arpeggio playing represents a further technical development in which the hand has to learn the particular shapes and positions involved in patterns involving non-adjacent keys. Further, the arm will be covering the width of the keyboard faster, given that each octave of an arpeggio will contain three or four notes compared to the eight of
A further, more advanced skill comes with mastery of double-notes, the full range of intervals up to the octave, both smoothly and detached, over a wide range of attack and dynamics. Again, aspects of strength and resilience are seen in a context where the absolute simultaneous sounding of notes is essential. Chordal writing can cause problems particularly for smaller hands. Here it is important to note the exact internal shapes of the hand and how they alter often subtly between adjacent chords. It is quite common to find inexperienced players grabbing at the keys. Psychologically it is helpful to have the image of the keys waiting to be struck and taking time initially to sink into them, often from a great height, standing before the piano. Here, the idea is to have the precisely positioned hand which should feel like a powerful claw, taking hold of the chord with deliberation. Care should be taken that the fingers are aimed to the middle of the keys, with none slipping off the edge of black notes in particular. Once this ‘courage’ has been primed, the reduced heights involved in playing in a normal seated position appear much less extreme. In other contexts too, a difficulty will be assisted by initially increasing it. This is especially so in the matter of what are usually known as jumps or leaps but which are more accurately shifts across the keyboard at various speeds. Even at high speeds it is important not to operate jerkily: the sensation is rather the lightest possible pick up and place down motion within the “taking hold” condition referred to earlier.

Ways of Listening

The development of these technical skills must take place within a nurturing of the player’s ability to listen accurately. This process takes place on two levels. On one
level is the monitoring of sounds as they are produced, manifested in continual subtle adjustments of tonal articulation and quality, and textural balance. The other process lies in the simultaneous awareness of ‘inner’ listening which so often provides the true model for presenting the sound. For example, the adjacent notes in a melody line played with a crescendo will increase in intensity, yet the piano by its nature will provide a diminuendo on every note. Moreover, the player has control of the sound only at its very onset, as the hammer arrives at the string. In this context, he will need to play consecutive notes by following his inner concept of the intensifying sound, while his outer listening will involve monitoring the actual sounds. Furthermore, a melodic line will require a beautifully crafted legato as if sung by the finest voice. This illusion will be fostered by the treatment of the accompaniment, by sensitive pedalling and by an ongoing flexibility of rhythm, which will suggest the rising intensity associated with a crescendo. However, the crucial ingredient is the quality of the pianist’s touch. He must release the maximum sustaining sound from the string with the minimum of initial impact and transitions from note to note must be as smooth as possible, as in the equivalent walk, where there will be no sound of footfall, and the action of the legs and feet will promote the most gliding movement of the body.

In considering such issues, we become aware of the mysteriously ambiguous nature of the piano: a skilled player can evoke sounds that transcend the apparent intractability and limitation of the instrument’s essentially percussive action.

**Maintaining Concentration in Practice**

The pianist needs also to consider ways of maintaining full attention within a lengthy
practice session. It is inescapable that much of the pianist's work will involve repetition of material, yet that very repetition can easily lead to loss of concentration and full musical meaning. The activity is essentially a lonely one: just the pianist, the piano and a room. The effectiveness of practice lies in having full control over exactly what is to be achieved in the next minute as much as in having targets for the next hour. An inexperienced student may often waste time or lose focus. Like a good general he must be a master of both tactics and strategy: he must find solutions to particular difficulties while not losing sight of the whole. So, it is important that practice which focuses on detail and small sections, be balanced by taking in a complete movement or work in order to integrate the particular ever more into the entirety. There will also be a point at which intensive work may be profitably followed by a period of letting it lie fallow, of digesting it, before resuming active attention toward it. As another example, the need for slow practice may not be confined to the early stages of learning: going back to this work after the piece is fully fluent and secure can assist in giving a sense of having more 'room' to play.

Conclusion

Such are the skills a young player will need to acquire. But it cannot be stressed too much that this work needs to take place within an environment which nourishes the passion for playing, encourages a feeling for beauty and meaning and builds connection with the musical content. As guest artist to the Australian National Academy of Music in 1999, I provided a statement, published in the Academy's Advanced Performance Program brochure. It still expresses my view on the essential integrity that must inform the training of talented young artists:

We are working together daily to get closer to the heart of the matter: acquiring
technical mastery not only as an end in itself but as the means by which we can express ourselves most directly, developing the deep concentration needed to prepare and perform major works, and stimulating the liveliest imagination which enables us to feel more intensely, widely and freely, within an informed appreciation of style and content. (p.14).

In this paper, I set out to explore the relationship between the pianist and the piano by surveying the range of skills which must be acquired in order to be a well equipped pianist. Within the following paper there will be further considerations as to how these are used toward artistic ends in performance. More investigation into how the intrinsic characteristics of the piano influence and stimulate the performer will be coupled with speculation on how listeners receive and process music, an exploration of the relationship between composer, performer and listener, and a survey of ways in which a performer interprets a musical text.
Experiencing Music

Preamble

Musicians can be suspicious of words and theory. The task of ordering my thoughts into a hopefully intelligible shape has been challenging, and not only because of its unfamiliarity. Indeed, I have wondered whether the task of preparing this paper might actually threaten my instinctive self, which is essential to me as a performer. But what is it about performing that is apparently so at odds with the process of writing?

Music is essentially non-verbal and during a performance the player must live within the moment and essentially commune with the music. The ability to listen and react to the characteristics of both the instrument and ambience of the hall, not only acoustically, but also in relation to the atmosphere which is imparted by the concentration of the listeners as the work is presented, is a process which should happen without intellectual intervention at the time of performance. Processes that happen naturally and unconsciously for the performer need to remain undisturbed. However, there is much which repays enquiry and analysis. What follows is an attempt to give an account of the nature and extent of that which concerns and fascinates me as a musician who is intent on conveying to his listeners the content of musical compositions. The process of creating this paper has involved research, background reading and reflection, which have stimulated me to examine and develop my thoughts on the nature of music and its performance. But I remain a practical musician, not a theorist. My most rewarding situation occurs when presenting the
result of my efforts, through making the music come to life in performance.

**Introduction**

In this paper, I will begin by looking into the early origins and development of music and the parallels with language, in order to identify common functions. I then consider how these functions subsequently diverged and acquired discrete uses as Western civilization developed.

We commonly regard music as expressive, yet it is not sentient, so how may we hold this view? How does music convey expression? I seek to answer these questions while investigating how music is experienced in terms of emotional response. I also address the notion of how humans perceive music and respond to it.

We live at a particular time when the status and function of music have undergone a profound shift, and I accordingly make some observations about the current state of music in contemporary Western society.

This is followed by a detailed survey of the related functions of composer, performer and listener in the communication and reception of musical structure and feeling. The importance of an accurate and perceptive interpretation of composer’s texts is considered, then the key aspects of acquiring a sense of style appropriate to particular music. There is examination of the ways that performers can learn directly from composers, through personal encounters and study of their own performances of their works, and by understanding how composers strive to make clear their conceptions and feelings. This is followed by a consideration of the role of the listener in
communicating music. Finally, there are observations on the role of the performer and what he can do to convey the content of musical works.

Overall, I will attempt to describe the areas of knowledge and of speculation that have contributed significantly to my understanding of the processes involved in successful performance. I will consider that which is describable in terms of factual information, opinion, and thought. However, in the act of performing the performer speaks to his listener through sound. Something magical can occur in the space between the performer and the listener, defying description, but being experienced as transformational. Both parties will bring the totality of their sensory, instinctive and imaginative faculties to bear, in creating a bond that is often palpable in the atmosphere generated by an eloquent performance.

Early Origins of Music: Parallels with Language

Our knowledge of music in prehistoric times is limited, yet there is enough evidence to show that it was essential to the life of our early ancestors. Rock paintings from the Paleolithic period depict people dancing, and in the caves where they lived, primitive flutes made from carved bones have been found.

We may speculate that the earliest attempts to communicate would have been by uttering vocal sounds of a range of volume and pitch that would convey the information necessary for survival, such as warning of danger. At another extreme, it is possible that the cooing and reassuring noises we still use when relating to babies and pets, are a distant echo of our hominid ancestors, as the British archaeologist
Steven Mithen suggests in *The Singing Neanderthals* (2005). He speculates that they had a ‘musical’ culture in which a form of rudimentary communication, derived from basic instincts and emotions, was bound up with survival and social interaction. From a totally different time and perspective, Richard Wagner held a similar view. In his 1860 essay *Music of the Future* (1979), he tells us that “to assume that Man’s first language originally bore a close resemblance to song is perhaps not utterly ridiculous.” (p.7). Storr (1997), describes such early communication as satisfying “…a subjective, emotional need for communication with other human beings which is prior to the need for conveying objective information or exchanging ideas”. (p.16)

Throughout the ages, music has retained this property of communicating the exploration of instinct and feeling.

It was the development of spoken, then written, language that furnished us with the means to develop our capacity for reasoning and acquiring knowledge. This urge to make sense of the world has had its effect on the development of music and an educated listener will therefore be aware that musical works are constructed with intellectual rigour. Such sophistication is achievable because music can be notated. As the Australian composer and commentator Andrew Ford (2005) points out,

...the invention of sound is nearly always partly a visual matter. Because of this, composers since the Middle Ages have been able to construct music that involves the exact repetition of figures or their inversions. ... Whether in search of balance or simply as a form of game playing, these are the sorts of patterns that can only be created with the visual aid of notation. (p.23)

Both written and spoken language may communicate information and provide the recipient with knowledge. Notated music in itself however, (unlike that from an oral
tradition where information is conveyed through it being set in a musical context) can never communicate knowledge, no matter how intricate the work may be. Instead, it relies on the participation of perceptive performers and receptive listeners to determine its content and to give it meaning. Just as the writer must use the vocabulary of everyday life, where words have acquired a precise meaning, so does the composer use sounds that have an associative meaning for the listener, who is sensitized to a particular music vernacular by instinct and habit. Yet there are important distinctions to be drawn between musical and verbal language. The distinguished American composer and teacher Roger Sessions (1965) analyses this.

In music, rhythm, tempo, dynamic intensity, as well as pitch and every nuance of harmony are controlled with utmost precision while specific association is at most conveyed through words sung, images evoked by the help of a program, or drama made visible on the stage. The gesture [therefore] is...in the foreground, whereas in literature, the words in their specific sense, evocative, associative, and even sonorous, bear the expressive burden. With words...it is the gesture and inflection that are left comparatively free. Rhythm is controlled only in a very general sense; it is subject to the widest possible variety of interpretation without fear of distortion. (pp.25-26)

Wagner (1979) held that as language evolved, “it became more and more abstract, with the result that eventually words were left with only a conventional meaning, in the understanding of which feeling played no part...” (p.28). For him, poetry was the manifestation of language which most closely linked it to its origin in song, and it could develop only by either “[giving] itself over entirely to abstraction, to pure combinations of mental concepts and interpretations of the world by explaining the logical laws of thought – as [in] philosophy. Or it effects an intimate union with
Poetry does indeed come close to music in that the quality of its very sound assists in making its expressive point. But in his *Form and Performance* (1962) Erwin Stein insists on a distinction between the two:

Inflexions of the speaking voice may amount to spoken melodies and impart to a recited poem an inkling of musical sound. The kinship of the two arts has created one of their finest flowers: the song. Yet their media are fundamentally different. However skilfully the poet applies the musical quality of language, they (*sic*) remain secondary to the meaning of the words. The sounds of music depend for their sense on the way they are shaped... (p. 18).

The leading British composer, Michael Tippett, also takes the view that words primarily convey their literal meaning. However, he regards this as a comparatively recent development, associated with the rise of scientific discovery. In medieval times, religious faith, superstition, and magic were integrated and part of the everyday. Later, as we have come to believe more exclusively in what is scientifically verifiable, words have become more associated with practical usage.

Tippett (1974) writes:

magic was still part of the real world, but soon after Shakespeare's day the temper of the West gradually changed. People became increasingly drawn to the world of discovery, of inventions, of technics. Emotional energy, which before had been somehow divided between the inner world and the real world, tended to become centred in the one world of technics. Consequently poetic imagination suffered an increasingly severe deprivation. In order to live it became romantic and eccentric. (p. 16).
This fragmentation of experience had far-reaching effects and this is reflected in the evolution of Western art music. To take two examples:

1. We find that the acceptance of the will of deity and belief in immortality gives way to a much more personal expression of belief and doubt. We may contrast the certainty of faith we perceive in Bach’s work with the sense of inner struggle we are aware of in Beethoven’s Missa Solemnis. Here is the lone individual whose longing for certainty conflicts with his rationalism. As Solomon (2001) points out, “...the Missa Solemnis forecasts the theological questions and doubts – along with the warfare between science and religion – that were to dominate the intellectual battleground of the nineteenth century.” (p.404).

2. The development of music in the nineteenth century was closely linked to the rise of an urbanized middle class, in the wake of the exploitation of the scientific discoveries that led to the Industrial Revolution. Musical works were now composed specifically for public performance in the large spaces of the new concert halls that, from the middle of the century were erected in leading world cities. Cook (2000) coins the term “bourgeois subjectivity” (p.18) in relation to the middle class’ exploration of their inner feelings. The music became more personal in expression and the composer was often able to wield great power. In Wagner particularly, we sense a yearning for the transcendental, an appropriation of the listener, who is to be engulfed by the unified power of music, poetry and staged drama. In his dealings with patrons he not only brooked no compromise artistically but also insisted that the work he did entitled him to live in luxury and free of material responsibility. We see also the concurrent rise of the virtuoso solo performer. This was a time of the artist as
prophet and hero. We may indeed see that the evolution of what Tippett described as “romantic and eccentric” imagination, arose from underlying developments associated with divisions in the human psyche.

But, there are innate properties of music that remain constant, regardless of its historical provenance. Unlike a novel or a painting, music is not ‘about’ anything, except in an incidental sense. Although much is written concerning music’s content, it is only the sound that conveys the meaning, and this happens at the moment of perception. Literary descriptions of music are inadequate compared with the sound itself. Indeed, as Copland (2002) tells us, music “may even express a state of meaning for which there exists no adequate word in any language.”(p.10).

Mendelssohn too, puts this very well, (Cooke 1990):

The thoughts expressed to me by a piece of music which I love are not too indefinite to put into words, but on the contrary too definite. And so I find, in every attempt to express such thoughts, that something is right but at the same time, something is unsatisfying in all of them. (p.251).

Craft (2006) quotes from Schoenberg’s diary for 27 January 1912 concerning his publisher’s request for descriptive titles for the then new *Five Pieces for Orchestra, Op 16*. Schoenberg writes:

On the whole unsympathetic to the idea. For the wonderful thing about music is that one can say everything in it, so that he who knows, understands everything; and yet one hasn't given away one's secrets, the things one doesn't admit even to oneself. (p.63).

If music has the capacity to carry communicable meaning, can it be considered as the
equivalent of a spoken language? We will be aware certainly of the intelligibility of a particular music, even one that is quite exotic to our ears. I recall hearing Japanese ceremonial and theatre music and Balinese gamelan in their local settings. The impression of an organised vernacular was immediate, but my understanding of the content was nothing, particularly compared to the richness I perceive in music of my own tradition and civilisation, to which I belong and am attuned. Meyer (1956) quotes Bertrand Russell: "Understanding language is like... understanding cricket: it is a matter of habits acquired in oneself and rightly presumed in others". (p.39).

If we pursue this definition, we may conclude that spoken language may not be so much the means through which the world is explained, but the way to create an intelligible meaning for that world. Cook (2000) cites the work carried out by anthropologists and linguists among native North Americans in the USA:

They found you couldn't properly translate native American languages into English: the categories didn't match up. The best-known example (the number of words the Eskimos have for 'snow') may be apocryphal, but the principal extends to more basic linguistic categories involving, for instance, the use of tenses or the distinction between active and passive voices. The categories didn't match up because in fundamental ways native Americans didn't experience the world in the same way as English-speakers. And one of these linguists, Benjamin Lee Whorf, came up with a radical theory... of how this came about: maybe, he suggested, language doesn't simply reflect the different ways in which different cultures see the world, but actually determines how they do so. Maybe, in short, language constructs rather than represents reality. (p.72).

We may recognise in this theory a direct link with the properties of music to which
Copland and Mendelssohn refer in earlier quotations. The fact that music of a particular culture will not translate to another, or that any music is untranslatable into spoken language, in no way detracts from its core property in creating a space for the listener to be free to imagine and become whole through his perception and experience of this constructed reality. Proust, (1981) wondered whether music might not be the unique example of what might have been – if the invention of language, the formation of words, the analysis of ideas had not intervened – the means of communication between souls. It is a possibility that has come to nothing; humanity has developed along other lines, those of spoken and written language. (p.260).

**Emotion in Music**

Although music of itself cannot express a specific emotional meaning clear to all, it employs procedures that, as they become familiar to the sympathetic listener, will 'trigger' certain reactions. For example, in the Western tradition, chromaticism denotes a heightened intensity of anxiety or longing, especially when it is associated with prolongation of unresolved discord in the harmonic language. The minor mode tends to convey a feeling of sadness in comparison with the major. We are also aware that we may accommodate the reception of a wide range of musical styles in which the hierarchy of consonance and dissonance is highly differentiated. (Consider the harmonic aspects of music by Mozart, Wagner and Bartok for example). Performance conventions are also important. For example, in much non-Western music, folk idioms and jazz, the performer's use of deliberate distortions of pitch are recognised as intensifications of feeling. This is considered incongruous in the performance of
All such procedures and conventions in musical language are processed by the listener. As Meyer (1956) puts it, they “are human mental phenomena and as such they depend for their definition upon the psychological laws governing human perception, upon the context in which the perception arises, and upon the learned response patterns which are part of this context.” (p.230) These responses build the framework within which we experience strong and varied emotional reactions while listening to or playing music. Are these feelings real in the sense that, for example, a person might feel sad at the death of a loved one, or are they surrogate feelings, where it is as if one feels sad?

Music itself may be said to represent, for example, sadness without itself being sad, in the same way that what we perceive as the always lugubrious face of a St Bernard dog, may not indicate its mood. Further, what we feel may not be sadness itself, since that feeling in real life is associated with pain within the context of personal loss or grief. Genuine sadness will be experienced when the music heard has particular painful associations for the listener. But often we can be moved by music that has no such link to a life event. Why is it we welcome this feeling in the context of listening to music, and even seek to repeat it, while in life we will certainly not choose to experience it? Is there a possibility that musical representations of sadness draw on our ‘real’ experience of it in causing us to conjure up a distilled essence of the

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1 Although up to around 1930, extensive use of portamento (sliding between pitches) was common in string playing.
emotion that captures its poignancy without connection to a particular object or human situation?

Conversely, it may teach us about the emotion in advance of experiencing it humanly, as in the case of musically sensitised children. I recall being moved strongly at the age of ten when hearing the slow movement of the Beethoven *Quartet in F, Op. 59 No. 1* and a little later, the discovery of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*, particularly the final movement, affected me deeply. In these instances I experienced feelings of what I later, through life events, recognised as grief.

The restorative, even healing power of music may be connected to its property of arousing deep emotion in this non-threatening way. The ancient Greeks recognised this in the idea that we are better off through sublimating feelings perceived as potentially damaging, through art.

This carries the implication that we experience these feelings in the context of the unfolding of events. The philosopher Stephen Davies (Juslin and Sloboda 2001) thinks that, “Because music is a temporal art, its expressive character is revealed only gradually and can be heard only through sustained attention to its unfolding.” (p.35).

Indeed, when we consider the musical masterpieces of the European tradition, it is clear that they speak to us not merely as a sequence of passing moods and feelings, but that the structures within which they are presented are themselves implicitly expressive. The fact that we hear music as time passes means that we are always aware of a particular moment in the context of what has gone before. We have a tendency to create continuities of experience so that when events are presented in
succession, we make our own links between them. As in life, so in music.

Importantly, we conceive music as having movement. Storr (1997) thinks “this may be connected with the fact that the auditory system originally developed from the vestibular system which is specifically designed to provide information about up, down, left, right, back and front.” (p.172).

So, in our internal perception, there is an implicit correlation between hearing, space and time. Sessions (1965) points out that

...movement seen is bounded by our range of vision: we never can closely follow it off into space unless we ourselves move. Sound...is never static, but invariably impermanent; it either ceases or changes. By its very nature it embodies for us movement in time, and as such imposes no inherent limits. (p.19).

As listeners, we provide moment-to-moment interpretations of aural relationships. Thus we will be aware of the concept of musical space as a consequence of its existence in time, which we comprehend in terms of ‘before and after’ from the standpoint of a particular moment. On a deeper level our appreciation of musical movement may lead us to experience powerful images. Within the temporal duration of a complete work we recognise and respond to its narrative, organic flow and eventual emotional catharsis. Its cumulative effect can be felt as the resolution of powerful emotions. This may often produce the most profound satisfaction for an attuned listener. Stravinsky (2000) held that “all music is nothing more than a succession of impulses that converge towards a definite point of repose.” (p.35).

**How Music is Used**

Music is susceptible to different uses. Probably from earliest times, it would have
heightened the atmosphere and incited ardour at such emotionally charged events as military combat, quasi-religious rituals, rites and ceremonial occasions. Indeed, we still use music for such purposes.

We are aware of the link between music and bodily movement. Lively rhythm will cause us to respond demonstratively by dancing, clapping, toe-tapping and so forth. On the other hand, certain music may cause the listener to become still and introspective. There is no separation between the body and the soul.

We are also aware of music as establishing enduring cohesion in communities worldwide, through a rich legacy of songs and dance music which celebrate and commemorate the stations of the human span as well as the beliefs and values of each society. Storr, (1997) quoting the psychologist J. Sloboda, points out that, 

Songs and rhythmically organised poems and sayings form the major repository of knowledge in non-literate cultures. This seems to be because such organised sequences are much easier to remember than the type of prose which literary societies use in books. (p.19).

Ford (2005) makes the related point that “If you do not record your music, you are forced to remember it ... in an oral tradition you try to pass on a song as accurately as possible, or the knowledge is lost” (p.22). He perceptively compares this to the Western tradition of notating music, which has often enabled drastic changes in music’s style and range, without the loss of what went before.

Today, we may be aware that Western art music, which had previously been regarded as the product of its creator, or the object of communion with its performer or listener,
is now perceived as a commodity and is taking its place, in a small corner within an
environment dominated by big business. Not so long ago it was usual to refer to the
“music profession”. Now the “music industry” is the most common designation.
Considered overall, music is a huge industry, due to the proliferation of recordings
and easy access to it through radio, TV and the internet. Music is also now commonly
heard in situations where it becomes essentially an adjunct to other activities.

One leading example of this is the use of music in films. When we view movie
images, they normally form the primary focus of attention, with the music acting as
decoration or intensification. The viewer/listener accepts willingly the use of even
advanced musical idioms in this context, such as the complex works of Ligeti featured
extensively in Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, which have a small and specialised
audience in their original conceptions as abstract pieces.

The other such pervasive use of music is seen in the growth of muzak. This is a
highly manipulative genre, aimed at influencing people in a working or retail
environment by providing background music which has been carefully crafted to
influence behaviour in specific ways: productivity in the workplace, enhanced
purchasing in the shopping mall, creating an atmosphere of conviviality in restaurants
and bars. Goehr (1998) makes the point concerning muzak that
to make its full effect it must be composed, as it were, in reverse. You have to start
with the effect it is intended to make, and then translate this into sound material.
Any genuine musical ideas must be reduced and limited so as not to interrupt the
regular pre-established framework. (p.152)

This phenomenon has become so pervasive that it has achieved the status of aural
pollution, and together with mobile phone chatter, is increasingly difficult to avoid. Too much aural garbage in the form of music indiscriminately broadcast in public places also contributes to noise levels. It is now often nearly impossible to find public environments free of such noise even in suburbs and small towns. Such conditions must have an effect in desensitising hearing and lessening our ability to listen acutely. As we shall discuss elsewhere, there is an implicit relationship between music and silence. Indeed, silence too has certain qualities which may be appreciated as distinctive. I am now grateful that as a child I often attended the Sunday School at my parents' local Quaker Meeting for Worship. On each occasion, for the last 15 minutes we were introduced to the adult Meeting which, according to the custom of Friends, was held in silence, broken only when a member felt moved to speak. I realise that this regular experience provided an unusual training in not only being quiet, but in listening to silence.

The music industry provides its largely young market with typically ephemeral musical product and performers. In contrast to the traditional presentation of classical music in 'live' performance, the basic outlet for the performer of such pop music is not the concert but the CD, DVD, or, most recently, the Internet. Pop groups will go on tour to promote an album, and the live event will seek to replicate the sound on the recording, even to the extent of the performers miming their own playing and singing to the original recording.

The organisation of concert tours for marketing purposes is also occurring as a key element in the promotion of certain young classical artists such as the pianist Lang Lang, (targeting particularly the rapidly growing market in China as well as the huge Chinese diaspora worldwide.) It is seen as highly desirable that new classical artists,
like their counterparts in popular music, be seen as young, attractive and telegenic. Here is a further indication that the focus has shifted from music as art-form to product, and the musician from interpreter to personality.

The urban consumer may choose from as wide a range of music as of restaurant cuisine. In fact, music has now assumed the function of an aspect of lifestyle and is manufactured and packaged to maximise its sales potential. Product and performance styles thus tend to emphasise the surface impact or allure of sound and content at the expense of depth and intensity of sound. Such sound is coherent wherever it is played: at home, in public or on an automobile sound-system while driving. Close microphone placement too often makes for a tonal landscape of equal clarity in all elements of the texture, and dynamics below forte are often undifferentiated. When we observe a view, we expect that detail will be less clear the further away we are from it. This imparts depth to the way we see, (and is reflected in the manner that artists in the Western tradition have used colour and texture within the prevailing technique of perspective.) Music too is commonly designed in this way. However, it is possible to tamper with such tonal perspectives by means of multi-channel recording. The producer of a recording now has great influence in determining the sound to be presented to the consumer. If all elements of a texture are given too equal a prominence, the sound picture becomes flattened and lacks sufficient tonal dimension and variety. Over time, such recordings will influence all listeners, including those who are also professional performers. Musicians need to be aware of the implications of such exposure in distorting characteristic sound-worlds. Brendel, (2002) for example, writes that he does not strive for something that quite a few sound engineers regard today as the ideal: to play everything equally clearly, to make all the voices equally distinct. That does
not help the listener. Some things must remain in the background, and sometimes the sound may be veiled. If the music imposes this on you as a necessity, then you will do it (p.191).

Particularly in orchestral music, separate channels designed to record each section of the ensemble can be manipulated during or subsequent to a recording in order to artificially balance the sound in ways that cannot have been envisaged by their composers. It is as if a scene were lit in strip lighting which casts no shadow. If the sound is too dry, resonance may be added. Such sound-pictures produced in recordings have increasingly become the models for the sound expected and duly delivered in the concert hall. Horowitz (1994) gives his reaction to a 1978 performance at Carnegie Hall, New York, of Brahms' Symphony No. 1 by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and their then principal conductor, Georg Solti:

The strings in particular, thrust forward great sheets of sound in order to hold their own with the winds and percussion. The effect was uncanny, as if someone had turned a knob to obtain a uniform increase in volume. Nearly as odd was the sound's texture, with each orchestral choir cold, forward and discrete. Rather than mingling or diffusing, the instrumental components of Brahms' First clamped into place like precision-tooled parts. Solti's interpretation was neutral with regard to tempo and articulation, except where the accents seemed exaggerated or the "lyric" phrasings peculiarly musclebound. Afterward...it occurred to me that an electronically dissected orchestra fed through giant speakers could have stirred up the same excitement. (p.414).

In piano playing also, the public has grown accustomed to a similar sound, brightly lit and free of shadows, precise in attack, with characterisation prone to exaggerations of
dynamics and tempi. The result is that while expertise in instrumental playing is at a high level, interpretations are becoming more one-dimensional and homogenized. The danger for the performer is that he will lose the ability to connect with his listeners at the moment of communication, in his attempts to reproduce the 'perfection' of the recorded performances he believes his audience has come to expect. Yet, attendance at live performances where the spirit of communication was palpably in the air, convinces me that when the performer takes the lead in establishing rapport at an individual level with the single listeners who comprise an audience of whatever size, a bond may be established and held for the duration. Communicating feeling, understanding and imagination, expressed through mastery of all the elements which the performer may call upon, must be his prime concern as an artist. Later in this paper, these aspects will be discussed.

The institution of the public concert still retains its place. When an individual attends, it represents a decision to listen to music in the company of others, while at least potentially being fully absorbed only in its substance. This choice may often be taken in reaction to a saturation of the senses to which we are exposed. Indiscriminate and unavoidable exposure to noise of all kinds is now the bane of everyday life. In the ritual of the concert, musicians and listeners set aside time to convey and experience the power of music in conditions that are created to that end only. For the performer, the influence of a receptive audience is of immense value in heightening the intensity of his urge to communicate.
Music in Society

Having touched on aspects of music’s standing and reception in the present cultural environment, it is appropriate also to examine its status in society, in particular its position within the arts, and how it is regarded by Government.

A profound change has occurred over the last thirty years in the relationship between the arts and government. It has always been recognised that subsidy was a prerequisite, whether this was provided by the Church and aristocracy or, since the late 19th century, increasingly by government. Ford (2005) tells us that conservative politicians in particular believed in [art] because it was thought to represent the pinnacle of Western civilization. It was, in fact, a significant part of what those conservatives were trying to conserve. Small-l liberals, on the other hand, believed you did not merely conserve culture, you had to subsidise it, you brought it to the masses via public education, public libraries and public broadcasting. And, note, they wanted to bring culture to people. They were not talking about making art accessible; on the contrary, the idea was to make people accessible to art. (p.34).

Now, we live in the consequences of the Thatcher/Reagan economic revolution. The notion of community has been replaced by that of the citizen as consumer. Increasingly, more of us are implicated in the unceasing pursuit of economic growth as we follow our superannuation or pension fund returns. These rely for growth on rising stock markets. This in turn relies on increased consumption to enhance profits for stockholders. Our first duty, it seems, is to go forth and shop. The arts are seen as luxuries for “elite” groups, who can no doubt afford them. Far better to appear to give
money back to ordinary people in the form of tax cuts and carefully targeted subsidies. Ford (2005) is dismissive of this “user-pays” argument, which depending upon whether you believe it or not...is self-fulfilling or self-defeating. We should not subsidise the arts because they are for the elites who can well afford to pay; but if we do not subsidise the arts, they will always be only for the elites who can pay (p.36).

Governments in fact are ready to take credit for the money it allocates to the arts and culture, but it is apparent that the large sums they spend are overwhelmingly devoted to the bricks and mortar of infrastructure. In the case of representational art-works, (painting and sculpture) there is no shortage of product to be shown in the new museums of modern art which are currently represented as a necessity in projecting the image of a significant city in the eyes of international travelers and investors, and potential purchasers of real estate. Such artworks have become increasingly valuable, and are highly prized as an integral part of an expanding portfolio of assets. Museums too will benefit from rising prices, as they build their collections, very often with pieces sold, donated or lent by collectors. When an artist is represented in leading public collections, the stock of that artist also rises in terms of the price his work will fetch. This also impresses the public, who are more inclined to look favourably on works which have a palpably proven value.

An equivalent poem, play, novel or musical work has no such worth except as a manuscript of possible value. However, these artifacts do not usually achieve public exposure, but remain largely hidden in archive collections. They are in any case, not the essential artwork. They must be brought to life as sound, or experienced by the reader.
The performing arts are expensive to run, with the cost of fees and salaries to actors, dancers, orchestral musicians, conductors, soloists and management and utilities to be found. Yet, in comparison with the vast sums expended on buildings and their staff, very little public money is finding its way to the performing arts companies (theatre, opera, ballet, symphony orchestra) who inhabit them. The implication is clear: government values the infrastructure, but is not so interested to assist in sufficiently funding performance programmes that are able to demonstrate creative initiative and enterprise alongside consistently high performance standards. Politicians are happy enough to point to the support for occasional festivals which may include artists and works out of the usual run, but for the most part performing arts companies are obliged to play very safe in their programming, lest they alienate their regular audiences. However, a rich artistic environment, especially for a city, is characterised by having the resources to systematically lead and educate audiences over the longer term to appreciate, and then expect, programmes of the widest range, including the most distinctive contemporary works, in performances of brilliance and insight. This would be no more than equivalent to the programmes often currently presented in the representational arts.

There is evidence that governments value musical activity in schools, and educationalists openly point out the usefulness of art and music in encouraging children to participate, to improve co-ordination, learn about the culture of others, and to promote happiness. In the United Kingdom, current guidelines and programmes focus on the need for music to be available to all. The emphasis falls more on students being able to express themselves, but rather less on giving them the techniques to do so with skill and precision. The cultural critic, Frank Furedi, (2006)
argues that

The main merit of inclusive art is that it is, in principle, accessible to anyone. This emphasis on accessibility indicates that the priority of the politics of culture is engagement with the public rather than with the content of artistic and intellectual life... Today, the politics of inclusion makes no attempt to cultivate and elevate the public taste. On the contrary, it regards the taste of the public as something to flatter and celebrate. Official cultural politics is not merely populist, it is also philistine...[this] has meant that the political agenda of access, inclusion and diversity becomes the arbiter of educational and cultural life. Music and art are judged not according to an aesthetic standard but a political one. (p.200).

Such an agenda is likely to restrict student's exposure to music which may be considered beyond their understanding, being judged as irrelevant or too difficult. This may be seen as a deprivation. A potentially sensitised child is in great need of access to music which though beyond his current comprehension, is able to touch and excite. This is the first step in becoming attuned to music. If musical exposure is restricted to works considered relevant to a child's current experience and development, that child is likely to grow up with the attitude that classical music is not for him. I had the great good fortune to be taken to solo and chamber music concerts from a very early age. I did not need to understand the content to know that I was deeply enchanted, and experiencing the music in public performances ensured that I listened quietly, attentive only to the sound.

This state of fascination must be augmented by knowledge, understanding and discipline if real learning is to occur. Parents today, finding a lack of structure and concern for rigorous learning, not only in music, but across the range of curriculum
Subjects, are increasingly turning to independent schools, or home education.

When students, who are drawn to music, consider tertiary training in the subject, those of us who work in the sector come into close touch with the results of the current agenda. My colleagues and I hear candidates presenting themselves for audition as pianists wishing to study at QCGU. Their documentation often informs us that they have attained a ranking of "excellent" in the performance assessments that contribute toward their tertiary entrance score. Rather than the designation indicating an absolute standard, as one has every reason to expect, it turns out that "excellent" is the descriptor for students attaining the top percentile of their cohort. It is disturbing to experience this Orwellian corruption of language. We are usually unable to consider them as potential major-study pianists.

When we work with students who have been accepted, it is clear that the levels of background knowledge and appreciation of most of them is weak, as to history, the language of music, and its cultural context. It is as if they were setting out to climb a mountain without the basic equipment to survive. It is particularly sad when there is often so much enthusiasm, idealism and raw talent displayed by such students. Often, it is only as they finish their undergraduate course that they come to the realisation of just how much it is they did not know, and how much intellectual infrastructure they need.

Students with creativity are now more likely to find their outlet in "contemporary" music with its opportunity for collaborative music-making and the electronic manipulation of sound materials, in a genre which speaks a vernacular connected to their everyday lives and preoccupations. Their training is typically essentially
exploratory, and carried out in collaboration with their peers. Often, young musicians who grew up with a classical training, develop in this area, as they find their creativity stimulated by self-exploration and the realisation that they may find a welcoming audience for their work.

The best outcome for children drawn to classical music will lie in having the good fortune to find an instrumental teacher who can not only provide them with a secure technical and musical foundation, but who can also be a strong artistic role-model. Often this may be a musician parent. In any event, the home environment needs to provide structure and support for the serious work to be done. In an era of single-parent households, or both parents in employment, these conditions are less in evidence. (The Jewish household which used to be regarded as a propitious environment, has perhaps been supplanted by the discipline and energetic focus of their Chinese and Korean counterparts, typically displaying a more defined and exclusive role for each parent.) If children can have musical and social contact with others who are similarly enthused, through playing and learning together, the benefits of activity are enhanced. Children are also happy to find there are others like themselves, who are animated through music. Left too much alone, a talented child can become lonely and inward-looking.

A key factor is the development of integrity. In music we find something more than a collection of assessable skills. It is an endeavour in which energy, understanding, skill, commitment, ambition and love all contribute and combine to build a deep sense of purpose.

Currently, two countries stand out as providing model structures within which music
performs its transformational magic. In Venezuela, a youth orchestra programme developed over the last thirty years has involved thousands of youngsters at local levels. At its apex is the Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra of Venezuela. Their London appearance in the summer of 2007 elicited ecstatic reactions, and they are recording mainstream repertoire for the prestigious Deutsche Grammophon label. In Europe, the Finnish government has established a network of community-based music schools and performing arts groups which has had the cumulative effect of the country producing more top musicians than any other, in proportion to its population of less than six million. More importantly, high proportions of the populations of both countries have access to music as a real and vital force in their lives. Finland follows the Scandinavian social-democratic model, where its citizens consistently choose governments who tax highly in return for providing their citizens with a large range and high quality of social and cultural services. Venezuela currently has a strongly leftist government which is using its clout as a major oil producer to bid for leadership in the region. Beyond these political extremes, we may see a common way forward: to reclaim the idea of governments being once again responsive to their people as citizens, and to restore their right to development as fully rounded and integrated people with a connection to their roots and to their inner selves.

In both countries we see a policy which is concerned with widespread participation in music at every level of attainment, in fostering amateur music-making as well as professional performance. The idea of a small elite being herded together into specialist music schools or performing arts organisations is replaced with a policy of creating the widest spread of contact with music. In the Australian context, it is significant that the country’s leading social researcher, Hugh Mackay, makes this observation in his recent survey, *Advance Australia ... Where?* (2007)
In deciding which artists and organisations should receive government funding, we are in danger of overlooking a crucial point. The greatest public value of the arts is through participation in them, rather than in merely being exposed to them as spectators. The most intense benefits of the arts flow from creating and performing, so why aren't we using public money to extend those benefits more widely?

There are lessons to be learned from sport. The way to build a sporting culture is not only to pay top players a fortune, but also to foster grassroots participation across the nation. Personal participation, whether in sport or art, is also likely to increase our interest as spectators, though that isn't the main point. The more you look at the ills of contemporary society — alienation, fragmentation, isolation, depression — the more compelling the need for community participation in the arts seems. What better way of fostering a sense of community, promoting mental health and wellbeing, and reducing the pressures of a competitive, materialistic society than by encouraging widespread participation in the arts? (p.339).

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**The Performer-Composer Relationship**

**Introduction**

The fundamental task for the performer is to establish a close relationship with the texts of his chosen repertoire. This must be founded on a full awareness of the
compositional processes which lead to the composer's conception taking its eventual
final form.

The main factors which have been important for me in developing insight as a
performer are:

1. The ability to penetrate texts with perception as well as literal accuracy.

2. Consideration of how stylistic awareness plays its part by informing the
performer about the most suitable sound and presentation for a work.

3. Knowledge of the work of composers as performers of their own music, and
personal encounters during preparation of composers' works.

4. Knowledge of the way that composers function, and how they are motivated.

Concerning texts

The way that Western music is written is precise as regards rhythm, pitch and
harmony. Tempo, dynamics and articulation are very often indicated too, but are
more likely to be subject to the tonal and stylistic characteristics of the piece, and the
conditions under which the performance takes place. Thus, an allegro where the
harmony is rich and frequently changes is likely to be less swift than one where the
texture is lighter and the harmony simpler. We may think of both as possessing
aspects of flow, but the liquidity has different thickness and weight. As to conditions,
the size and resonance of a performance venue is likely to affect the performer's
choice of tempo, scale of dynamics and treatment of musical textures.

The performer must develop an acute eye for what the text is telling him, and also be sure that he is working from a text that is faithful to the composer. Many available editions are confusing because it is not clear to what extent the texts have been distorted by editorial interventions. The inspection of manuscripts and early editions can have special unforeseen results. Seeing the calligraphy, the slips of the pen and the crossings-out, may have the effect of drawing the attention of the reader to details he may have overlooked or taken for granted in the bland uniformity of a modern urtext edition, as well as giving him the sensation of being that much closer to the moment of original conception of the work. The pursuit of detail leads to enlightenment and perception if carried through with good sense, as well as imagination.

For example, looking at only the first page of Beethoven's Appassionata Sonata, Op. 57 (ex. 1), it is extraordinary how often the opening rhythm is corrupted in performance so that its 16th note is taken as an 8th. Not only is this factually wrong, but it is liable to lead the performer into choosing a too swift tempo. (See also the Scherzo of his Op. 31 No. 3 where the speed must accommodate the clear articulation of the 32nd notes in bar 43 et seq.). Again, at the phrase ends (bar 4, 8 etc.), the crochet length, within a compound 12/8 time signature, imparts a certain tight-lipped character which is missed if the player succumbs to what he might expect: holding the durations up to the second beat of the bar.

We note that the figure in bar 3 and 7 is within the prevailing pp but in bar 9 and 11 it acquires an expressive swell to mid-bar, then reducing: this will have an implication
for timing. The \textit{pp} is likely to be more literally in time than the inflected version.

At another level, Beethoven's choice of tonal presentation is provoking. Try playing the opening of the sonata with the left hand an octave higher and the result is weak and ordinary. The two-octave distance gives a more potent atmosphere by opening up an unexpectedly wide and chilling space between the two voices, which has the potential to grip the listener from the very outset.

A different challenge comes at bar 17. This first \textit{ff} outburst in the piece is intended to shock, but on our current powerful instruments, a literal interpretation of the dynamics will be too unbalanced. The energy and vehemence need to be especially focused to the top voice. The physicality of the gesture and the thickness of the chords in both hands will of themselves ensure the maximum impact.

Brahms provides the player with unexpected notations which need a perceptive response. The use of a \textit{crescendo} on many of the quarter-note upbeats of the \textit{Intermezzo, Op.118 No.1} (ex. 2) is puzzling, as this is clearly impossible on the piano. When we realise that he may be suggesting the effect of a powerful sustained up-bow on a violin, the performer's response to this evokes the intensity and timing of the gesture perfectly.

We notice how he draws attention to the inner voices in the treble by writing their note-stems downwards (from bar 5, at bar 11 to 15 etc.). Slurs over groups of notes show that there are irregularities of barring implied. The implicit barring from bar 33 to 36, is $5/8$, $3/2$, $3/2$, $3/8$. 

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In the next piece of the set, in A major, the spread of the dyad in the right hand at bar 2 seems unnecessary since many hands can play the notes together. But we are perhaps being asked to imagine a soprano floating her top A with expressive delicacy. Hence it must be played a little after the beat. We also see in this piece the wealth of subtle and varied harmonisations of its main theme, which seem to invite correspondingly nuanced treatment.

These examples give some idea of how detailed reading of texts can prompt perceptive responses in the awakened performer. But encounters with the totality of a work are also precious. However well-known a piece may be, each individual has the chance to meet it for the very first time, and it ought to happen with as much spontaneity as possible so that the music releases its potential to create surprise and delight as the musician explores it at the instrument. It is indeed a pity that the most usual such encounter for young musicians today is through hearing a recording. This essentially passive ingesting means that the essential aspect of meeting and discovering the work is bypassed. By the point that work begins at the instrument there are no surprises to be found, and the innocence of discovery has been missed.

So we may say that the totality of the work needs to speak to the reader without preconception. Appreciation of musical form is valuable, but this must not be regarded as a kind of jelly-mould into which the music is poured. If we look at the exposition of Mozart's Sonata in F, K. 332, we find little sign of conventional first and second subjects, but a rich and rapid succession of no less than seven musical ideas all highly varied in character. The development starts with yet another new idea! In the next sonata K. 333, the exposition is serene and civilised, with the musical narrative presented in terms of one leading line. Turn the page to the
development, and though the material is initially familiar, the world is different. The context is straight away full of dramatic potential, with two voices in dialogue. The music soon plunges into the minor mode for the first time, and the intensity continues right through to the point of recapitulation. We note the urgently rising melodic line with its expressive appoggiaturas from bar 87 and the subsequent obsessive wounding G flats in the bass.

Again, what are we to make of Schubert's late A major Sonata D. 959? The first movement already contains so much development of its material before the exposition is over. The formal development occupies a totally different world that seems to hover in disembodied mystery. Even when he finds himself in the tonic "home" key well before the recapitulation point, there is no feeling of return. It is as if Schubert had accidentally wandered into familiar territory without realising it.

Such examples teach us that each masterwork must be approached on its own terms, and its distinctiveness must be appreciated as a condition of real understanding.

There is no doubt that when a composer invites us to read extra-musical meanings into a piece, the imagination may be particularly stimulated. Beethoven's so-called Les Adieux Sonata in E flat major, Op. 81a, was begun upon the departure from Vienna of his friend, patron and composition student, the Archduke Rudolph, when the city was under bombardment from Napoleon's army in 1809. The first two movements, the 'Farewell' and the 'Absence', were only followed by the composition of the final 'Return' once the Archduke had returned to Vienna. This creates scope for speculation. The work clearly stands on its own as an abstract musical construction which is reasoned and satisfying with a perceptible range of feeling conveyed. It does
not seek to be descriptive by illustrating a detailed narrative. Yet, because we have Beethoven's scenario for the piece we may feel freer to interpret the music as an imaginative illustration of aspects embodied in the titles of the three movements.

The opening horn-call motif, as Rosen (2002) notes, is "a symbol in poetry well established by 1810, of distance, isolation and memory." (p.202). The first reharmonisation of it in bar 7, in the remote key of C flat seems to stand as a symbol of the distance to be traveled, the hesitations from bar 12 suggest an unwillingness to leave, while the sudden start to the Allegro conveys the idea of determination to overcome this and begin the journey. We may hear pictorial touches in the material, for example, the extensive treatment of the rhythmic cell derived from the first theme of the Allegro suggests the galloping of horses. The relatively long coda seems to evoke disappearance to a far-off place with its thin, very soft texture.

The very form of the slow movement, a sonata structure but without development, stands perfectly for the emptiness and loss of direction we associate with absence. The finale is clearly joyous as befitting reunion, but the poco andante coda is a special touch, seeming to look back at the whole experience from the standpoint of the now regained content at the happy outcome.

It may be argued that such speculation is quite superfluous to the music. Indeed, the piece works perfectly well as "pure" music. Yet the willingness and ability to make such naïve connections are evidence of an awakened imagination which undoubtedly assists in establishing a distinctive relationship with the work through the process of active personal discovery. This is quite distinct from an ability to appreciate formal structure, important though this is.
If *Les Adieux* seems particularly susceptible to this treatment, the performer may also find parallels in other contexts. In Beethoven's *Sonata, Op. 110*, the *arioso dolente*, on its return is marked *ermattet* (exhausted). The melody, formerly smooth, is now punctuated by short rests, as if fighting for breath. When we find similar fracturing, we recognise the same anguish: the final bars of the funeral march in the *Eroica* symphony, and the passage before the return of the main theme in the great slow movement of the *Sonata Op. 10 No. 3*. In such ways does the performer learn the language of what he is called upon to express. Through prolonged exposure and study of the repertoire he acquires the fullest range of associations across genres and historic periods that provide a rich source of material with which to develop an aware imagination.

Thus, we see that the informed pianist will need to have the experience of and contact with, such a wide range of music that he will be able to make appropriate decisions on interpreting the text and realising it instrumentally.

**Observations on style**

Years ago, in the museum at the RCM, I had my first opportunity to play on a fortepiano. This was a revealing and fruitful experience. I found that once my ear had become accustomed to less sheer output and power, I was aware of a highly distinctive variety of tone colour between the registers of the instrument. Given that this is the type of instrument that Mozart and Haydn would have played, what inferences can the modern pianist draw from this experience?
One is aware when playing an authentic instrument that Mozart, in particular, is exploiting the instrument's potential to the full, and this puts the pianist in touch with the power and range of the music in a vivid way. On the modern instrument one is too often preoccupied with the need to play with restraint relative to the hugely enhanced tonal capabilities of that instrument. The apparent restrictions of the fortepiano ensure that the scale of sound and graciousness of utterance are not at risk of being compromised when going to extremes. Returning to the grand piano, we realize the necessity for a crystalline clarity in the treble and particularly a lightening in the bass.

Like Mozart, Beethoven was able only to use the instruments that were available to him. Unlike Mozart, however, he often pushed the boundaries of instrumental capability in his pursuit of a more intense personal expression. A distinction may be made between his early piano writing and his later writing. These later works both arise from and express his expansion of form and corresponding weight of sound, which are apparent in his orchestral works from the Eroica onwards. However, we need to be sensitive to his extraordinary ability to apparently anticipate such developments in earlier works. For example, the slow movement of Op. 10 No. 3 surely displays a depth and intensity we usually associate with his middle period. He tended to explore technical and emotional extensions of style and content firstly through his own instrument, the piano, before consolidating in major chamber and orchestral essays.

Composers of the past were commonly stimulated to new inventiveness when confronted with improved instruments: equally, the music being written required increasingly better instruments. This process has implications for the interpreter's
decisions about style: if the superior instrument was a source of inspiration to the composer, then it is important that the interpreter realise the extent to which this affected the creator.

As an example of this composer-instrument relationship, we may take Haydn's growing awareness of the rapid developments in piano manufacture that were taking place from the late 1770s. As Walls recounts, (see Rink, 2002: p.26-27) in 1790, Haydn recommended to the pianist Maria von Genzinger, for whom he was writing a sonata (No. 49 in E flat), that she use not merely a fortepiano in place of the usual harpsichord, but specifically a Schanz instrument, which had previously impressed him by its lightness of touch. Knowing this preference, we can appreciate not only the transparency and fine detailing of the writing in this particular sonata but also the newly developing cantabile which was the outstanding attribute of the fortepiano over its predecessor.

Only four years later, when Haydn was in London, he encountered the more robust English pianos which had been developed under the influence of Clementi. Haydn’s exposure to this instrument is clearly evident in his last sonata (No. 52) where the writing is of an orchestral nature that he could not have previously envisaged for the piano. This sonata is a piano work of unique symphonic weight and inventiveness in his output. Haydn’s delight in finding an instrument capable of conveying such grandeur and spaciousness is palpable.

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2 Clementi, a remarkable composer, also had a unique combination of capabilities in developing the range and scope of piano playing simultaneously with improving the design and manufacture of the instrument, and publishing music. Beethoven acknowledged his influence.
Important though it is that performers should have insight into instrumental
development and its relation to compositional processes, this is not the whole story.
The aspect of the performance connected with historical authenticity will not of itself,
lead to an engaging outcome and so the question may be asked, what is it in such
pieces as these Haydn sonatas, that has held the interest of performers and audiences
in the intervening two centuries?

Barenboim (2003) holds that works of art have “two faces – one directed towards
eternity, the other toward its own time.”(p.55). Whatever the original inspirations for
the work, including the stimulus of a new instrument, or the talents of a particular
performer, the work now stands because of some property of intrinsic feeling which is
generated in the act of performance and thus speaks to audiences and performers. The
best music is susceptible to a range of valid interpretative approaches that will reflect
the individuality of new performers across the generations.

Of course, one encounters interpretations whose validity may be questioned.
Approaches which appear to be at odds with the inherent meaning of the work may be
perceived as bizarre. Brendel (1995) writes:

Is it not difficult and absorbing enough to look for ‘meaning’ and to distil its
essence? To surprise oneself, or let oneself be surprised by musical discoveries is
legitimate and satisfying as long as such discoveries illuminate the purpose of the
piece. The intention to surprise one’s audience, however breeds eccentricity.
Wanting to be different, the player easily exaggerates what is right or contradicts
what is necessary. (p.248).
The true artist will be revealed as one who without taking liberties nonetheless reveals something new. For example, around 1795, Beethoven wrote characteristically bold cadenzas (which have remained in general use ever since) for Mozart’s *Concerto in D minor*, K.466, presumably for a performance he gave of the work. We may deduce something of the likely revelatory quality of his conception on consideration of these cadenzas. We know that Beethoven reputedly found Mozart’s playing fine, but choppy, with little *legato*, and we can imagine that he approached the work in an assertive and fiery manner with a more recognisably modern piano technique than Mozart whose boyhood keyboard reflexes were developed on the harpsichord and clavichord. More contentious are the published embellishments and cadenzas to Mozart’s concertos by his pupil, J.N. Hummel. We may perceive these to be misconceived since the intricacy of decoration is often too dense, and can only be effected by the adoption of very slow tempi in Mozart’s usually flowing middle movements. Cadenzas too are often over-elaborate and long, and the use of a keyboard range unavailable to Mozart as well as foreign textures and figurations make for uneasy anachronisms.

A more contemporary example of newly revealed insights was to be furnished by the (very different) performance approaches to Bach from Rosalyn Tureck and the young Glenn Gould in the 1950s. I can recall the impact of their performances, which led to a new understanding of works such as the *Goldberg Variations* and the Partitas. This took place at a time when prominent harpsichordists, particularly Wanda Landowska and Ralph Kirkpatrick, had appropriated this music to the point where pianists were heard performing it only rarely. The imaginative and bold recreations of these scores on the piano by Tureck and Gould are telling examples of how distinctive and creative approaches revealed Bach’s music, originally written for harpsichord, as transcending...
Brendel (1995) illustrates this aspect effectively, when he makes the point that some of Bach's music, although written for the keyboard, is, in essence, an ensemble or vocal work. According to Brendel, these pieces often "...seem like a two-dimensional reduction of something three-dimensional." He further elaborates, "The modern piano, thanks to its greater sensitivity to colour and dynamics, can sometimes restore this third dimension." (p.219).

Of course, the modern piano, from around 1830, was designed to be played by a virtuoso in a concert hall, and projected to a large audience in a demonstrative and highly characterised manner. It is with a considerable effort that we remind ourselves that Bach's output for keyboard was not designed for public performances, which were at that time virtually non-existent. Rather, it would have been played in what we would experience as an understated manner, in private settings, for a few initiated individuals. Furthermore, the expectations of listeners have changed over time. Up to the last quarter of the 18th century there was a tolerance for long stretches of music to be heard in the same dynamic and key. As Rosen explains, (2002)

It was difficult to alter the registration, and therefore, the dynamics, during a rapid piece on a harpsichord, because on most instruments the changes were made not with convenient pedals, as on modern harpsichords, but with stops worked by hand. (p.201).

So, as we have seen, the piano, unlike the harpsichord, is capable of revealing the

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3 The clear potential of the Beethoven sonatas as concert works in the public arena should not make us forget that they were written with no obvious indication that they would be so used.
latent possibilities abounding in Bach's keyboard music and an interpretation utilizing the piano to this end would be stylistically valid. However, pianists beware! The scope of the modern instrument for tonal contrast and characterisation also offers the potential for unconvincing and stylistically questionable interpretations. For example, in Bach, introducing dynamic variety within particular movements rather than creating contrasts between successive pieces, is usually unpersuasive. This is not only because it was impossible on the usual single-manual harpsichord, as we have seen but because this practice is more characteristic and reminiscent of later music. Adopting such a procedure creates a distortion and is anachronistic.

Similarly, the transfigured slow waltz framework we find in the first variation of the finale of Beethoven's Op. 109 or the second subject of the slow movement of Op. 106 would sound incongruous if their melodies were expressed with a too-sensuous "beautiful" tone since this might well remind us of Chopin. In turn, the playing of Chopin must not be executed with the more extreme treatment suitable for Scriabin. Chopin playing requires poise, sensibility and freedom from exaggeration, particularly in rubato, while the approach in Scriabin can be more extreme and neurotic. Incidentally, while Rachmaninoff's music is often played with various excesses, his recordings of his music are aristocratic and totally free of wallowing.

It is often held to be desirable that the performer consult the theoretical writings contemporaneous with a work or composer. Indeed, there will be much to be gained from this in terms of acquiring insight into the issues which were engaging commentators and scholars at a certain time and in a particular place. There is a sense however in which such writings need to be treated with caution. Sessions, (1965) questions what they represented at the time, and the composers' relationship to them,
and asks whether they are to be taken literally as rules or as guiding principles. Perceptively he comments that “there is a danger in looking back at the past, which was itself moving towards us: we tend, as we view it, instinctively to arrest it momentarily in its process of development and to treat it as if it were static.” (p.77). Further, it is only over the past 100 years that we have truly reliable evidence concerning performance practice, through the study of gramophone recordings. Without them we would remain relatively unaware of major differences in practice over the period. These involve such issues as portamento and vibrato in string playing, and rhythmic freedom to the point of instability and inexactness, not only in orchestras, but in the playing of chamber and solo music. Performances of the past clearly display much more volatility and extremes of impulse within a given tempo. We do not regard these characteristics as manifestations of authenticity in themselves, but we do take note of features that appear to offer an insight in tune with our current sensibility and taste. For example, string players in traditional symphony orchestras can now play without vibrato, and do so to great effect, but no conductor would require them to play with the portamento slides we hear in recordings up to around 1930.

The fundamental issue here is for the performer to acquire the conviction and authority which derive from a comprehensive knowledge of all possible sources, and the ability to see a work for its purely musical content, untainted by any associations which obstruct the closest possible contact with the essence of a work. Tradition and a sense of history is a valuable part of our experience, yet each artist in succeeding generations must forge a personal link with works that have shown their capacity for leading lives of their own. As we shall see in what follows, the experience of working with living composers in establishing new works can provide the performer with a
guiding model.

**Acquiring authority**

Particularly at the outset of his career, the young performer must address the issue of expressing himself with a sense of purpose and validity through the masterpieces that constitute his repertoire. He will be aware that these works have been the subject of intense exploration from the most penetrating musical minds and leading artists across the generations. The legacy on record over nearly a century has preserved the eminence and achievement of the majority of the renowned interpreters of the period. The situation for the emerging performer is potentially daunting. There may be a temptation to take a contrarian line and subject established works to a deliberately exaggerated approach in an attempt to create surprise and shake the complacent listener out of his preconceptions about how the music might be experienced. As a prominent example of this outlook, we may consider the Canadian pianist Glenn Gould. Behind the elaborate and undoubtedly fascinating intellectual edifice which he built as a writer and broadcaster in parallel to his often compelling performances, we may sense some anxiety. In a 1966 TV interview with Humphrey Burton (quoted in Bruno Monsangnon's documentary “Glenn Gould Hereafter” 2006), Gould makes a revealing confession: “I think that the basic statements have been made for posterity...what we must do is try to find our way round these things, try to find a *raison d'être*.” We are made aware of the highly self-conscious artist seeking to find validity and relevance, as well as a viable career.

We may contrast this with the approach of Alfred Brendel: (2002) “I never actually set out to do things differently in order to prove myself. I always felt that when things
turned out differently, it simply happened and was not an intention” (p.50).

... people believe that someone who tries to understand and follow the text must of necessity lack imagination and be boring. To which I can only reply that to read the text accurately is an extremely difficult business – much more difficult than even most musicians realise. To understand these markings and give them life requires a great deal of imagination. One should not act as a computer, or as the composer's slave; one must, rather, try to assist the composer as a voluntary helper. (op. cit. p.105)

In my own experience, establishing ways of looking at works of the past with the minimum of preconception was of great importance. One early decision was not to listen to recorded performances, however much in sympathy I might be with them, until I had satisfied myself that I had established my own encounter with a particular work. The lines of communication between text, the developing impressions of movement and sound that constitutes the physicality of the performing experience and ideas on how to present the unfolding narrative take time to become focused. I do not want this process to be influenced by a third party any more than I would wish to experience a new friend any way but directly.

A further, and crucial experience as a young performer, was the opportunity that arose to create first or early performances of substantial works. Here, the challenge of being in a position to assist in establishing the performance style for a new work proved to be highly liberating. To go down an untrodden path was exhilarating because it made me feel free of the weight of tradition I associated at that time, with the established repertoire and its legacy of brilliant interpretations. There was also the element of stimulus associated with working with composers, once I had reached an
advanced state of preparation. I was fortunate that my early encounters were with composers who had a highly distinctive voice and a strong sense of formal structure. When I played Tippett's then recent Sonata No.2 for him in 1965, it was not so much his reaction to this or that detail which was important. Rather, the gestures he made while I was playing, guiding the ebb and flow of the music, and his insistence that those moments where the music turned unexpectedly and poetically on itself should be fully characterized: these are abiding memories. Tippett also gave particular attention to the voicing and pacing of the slow section (Tempo 8: bars 240 to 247) which occurs around two-thirds through the work. I then realised this was the still centre of the whole thirteen-minute piece. In some way this affected how I viewed what lead up to it and away from it in a new light which altered my conception, giving it more shape and conviction.

Berman (2000) seems to have had a similar experience playing Schnittke's Sonata No.1 for the composer. He tells us:

I was stunned by his words in reference to the forcefully repeated bass notes at the end of it: 'They buried the sonata.' This glimpse into the composer's associative thinking enabled me to see the piece in a dramatically new light. (p.141fn).

Such insights into a composer's creative processes can indeed be enlightening. Working with Roger Smalley towards the first performance of his Accord for two pianists in 1975, I was initially puzzled by the nature of the long opening section of this 45 minute work. It seemed to be somewhat static. Yet I came to see that the composer's creative judgment had been sound. The spaciousness signals to the listener that this is a work that will take its time. But Smalley's picture for the conception (in Thönell, 1994) was also illuminating; that of "the cinematic effect of
first seeing a vast landscape” before the musical exploration subsequently examined it as if in a series closer shots “for example the series of zooms into the hotel room in Phoenix, Arizona, which open Hitchcock’s Psycho”. (p.101). He continues:

...these ideas also relate to my impressions of Perth, where the piece was conceived. Perth is a large city, but when seen from the sea or the overlooking park it becomes merely a small fragment of a much larger landscape taking in the the huge Swan River estuary, the Indian Ocean and the endless bush. (ibid).

Smalley's use of these images expresses something of value to the performer about the initial impulse for a work. Tippett, on the genesis of his Symphony No.3, is particularly vivid. In Csaky (1979) he describes it as spontaneous... I was in a concert at the Edinburgh Festival once when there was a piece of modern music being played – much of it very slow, almost immobile. I found myself saying that if I ever wanted to use that kind of music I would have to match it with something extremely sharp, violent and certainly speedy. In retrospect I realise that I had gone from the sounds coming to my ears from the outside world...to the interior world inside my own body. In my own mind the process of invention was beginning. I didn't go very far. I recall merely saying to my neighbour. ‘The Third Symphony has begun!’ (p.176).

Here we have the description of a moment of conception for a work, an identifiable instant when the idea for a major work ceases to be vague, and comes into focus.

At other times this moment of conception can be a musical idea which takes root in the composer's imagination where it starts the process of determining the course and shape of the piece. Sessions (1965) is illuminating, defining the musical idea as "that
fragment of music which forms the composer’s point of departure, either for a whole
composition or for an episode or even a single aspect of a composition” (p.44), and
going on to illustrate this in examples from Brahms’ Symphony No.3 and Beethoven’s
Quartet, Op.135 as well as his own Piano Sonata No.1. Here he tells us that a
particular complex chord “rang through my ear almost obsessively ”(p.50) and that
when he started to write the next day, without initial conscious reference to it, he
found himself inventing two themes in tonalities which bore precise relationships with
those suggested in the original chord: “the germ of the key relationship on which the
first two movements of the sonata were based were already implicit in the chordal
idea with which the musical train of thought...had started.” (p.51).

On another level, invention will come from manipulation of musical materials,
particularly themes and harmonic relationships. Beethoven’s most ambitious works
were often hammered out laboriously as he sought to refine and focus his vision. The
survival of so many of his sketches throws light on this process, akin to the scientist
who comes to the moments of insight only after prolonged immersion in his collected
data of observed phenomena.

Cooke (1990) draws attention to the evolution of the main theme of the Funeral
March of the Eroica Symphony which involve many changes and refinements of
details in pitch and rhythm, and the insertion (bar 4) of “the pathetic 3-2 suspension
treated as an anguished 6-5 on the dominant, which, out of the many purely technical
possibilities, was the right one for transforming his emotion of dark grief.” (p.222).

Such considerations of how composers see themselves, and insights into their creative
processes, are of indispensable value to the performer who wishes to get to the heart
of the music he performs. I have already drawn attention to an early encounter with Tippett in relation to the Sonata No.2. Another formative experience from around the same time was work on Roger Smalley’s Missa Parodia, which he wrote for me in 1967. Again, here was a large piece which challenged me on every level. As with the Tippett, once the very considerable technical and stylistic challenges involved with a complex piece in an advanced modern idiom had been met, and the work assimilated, there came a point where one day the work seemed to be laid out like a landscape. At any moment I sensed that I knew exactly where I was in relation to the whole, which itself was clearly ‘visible’. At that time, the sound of my playing seemed to change, I was aware of being free to experience it within this wider perspective and as a result was more aware of the ensemble of voices and distinctive textures characteristic of the work. I was inside the music but also in some way above it. Later, I also experienced this in conducting, once I had acquired sufficient skill in that activity. These sensations were also associated with an enhanced confidence in the validity of my interpretation and an associated authority which was reinforced by positive reaction and endorsement from composers. It was around this time too that I began to associate this process with music of the past. I was developing a sense that told me when I had assimilated a work as fully as my perceptions of it would permit at the time. The great conductor, Wilhelm Furtwängler (1953) expresses the nature of this process when he states that the composer experiences the real import of what he has to say before or while he commits it to paper; the improvisation on which the written version is based represents the core of the creative process. But as far as the interpreter is concerned, the work is the exact opposite of such improvisation: it is an outer shell of signs and forms, which he must pierce if he would penetrate the work he wishes to perform. (pp.47-8).
Over time, I realised that music of the highest quality would reveal more of its essence as one returned to it over years in which one had developed greater capacity to understand it through experience and growth.

The text is indeed all that the performer has to guide him, but as we have seen earlier in this paper, this does not imply a literal approach. We considered then examples of notational clues which gave suggestions on the kind of sound or expression the composer is attempting to suggest. But there are aspects which cannot be so indicated. It is the character of the work which will determine how seemingly undifferentiated qualities will function in a particular context. What kind of allegro are we considering: passionate, light-hearted, easily flowing, or deeply weighted? Is piano warmly lyrical or urgent, or even sinister? We may find answers within the work itself, but it is also likely that our experience of works in other genres by the same composer will also provide illumination.

**How composers work**

When we look for a common thread which links composers from whatever period and style, we find that they are driven by an inner necessity to create. As Storr (1997) writes: “... music is not a direct communication of the composer’s feelings to his audience, but rather a communication about how he makes sense of his feelings, gives them structure, transforms them from raw emotions into art.” (p.100). Almost invariably, composers are highly industrious, with little respite between works, although major undertakings may be interspersed with other pieces of more modest scope. The case of Hugo Wolf, who composed his lieder collections at great speed...
followed by extended fallow periods, is an exception which proves the rule.

Composers need to be in touch with their craft as consistently as professional performers with their instrument. They will have different conceptions of what meaning their work may have, but for the most part they wish to communicate the essence of their emotional and spiritual life. This has to be allied to a search for the most appropriate forms and musical language in which to create. The process always needs the balance between conscious and intuitive elements driven by a strong imagination.

Beethoven’s decision at the brink of his “middle period” to persist with the traditional sonata forms which were already apparently played out after they had been brought to a pinnacle of balance and perfection in the symphonic and chamber works of Haydn and Mozart, exemplifies this process. His epic expansion of the form made for works of unprecedented size and intensity. They were no doubt daunting for their first performers and listeners. Even more challenging are the works of his last decade, which take the listener into a world which remains rarified and totally distinctive to this day. Yet, as he wrote at the head of the late Missa Solemnis, “Von Herzen—Möge es wieder zu Herzen gehen!” (“From the heart — may it return again to the heart!”) The urge to communicate and be understood is paramount.

Composers will be fully aware of the power of a particular musical vernacular in which they are working, and their ability to manipulate it to evoke exact responses in listeners who are attuned to it. There is a most revealing letter from Mozart to his father, written in September, 1781 (quoted in Fisk, (1997)) where he is quite explicit about the ways in which he depicts emotion in sound in his opera Die Entführung aus
Referring to Belmonte's aria "O wie ängstlich" he writes,

"...can you guess how I have written it? His throbbing heart so full of love is depicted by violins playing in octaves... you hear the whispering and the sighing (which I have rendered using the first violins, with mutes, playing in unison with a flute). (p.49).

Significantly we also find him explaining to his father how he came to choose the sequence of keys for consecutive numbers in the opera as the manifestation of his concern to balance feeling and form. Of the music for Osmin he writes,

"... just as someone in this type of blind rage forgets himself, overstepping the bounds of order and propriety, so the music must forget itself. Still, passions, whether violent or not, must never be expressed to the point of appearing disgusting; and music, even in the most dire situations, must never insult the ear, but rather must remain just what it is: music. Therefore I have gone from F (the key of the aria) not into a remote key, but a related one. And yet, rather than the nearest relative, D minor, I have chosen the more distant A minor. (ibid)

We find the same concern regarding balance between expression and means even in the apparently extreme case of Alban Berg's Wozzeck. Here, the concept of what may be portrayed on the stage has developed to the point that the passions are often indeed "disgusting" in terms of Mozart's aesthetic. The characters in the opera are depraved and deranged, and the music, now atonal, has gone far beyond considerations of classical key relationships as the guideline for emotional coherence. The effect is powerful and overwhelming, the prevailing emotion that of pity for the miserable soldier trapped in an uncaring and brutalising world. Yet behind the often lurid surface we find musical structures which express this hermetically claustrophobic
universe, as well as providing the inner stability to underpin the apparent extremes of the drama. Here too is manifestation of a concern to balance form and feeling. In Mozart, the surface elegance should never blind us to the intensity and range of feeling he gives us. In Berg, these attributes are as if turned inside out, with the controlled logic of the structures, and the turbulent drama issuing from the stage and orchestra pit related in a powerful expressive tension.

What of the relationship between composer and performer? The composer will rightly expect that a performer of his scores will have assimilated them conscientiously, but he will also be curious as to what will have been found by the perceptive and sympathetic performer. There have been, to be sure, composers who have railed against performers who take too many liberties and over-interpret their scores. Debussy, Ravel and Stravinsky, whose dealings were with musicians who had often developed in a late-Romantic environment which laid much emphasis on the music being a vehicle for the performer, were highly critical of “interpreters” and were given to insisting on literal and undemonstrative performance characteristics. They were, no doubt determined to impress upon performers that they were creating a new style and aesthetic. However, from the 1920s performers’ attitudes were changing. The importance of faithful adherence to original text as a basis for interpretation was leading to an objectivity which reflected a priority toward realising composer’s intentions as made manifest in their scores.

Yet each work, once released by its creator, tends to have its own life. We have noted earlier that music which is durable demonstrates its intrinsic quality through its susceptibility to a range of interpretations from performers across the generations. New insights will be delivered in response to the development of more advanced
instruments, because of the need to present works in particular performance venues, and in recordings, and through the researches of scholars and editors. These eventualities could not have been anticipated by many composers at the time of creation, yet so many works have thrived as a result. The responsible performer it seems, must also be responsive.

Composers as performers and teachers

We can glean much about what composers may expect of performers by considering their own activities as executants and teachers of their works. Often, these activities are an adjunct to their creative work, but there are those whose achievements have been of equivalent distinction. The time and attention which Boulez has devoted to conducting has by his own admission taken him away from composition more than he might have wished. Rachmaninoff decided to adopt the career of a concert pianist for the first time when he was forced to leave Russia after the 1917 revolution, with the result that he too was less active as a composer. Usually however, composers’ performance activity is integrated into a consistent flow of new works. We may think of such past figures as Mahler, Britten, and Bartok and Lutosławski. Today, in the UK, Oliver Knussen and Thomas Ades are highly effective and perceptive conductors in a wide range of music, (and Ades also a pianist). In Australia, we may consider the conducting of Richard Mills and the emphasis Roger Smalley has placed on piano performance in particular.

When we come to examine the performances and testimony of such musicians, we find very often a disparity between their writing and their performing or practise. For example, both Barenboim (2003:212) and Berman draw attention to the very fast
metronome marks demanded by Bartok. Berman (2000) writes that when

"working on his second Piano Concerto I came to realise that the metronome
indications are some twenty to twenty-five beats-per-minute too fast. It is the
relation between tempi in Bartok’s music ...that requires serious attention on the
part of a performer... (p.82).

(Rehearsing Stockhausen's Gruppen it became clear to me that there too, such
relationships also provide the framework for the realization of the piece, where each
conductor of the three orchestras must gauge successive entries at a tempo related
precisely to that of a colleague's in a preceding passage). Berman also points out that
in the playing of Bartok on his extant recordings "one is astounded by the rhythmic
flexibility of his playing, far removed from the unyielding precision we are now
accustomed to hearing". The problem for the performer here is the intimidating
insistence in the published scores, of exactly differentiated metronome markings,
often reinforced by printed indications for an apparently precise duration of a
movement, in minutes and seconds. A related problem existed in the case of the
Webern Variations, Op. 27. Until the publication in 1979 of Webern's annotated copy
of this work, made as he prepared its first performer, Peter Stadlen, players were at
pains to take the score as they found it. There are very few marks of interpretation or
expression. But it is now clear that Webern wished for a highly nuanced, romantic
interpretation, with a great deal of rubato and inflection.

As a conductor of his own music, Elgar too displays a wide disparity between his
markings and his actual practice. In his recording of the Symphony No.1, we find
more restlessness than the score indicates. Philip (2004) tells us that

The outer movements...are subjected by Elgar to continual changes of pulse that
are not marked in the score. In the allegro of the finale, which has a single metronome marking of minim=84, Elgar begins at 76, rises to 108 by figure 118, and drops to 80 at figure 130. The first movement of the symphony is in a state of constant flux, from the very first bars of the allegro. Modern conductors take these movements with a certain flexibility, but only those who know Elgar's recordings adopt anything like his approach, and they rarely attempt such a level of volatility. (p.143).

Peter Hill, who recently co-authored the authorised biography of Messiaen, has also recorded the composer's entire output for piano, having studied it with him. He testifies (in Rink, 2002) that

When I first began to learn the music of Messiaen, the often hair's breadth distinctions in his rhythms led me to strive for extreme precision; but when I eventually went to study with him, he found this aspect of my playing mechanical. Messiaen wanted rhythm and phrasing to be subtle, and no matter how complex the notation the music should never sound 'like an etude'. For Messiaen, the performer's job was to infer meaning and 'character' from what was written in the score. (p.132)

Like Bartok, Shostakovich is inclined to fast indications, and breakneck speeds in his recordings, notably of his first Piano Concerto. Yet there is testimony that he was well aware of this tendency being a distortion of his true intent. In Peter Pears' account (in Wilson 1995) of a visit to the composer with Benjamin Britten, he recounts how Britten played on the piano his recently completed third Cello Suite. "...[he] apologized for his inadequate performance and having played the music too
fast. At this Shostakovitch chipped in and said ‘Yes, yes Ben, we composers always tend to play our music too fast...’” (p.407). It is of note that Tatiana Nicholaeva, for whom Shostakovitch’s Twenty-four Preludes and Fugues were written, adopts consistently slower tempi than indicated, in her recordings of the collection.

While most composers appear to internalize, as well as perform, their music at quick speeds, Peter Sculthorpe for a time appears to have experienced his music with more restraint. In 1989, I invited him to Brisbane for a 60th birthday concert of his works. When preparing Mangrove with the Queensland Conservatorium orchestra I was puzzled at some slow metronome indications. When Peter came to the final rehearsal I was relieved to find him endorsing my conception of the opening in particular. His explanation was interesting. In 1984 he had toured the USSR and heard his music, played with Russian intensity, in a way he had not previously imagined. (There is reference to this in his autobiographical Sun Music). Such performances clearly contributed to his richer internalisation of the content and range, as well as more animated tempi, of his music.

These examples are drawn from recent composers, yet there is also frequent testimony from their predecessors regarding the need for performers to exercise their musical sense and sensibility when searching behind the printed notes and instructions. Two instances of how composer/performers see the essential differences in their dual capacities illustrate the dichotomy.

Roger Smalley was asked, in an interview with Andrew Ford (quoted in Thönell, 1994)

AF: “Do you ever take liberties with your own music in performance?” RS: “I do
in the Piano Concerto. I tend to sacrifice accuracy to impact” (p.11).

And in amplifying this comment by relating his work as a composer to the task of the performer:

The more you restrict the scope of the performer – if you write fourteen in the time of fifteen, at a tempo of quaver equals 94.5, and it’s important these directions be observed – then you’re not leaving the performer very much latitude. It seems to me to be more rewarding to leave the performer a bit of room to move. (ibid)

The hypothetical example Smalley chooses may seem exaggerated, yet even when such real complexities do occur, musical considerations must prevail, the performer must indeed have sufficient autonomy. Rosen, (2002) when playing Boulez’ Constellation – Miroir from the Third Piano Sonata, recalls the composer suggesting he

make more of a gradual slowing-down of one passage. I observed that he had marked the slowing-down to go from 96 on the metronome to 72, and that I had already reached something like 50. ’That makes no difference,’ he replied; ’follow the sonority.’ The rhythm of his music must often be established not so much by a pre-established scheme, but freely by the performer or conductor in relation to the acoustics of the hall. (p.217).

The point here is that the sound must be coherent and have integrity. This is confirmed by Boulez’ response to Barenboim’s enquiry as to why he takes different speeds from his own markings: (Barenboim (2003) “When I compose I cook with

4 Now designated Concerto No. 1 since the appearance of his 2nd Concerto in 2007.
water, and when I conduct I cook with fire”. (p.224). He tells us unmistakably that the extended simmering of composition has given way to the immediacy of the searing heat of performance, when the sounds come to life.

**About Listening**

The functions of composing, performing and listening are totally linked, yet today are relatively disintegrated. As Sessions (1965) has it: "composer, performer and listener each fulfil one of three separate functions in a total creative process, which was originally undifferentiated and which is still essentially indivisible”. (p.8). We can still find examples of such integrity in tribal musics, where social structures as well as the dependence on an aural tradition, blurs the borders between those who may have created the music and those who actualise it. The concept of an audience is alien in cultures where the participation of all in music and dance is deeply embedded in everyday life. Not only in the West, we may see that the transition from a hunter-gatherer society to the more stable structures, through agriculture and the rearing of livestock, made possible the emergence of a class who were not required to be productive. There was usually a sufficient margin in food production to enable not only administrators but also artists to be supported. Small (1998) tells us that musicians were “socially necessary for the central part they played in the rituals of the community that celebrated the mythologies of birth, marriage, death, harvest and other great events of life”. (p.39).

We are still aware of the importance of music in such rituals, for example the congregational singing which is an integral part of religious celebration. The
phenomenon of the massed singing by team supporters at sports events is also an echo of tribal behaviour, as is the use of traditional music reflecting the ethnic origin of immigrant groups. Even when such migrants are well established in a country such as Australia, special occasions such as weddings and funerals will be marked by music and dancing which speaks of distinctiveness as a group, and a pride in old traditions. In none of these situations is there any sense of the music being made for the benefit of non-participants.

The notion of listening as a particular activity developed from the status and function of music among the aristocracy. Works were commonly created for the participation of this wealthy class. For example, when, in 1731 Bach published, at his own expense, the Six Partitas, his inscription tells us they were written “Denen Liebhabern zur Gemuths Ergoetzung verfertiget” (for the pleasurable diversion of music lovers). They would have been very small in number and of an exclusively privileged class with wealth and leisure enough to consume music as amateurs, though often highly skilled and discerning. We may recall Haydn’s innumerable trios including the baryton, an enthusiasm of his master, Prince Nicholas Esterhazy, who needed music to play. Works would be written for the instrumental and vocal talents available within the castle or palace and estate, often remote from main centres of civilization. Such works would be provided with no expectation that they would endure. Rather they would be furnished for the occasion, much like a new suit of clothes or a fine gown. Although the possibility existed that the music could be heard by non-participants, the notion of the modern audience gathered together for that purpose and entering by virtue of having purchased a ticket was not yet ripe. Music was still being made and experienced within the tribe.
We have earlier drawn attention to the importance of opera, from around 1600, in establishing musical gestures which explicitly portray emotional states and characteristics, (the so-called temperaments). This task challenged composers to find the musical means to express the unfolding of a narrative, and to characterise both conflicts and passions, and eventual order and happiness. The genre, originating in Italy with Monteverdi’s Orfeo (1607) was originally known as *dramma per musica*: drama through, not merely with, music. One outcome, as Small (1998) points out, was that the development of tonal harmony began in earnest...with its ability to create in listeners tensions and frustrations, desire and fulfilment, to delay resolutions and to tease expectations...” The other way in which the listener was drawn into the drama was the portrayal of physical movement through musical gestures which “represented not an emotional state itself nor a temperament but the type of physical gesture, both bodily and vocal, with which the emotional state or the temperament was associated. (p.147).

Over generational time, the sensibilities of listeners became more susceptible to such internalisation, so that experiences that had involved the integration of music and movement, came to carry the whole complex of messages through the sound alone. This created the conditions for the rise of purely instrumental music in the 18th century. In his essay *Philosophical Perspectives on Music’s Expressiveness* (in Juslin and Sloboda 2005), Stephen Davies confirms the idea that

We experience movement and pattern in music; we hear in music a terrain shaped by ongoing interaction between its parts, which vary in their highness, complexity, teleological impetus, energy, texture, inertia, and so on. If music resembles an emotion, it does so by sharing the dynamic character displayed...in the public behaviours through which the emotion is standardly exhibited...A number of
emotions have standard behavioural expressions that are partly constitutive of their nature... A downcast bearing and slow movements go with sadness, whereas joy is upbeat and lively. Sometimes we can tell what a person is feeling from the carriage of their body, without knowing the cause of their feeling. (p.31).

However, the notion of a widespread audience for music was still some way distant. For example, in Vienna, towards the end of the century the most populous of the German-speaking cities, concerts were relatively infrequent and usually sold on a subscription basis, open only to the nobility and merchant classes. But there were many private concerts in the homes of the leading families. Loesser (1955) tells us that Mozart, “between February 26 and April 3, 1784, ... played fourteen different times at the homes of the Esterhazy and Galitzin families, not to mention three concerts of his own enterprise and two for charity...” (p.122).

It was industrialization that provided the conditions for change in this sphere, as in so many others. Populations moved from the countryside to the cities. Although conditions were often exploitative, there was a gradual improvement in the material quality of life for more of the population in the leading western European countries. As Cook (1998) relates, from the early 19th century

The middle classes (or bourgeoisie) occupied a steadily increasing economic, political and cultural role. In the arts... the most important development of the period was what might be termed the construction of bourgeois subjectivity. By this I mean that they explored and celebrated the inner world of feeling and emotion; music in particular, turned away from the world and became dedicated to personal expression. (p.18).
We may see that the music of Beethoven in particular was to come into increasing prominence, with its unprecedented sense of purpose in addressing the individual in a manner both heroic and personal. Here was music which demanded the fullest attention from its listeners. The message was clear: the function of the audience was to receive the music in concentrated silence, although it was not until impact of the autocratic conductors, Bülow, Mahler and Toscanini, that modern public listening etiquette became fully established.

The growth of public concerts was at first to be perceived as a response to the virtuoso composer-performers who flourished especially from the 1830s up to the revolutionary watershed of 1848. The notion of the concert as a theatrical spectacle was made manifest in the extraordinary careers of Paganini and the young Liszt, (who ceased touring after 1847) but there were innumerable traveling virtuosi criss-crossing Europe. They did little to develop taste and discrimination in their listeners. But gradually conditions changed. Among pianists, Anton Rubinstein, Hans von Bülow and Clara Schumann were in the vanguard of those artists who emphasized their responsibility toward the music they played. As Loesser (1955) has it:

The fact is, the virtuoso acrobat pure and simple was gradually becoming replaced by a performer who considered himself an interpreter, one who aimed to set forth as vividly and convincingly as he could the music of composers other than himself. (p.422).

In the field of orchestral music we note that it was not until 1842 that the first fully professional symphony orchestras were established, in both Vienna and New York. The practice of occasional *ad hoc* ensembles where professional and amateur players would combine, was giving way to the fully professional orchestra able to meet the
ever-increasing challenges to be met from advances in instrumental development and execution and the demands of composers such as Berlioz and Wagner. The era of the skilled amateur able to perform with his professional servants as in Haydn's time, was decisively over. Composing, performing and listening were becoming established in a manner we recognise today, as separate and increasingly specialised activities. A canon of established repertoire, in new complete published editions represented a transformation of the old convention of music being written for a particular occasion with little expectation for its survival. A large quantity of new music was also readily published and composers benefited from the protection of increasingly effective copyright laws.

The Romantic composer and performer thrived in this environment. There was a greater insistence from them that attention was due to their art by virtue of their gifts and skills. We recall the incident when Liszt was playing before Tsar Nicholas I who arrived late at the recital and then started talking. Liszt promptly broke off his performance. On being asked why he had ceased to play, Liszt displayed both wit and sarcasm. As Walker (1987) has it: "Liszt replied, 'Music herself should be silent when Nicholas speaks'... Thanks to Liszt, artists soon became the new aristocracy, and the great public were quick to recognise it" (p.288). Among composers, the example of Wagner in particular was decisive in establishing the apparent right of the creative

5 Horowitz (1994:135fn) tells us that the repertoire of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra which had a continuous existence since the late 18th century, "shows these percentages of music by dead composers: 13 percent in 1781-85, 23 percent in 1820-25, 39 percent in 1828-34, 48 percent in 1837-47, 61 percent in 1850-55, 76 percent in 1865-70". The repertoires of leading concert organisations in London, Paris and Vienna show the same trend.
artist to make demands on all in pursuit of realising his vision. This included his listeners.

The consumers of music from the mid 19th century included many who were discerning amateurs. They knew the repertoire well, through playing not only solo and chamber music but, if they were pianists, the symphonic repertoire too, in the form of arrangements for piano solo or duet, (two players at one instrument). They also took interest in reading works of analysis. We may say that they were aware of the enhanced enrichment to be had from understanding the construction of musical masterworks. But there is a sense too that suggestions often expressed regarding the supposed emotional content of the music played a part in training or at least reinforcing the sensibilities of the reader/listener. Tovey's *Essays in Musical Analysis*, famous for many years in the English-speaking world since their publication in the 1930s, were not written for the professional music student but for the keen listener. Individual essays were often first published as annotations within concert programmes. Tovey (1935) does not hesitate to express his own emotive reaction to aspects of the music under discussion. For example, of the second movement of Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony he writes: "The first episode is a regular trio in the major mode, beginning in consolation and twice bursting into triumph. Then the light fails and the mournful theme returns..." (p.32). It is interesting to speculate on the role that such writing has in assisting the conditioning of attuned and sympathetic listeners.

The cultivation displayed by such music-lovers was assisted greatly by the presence of a piano in the homes of all classes of society. If we see a piano in the home today we may ask ourselves who in the household plays it, but until the 1960s when
television and the gramophone became the well established presence we know today, the piano was a given feature. In the absence of other distractions, it would be used, however humbly. It is likely that listeners of fine music who thus retained at least a minimal contact with making sounds for themselves were immunised to the possibility of regarding music merely as a commodity. (In this respect we may point to the currently widespread participation by young people in collaborative music-making in the pop and jazz area where creativity appears to be much higher).

It is the current ubiquity of music which is the most disquieting. Concern is not for the music itself, which has always survived perfectly well. Loesser (1955) quotes J.F. Reichardt visiting the “Great Concert” in Leipzig in 1776: “[It] has the pretty gift of chattering and noise-making in common with all other concert societies.” (p.180). He adds a further report of an occasion in Göttingen in 1793: “The noise of the sweet gentlemen and cackle of the ladies, everywhere beleaguered by dandies, often drowned out the music completely...”(ibid) We also recall that from Handel’s time until well into the 19th century, such London establishments as the Rotunda in the Ranelagh Pleasure Gardens gave the opportunity to hear fine music in many genres. Canaletto painted it, so we have a record of what went on there, as accurate as a photograph. Small (1998) describes it:

…a big circular space, three stories high and 150 feet in diameter...[People are] standing or walking about, talking in pairs and in groups, or just coming and going, in much the same way as people do in the foyer of a modern concert hall. Most... seem...to be treating the performance as background to their other social activities...but there is a knot of people gathered around the musicians' platform as in a later day jazz enthusiasts would gather around the bandstand in a dance hall...

(p.29).
One could make out a case for the use of recorded music in a private setting offering welcome opportunities to move uninhibitedly with the sound, or to sing. Many experience this with great pleasure as it reanimates the ancient integrity of sound and dance. Such activity, and those described above from 18th century London and Germany have in common the element of intention, that what was done happened with purpose. Today's problem is other. Quite unbidden, we are bombarded with all manner of musical sounds in so many everyday environments. The danger is not so much for the music, but to ourselves as sensitive receivers of it. Too much unconsidered exposure can dull the senses alarmingly. Already in 1940 Stravinsky was giving a warning (2000) at the close of his series of lectures at Harvard, published as *Poetics of Music*:

The propagation of music by all possible means is in itself an excellent thing, but by spreading it abroad without taking precautions, by offering it willy-nilly to the general public which is not prepared to hear it, one lays this public open to the most deadly saturation.

The time is no more when Johann Sebastian Bach gladly traveled a long way on foot to hear Buxtehude. Today radio brings music into the home at all hours of the day and night. It relieves the listener of all effort except that of turning a dial. Now the musical sense cannot be acquired or developed without exercise. In music, as in everything else, inactivity leads gradually to the paralysis, to the atrophying of the faculties. Understood in this way, music becomes a sort of drug which, far from stimulating the mind, paralyzes and stultifies it”. (p.135).

The message here is that music needs to be actively taken in, with concentrated consideration. Listening is not a passive state. It relates to hearing in the same way
that looking relates to seeing. The ability to see and hear does not in itself mean that a
developed sense of observation, memory and discernment exists. To listen is to
observe with the ears. A propensity for this will exist in certain individuals, but
training must also occur.

We may say that listening requires talent and application. Further, the presence of
talented listeners is crucial in making music speak. The composer's task is to make
sense of his feelings and communicate them in the text, and the performer's to realise
that vision in sound. Yet neither can exist without the listener to whom their efforts
are directed. Because the composer speaks through the text, his presence is
immaterial. But the communion between performer and listener is vital. The
performer must have an audience in order to develop as artist, to stimulate the process
of growth in perception and authority which comes from sharing the experiences
inherent in the music. Brendel (1995) asks:

Why, if I may believe my own experience as a listener, does an impressive concert
tend to leave stronger traces than a record? Because the listener, no less than the
player, has had a physical experience, not only hearing the performance, but
breathing it in, contributing to it by his presence and sharing his enthusiasm with
many others. (p.203).

Tippett (1974) endorses this opinion, and provides a composer's viewpoint, writing of
...those invisible waves of absorption and attention which a great public gives to
great music. Psychological conditions of performance [are] then magically made
which are virtually impossible in a studio. These are still the dream conditions of
the composer, I think. This is his public in the flesh. This is where he wants to be
played and understood. (p.96).
We need to consider what constitutes a good listener. Fundamentally, this is not simply a matter of being present and silent as the music is performed, but rather, as Sessions (1965) describes it “opening one’s ears to the sounds as they succeed each other, discovering what point of contact one can find, and in fact following the music as well as one can in its continuity...establishing a fresh and essentially naïve contact with it...” (p.88). Becoming fascinated by the sounds in themselves and the feelings they may evoke no doubt constitutes the allure of this contact, which will lead the awakened and curious listener to want to discover something of the way the music is constructed. This will certainly have the potential to extend comprehension but only if knowledge is integrated into the basic experience. Such knowledge will assist in building an inner concept, cultivating aural awareness, and promoting an increasingly detailed observation and memory of what is going on as the music is sounding. Sessions (1965) again states this well.

The really ‘understanding’ listener takes the music into his consciousness and remakes it actually or in his imagination, for his own uses. He whistles it on the street, or hums it at his work, or simply ‘thinks’ it to himself. He may even represent it to his consciousness in a more concentrated form – as a condensed memory of sounds heard and felt, reproduced for his memory by a vivid sensation of what I may call character in sound, without specific details, but in terms of sensations and impressions remembered. (p.92).

Such experiences are often to be had when even an experienced listener is faced with the performance of a work in an advanced idiom, where there is difficulty in finding orientation, and the sense of construction hard to discern, as in dodecaphonic works, where literal repetition of motifs or thematic shapes is deliberately limited, (for
example Schoenberg in the third of the Op. 11 piano pieces or the monodrama *Erwartung*). But in all instances, if we are impelled to investigate works further as listeners, it is likely to be in pursuit and reinforcement of the “vivid sensations” to which Sessions refers.

**Music and time**

Musical performance takes place in time. Consequently, a work may be said to demand that the listener accept its designated time-span as a prerequisite for it to make its impact. At a time when the expected attention span has often shrunk to dimension of the soundbite, the notion that the content of a work will require the expenditure of a considerable and unbroken length of real time, in a fully receptive state of attention, is deeply unfashionable, even eccentric. The philologist, Edward W Said has this to say within one of his published conversations with Daniel Barenboim (2004):

> A musician intervenes in the life of his audience. The audience is leaving everything and interrupting their lives to come and listen to you. Similarly, people who want to read me have to put something aside in order to devote the time. For this intervention to be effective requires discipline on my part, and that discipline involves knowing something, having a particular culture, having a particular training. I think it’s terribly important. In my case it’s what you’d call a philological training, where you read the texts in a historical context and understand the discipline of the language and its forms and discourses; for you, the study of classical music, understanding the forms... This training is beginning to disappear among the young musicians of our time. And what you have instead is a kind of, in my opinion, baseless eclecticism: ‘Ah! Beethoven:Da-da-da-dum.’...
Barenboim: Well, it's a slogan. For me there is a clear philosophical criticism of slogans, of the language of television, which is that it does not take into account the relation between content and time... certain content demands a particular amount of time, and you cannot compress it and you cannot abbreviate it. (p.58).

However, the listener's experience of the way that time is filled by music will vary according to its perceived content and context. The speed at which time seems to pass when listening, forms a vital part of the experience of receiving and assimilating a work. Some examples may illustrate this:

1. Messiaen's *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant Jésus* is a vast cycle of piano pieces of around two hours performance time. The opening number plays for around 6 minutes at an extremely slow tempo. The unfolding of the melodic line takes place against the unbroken tolling of triplet 16\(^{th}\) notes of one-second duration each (the marking is metronome mark 60 per note). The intention is to calm the listener and hypnotise him into the appropriate state of acceptance for what is to follow. It is a recurring feature of Messiaen's music that a particular prevailing impulse will be maintained beyond a point that might be considered effective or reasonable. In so doing Messiaen calculates that such excess will take the listener through a barrier, to where time can appear to stand still. This does not only apply to slow music but such movements of huge energy as the *Regard de l'esprit de Joie* from this cycle, or the fifth movement of the *Turangalîla Symphony*.

2. At another extreme, in the five to six minute duration of the *Sechs Kleine Klavierstücke* by Schoenberg, the listener can feel that much more has been experienced than could be anticipated within that time-frame. Each piece displays a
highly distinctive tonal character and sense of gesture. Although brief, there is no sense that the sequence of events can be anticipated. Even on repeated hearings, the attribute of surprise remains. An unusual or unexpected feature retains its freshness because of the context in which it is presented. The sequence itself contributes to creating the unexpected. It is artfully arranged, with two fleeting visions (nos.4 and 5) serving to give more sense of expansion to the first and last, while the second and third are in antithesis, one slender in sound with eloquent use of silences and the other always legato and the most stable in its continuity. The pieces seem to be like isolated islands in a sea of silence. (Schoenberg directs that they be distinctly separated and should not run into each other.)

3. Late Beethoven contains frequent juxtapositions which can appear disconcerting. Solomon (2004) comments on Beethoven's "most inimitable scherzos" as "disruptive, asymmetrical, propulsively unstable, undecorous, satiric, even demonic". (p.83). That in the Sonata Op.110 certainly has elements of the uncouth which puts it at odds with the prevailing serene sweetness of the opening movement. Yet its terseness in this context, (just two minutes in performance) provides the transition to the deeply expressive "lamenting song" and fugal sequence which comprises the core of the work. With its passing references to Viennese street-songs, it demonstrates a mundane and vulgar humanity, as if to represent one extreme of the vast range of human experience that exists between it and the exalted realm of suffering and eventual renewal which the finale explicitly depicts. Tellingly, the melodic shape of the scherzo's opening, and that of the song, are nearly identical. The very brevity of the scherzo serves to jolt the listener into being more receptive to the unexpected nature of the form and content of what is to follow.
The placement of the similarly short Alla Marcia fourth movement after the long slow movement of some eighteen minutes in the Quartet in a minor, Op. 132 is similarly unexpected. It is possible to view this as a deliberate breaking of the rarified atmosphere of the Adagio, in order to bring the listener down to earth. However, not all find the solution convincing. Sculthorpe (1999) finds the March “among the most trivial music [Beethoven] ever wrote”. (p.155).

Another unexpected juxtaposition may be found in the Sonata, Op. 109. The first two movements are musically eventful and elaborately organized, both of them in sonata form and brief. The second is indeed the most concentrated example in his whole output, commonly taking less than two and a half minutes to perform. The last movement, which follows this, is a spacious set of six variations on a sarabande-like theme of 32 bars. This sublime and simple melody will take around the same time to play as the whole second movement. Clock-time is dissolved as Beethoven drastically takes the sonata in a totally unexpected direction. The listener is disorientated and thereby opened up to the elevated world of the finale. The relationship between real time and musical time is an integral aspect of the experience.

4. Goehr (1998) presents a convincing example of the mechanism by which different perceptions of time are created, when he compares the introductions to Beethoven's last Sonata, Op. 111 and Liszt's piano piece Funerailles. Both present a highly dramatic and somber chordal timbre, with dotted rhythms, and feature closely related motifs, each repeated three times, with the harmony featuring use of all the possible secondary sevenths in turn. Liszt does not depart from the sequential treatment of his melodic motif heard at the outset, presented over an incessantly tolling bass. The
drama of the music derives from the accumulation of intensity as the melodic motion rises ever higher in pitch, before falling as if exhausted in the final four bars. Beethoven also begins with a threefold sequence but at bar 6 there starts an unexpected and mysterious passage which passes through five bars of shifting and remote tonality, the tension heightened by the relentless dotted rhythms, before achieving the dominant in bar 11. His equivalent of Liszt's ending is more brooding and ominous and leads directly into the main allegro, while Liszt gives a dramatic *lunga pausa* before embarking on his first main theme. Goehr (1998) comments that:

The difference in effect of the two fragments is startling. Liszt operates in real time: the effect lasts just as long as the notes sound. Beethoven's foreground is heard as a manipulation of a simple and conventional background: his unique effect is realised in terms of the distance he has traveled from it. The effect is profound, though in purely material terms his chords and positions are less spectacular than those of Liszt. Prolongation achieves a suspension of clock time. The effect does not date. (p.198).

**About Performing**

We turn now to consider the role of the performer and how he operates. We have earlier shown that he would do well to make a close study of the composers' texts the foundation of his work. This will stimulate his creativity, if such study is informed by a good knowledge of how particular composers make use of their range of music notation. This includes: how notes are grouped and related either as vertical accumulations or conjoined voices, indications of articulation and accentuation, the use of dynamic markings and descriptive verbal instructions. All of these may be used in a number of ways, characteristic of particular traditions or individual
composers. For the informed performer these notations will be suggestive of ideas which will lead to characterful concepts of sound, particularly if there is knowledge and experience of a composer's works over a wide range. For the pianist, Mozart's operatic writing and Beethoven's for orchestra, provide clear examples. However, in the piano writing of the Romantics, Liszt, Schumann, and especially Chopin, we find sonorities which derive from the very nature of the instrument, particularly the integration of touch and textures, and a fully integrated use of the sustaining pedal, all contributing to create colour, atmosphere and poetry.

Manipulation of the pedal can never be precisely indicated because it is so bound up with the pianist's touch and the way he interprets, imagines, hears and creates musical textures in a wide variety of acoustics, on varied instruments. Even with musical notation, there is a limit on what can be indicated, and for the same reasons. As examples:

1. There is a vast range covered by the general designations of _staccato_ and _legato_ ranging from the shortest detached notes to a seamless stream of sound where adjacent pitches appear to succeed each other with no perceptible modification of tonal impulse.

2. Dynamic indications give an imprecise indication of what may be required or appropriate in a given context. The voicing of chords in _forte_ will require some elements to be much less in relation to the prominent leading voice. Bass lines too may need a resonant weight compared to the inner texture which lies between it and the melodic top.

3. Indications of gradual change in pulse (_ritardando, accelerando_) or in tonal intensity (_crescendo, diminuendo_) require the performer to judge accurately how and to what degree the rates of change are to be effected in the particular instance.
4. Since the Romantic period, indications of rests or *staccato* may often refer to the touch to be employed by the hand, but the sound is quite other due to prolongation by the pedal.

Further, in Baroque music, the performer will need to acquire the skill and confidence to embellish and ornament the melodic lines with taste. In Mozart too, there are many situations where decoration is appropriate, including the interpolation of lead-in passages at fermatas prior to the return of principal themes. These must be applied judiciously, (and not too often!) so as not to draw undue attention to the embellishments. Mozart's own impeccable sense of balance between the most potent expression and lucidity of means, such as we witness in his surviving cadenzas and notated lead-ins for a number of the piano concertos, will be our best guide. In some virtuosic works of the 19th century there is also the possibility of creative embellishment. Liszt encouraged the young virtuosi who traveled to Weimar to work with him, to take wing in the cadenza-style passages of certain works such as the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. In other contexts too, he was clearly amenable to alternative texts, as witness for example his various endings to the concert study *Un Sospiro*. But the performer will need to know that the texts of works which are reflective of Liszt's most elevated sensibilities and depth of meaning need to be approached with the greatest respect and fidelity.

Through such considerations we may see that the responsible performer cannot limit himself to a subservient passivity in the face of the text, but must become fully engaged in searching for the meaning which lies behind the necessarily incomplete information which can be provided about sound when using written symbols. He will also need to give consideration how his interpretations will acquire coherence, so that
works are presented not only with a sense of involvement and full range of response to every passing moment but a sense that all such detailed characterisation is conceived within a sure overview of the work as a whole. Much of this may take place on an unconscious level, but it will be aided by giving thought to such matters as the exact relationships between fluctuating tonal levels, and consideration of the ‘topography’ of the work's landscape. The performer must be always aware of where he is within the journey, whether this be the relaxing lowlands, rolling hills, or progressively higher peaks. Sometimes the music must be allowed to breathe more easily, at others the impulse will tighten, or become broader as a climactic moment is approached and reached. Yet such a range of response will need to be appreciated in relation to a particular pulse. A tempo is not to be defined by a single designated calibration on the metronome. It is rather an area within which all the work's elements may be fully characterised without loosing the sense of where that basic pulse is, and how far one may deviate from it. We suggest as an analogy, the manner in which an individual may live over a 24 hour period. His pulse rate will naturally change in response to his feelings, the events in which he is involved and different times of the day or night. Yet he will be aware of experiencing this wide range of sensations and experiences within the tempo of his life. Only when his pulse and other measurable indications of health such as temperature and blood pressure have departed too far from normal do we perceive that he has deviated from the conditions within which he may live life to the full, within the rhythm of his everyday existence.

One of the principal responsibilities of the performer is to present the unfolding totality of a work even as he characterises every moment with due regard to its particular sensation. Rachmaninoff (quoted in Norris 1993) is revealing about this aspect. He held that every work had its own culminating point.
This culmination, depending on the actual piece, may be at the end or in the middle, it may be loud or soft, but the performer must know how to approach it with absolute calculation, absolute precision, because if it slips by, then the whole construction crumbles, the piece becomes disjointed and scrappy and does not convey to the listener what must be conveyed. (p.78).

This observation implies that although the performer has to be caught up in the moment, listening intently and projecting to his audience, he must also be able to sense where he is in the context of the unfolding narrative. Brendel (2002) states:

> When I am on stage, I must do several things at once. I must control myself and free myself. I must look ahead to what I am about to play – see the piece, as it were, spread out like a panorama before me – but at the same time take in what I have just played. I have to play for the audience, and must reach their ears as far back as the thirtieth row. I am accountable to the composer, but I am also there to communicate something to the listener. I am not delivering a soliloquy, but am somewhere in the middle... I am the mediator... but I am not the message... I must be immersed in what I am doing, and at the same time stand outside. (p.59).

The cultivation of acute and detailed listening is vital, not only in the ability to hear one's sound but the skill of relating this to imagined concepts of tonal images.

Berman (2000) writes of two kinds of 'musical ears'. One is the 'subjective ear', the pianist's image of the kind of sound he would like to produce. The more specific the image, the better the results will be. The other is the 'objective ear', which refers to the musician's ability to monitor the sound that actually comes from under his fingers. Objective listening
is a perennial goal, a lifelong battle, for a musician always tries to listen objectively to his own playing but never fully succeeds. The pianist cannot do meaningful work without learning to listen intently and tirelessly to every sound he produces on the piano. (p.4).

**What performers do**

What then can the performer do in the act of performance to convey the content of a work? We need to consider the component aspects that the performer must call upon. How these are used and projected will do much to determine his effectiveness, but we will see that none can be considered in isolation. It is the relationship between and integration of one to another, which constitute the performer's skill and create conditions for successful performance. So, although what follows will pay attention to all aspects, there will be frequent cross-referencing between them.

The aspects to be considered are:

1. **Relating to sound and its treatment:**
   - sound (including silence), melody, harmony, rhythm (including phrasing, articulation, and pulse), dynamics, tempo, texture, timbre/colour.

2. **Relating to Communication:**
   - body language, illusion, awareness of audience.

We may start from the fundamental proposition that all music takes place as sound in time, whether we take this as a single tone in the context of surrounding silence, or the accumulated experience of absorbing a complex work of thirty minutes or more.
These extremes are well illustrated in the Liszt Sonata in b minor, where the first sounds are two detached octave Gs in the bass that seem to puncture the initial silence, followed by a mysterious downward legato scale. (The tempo is Lento assai.)

The work as a whole is an epic narrative where the usual multiple movements of the classical sonata are transformed into a seamless single-movement structure. At the end, Liszt creates a sudden dissolution which has the effect of switching off the music and taking the listener back into the silence from which the work began.

(Significantly, it replaced his original brilliant ending). It is fascinating to discover the famous Soviet pianist Sviatoslav Richter talking about his way of presenting this opening. (Monsaingeon 2001)

Here's what I do: I come out on to the stage. I sit down, and I don't move a muscle.

I create the sense of emptiness within myself, and in my head I count up to thirty, very slowly. This causes panic in the audience: ‘What’s happening? Is he ill?’

Then and only then, I play the G. In this way the note sounds totally unexpected, but in an intentional way. (p.29).

This is a doubly significant testimony. It reminds us that all musical sound is experienced within an implicit potential for silence. It also tells us that a performer, by being the focus of attention on stage, is able to conjure up a particular characterisation of silence, according to its surrounding context. Haydn, (in his quartets as well as piano sonatas) is a master of tactical pauses, often for humorous effect. Witness the mock horror in the silences in bars 11 and 70, following the bizarre shift of harmony in the finale of the Sonata No.50 in C, or the effect of the change which seems to come over the music during the long pause between the emphatic reiterated cadences in G and the continuation in what comes across as a mischievously unexpected E major, in the Sonata No. 52 in E flat. With impeccable
timing and possibly the tiniest gesture, the aware performer may make these eloquent. Liszt’s use of pauses is often for dramatic effect, where music of great intensity and brilliance is suddenly cut off. Moments such as the points between the final climaxes and the codas in the Sonata and the Legend St. Francis of Paola walking on the waves come to mind. In such instances the performer must show that the intensity is carried over into a silence which must vibrate. A strong gesture from the performer, demonstrating the transition from forcefulness to solemnity, is essential.

Silence is also the essential ingredient of articulation within the smallest units of musical utterance. It is common for sounds to be arranged in groups of two or more notes covered by a slur. This often implies that the last note be slightly separated, (and lighter in emphasis) from the start of the next group. The listener will not be aware of silence so much as the musical texture being airy and articulate. Yet the tiny slivers of silence among the sounds are absolutely integral to making it speak with character and eloquence. Rests can be particularly loaded with meaning. In the return of the Arioso dolente in Beethoven’s Sonata Op. 110, what had originally been heard as a legato melody is cut up and punctuated by short rests which illustrate perfectly the laborious gasps for breath the composer is surely seeking to evoke in his direction: ermattet (exhausted).

Such aspects of performance depend on the creation of the illusion that something is sounding, also in silence, and that these moments will carry a full sense of characterisation because of the contexts in which they occur. They are a reminder that even the most gifted performer cannot convey everything through sound alone. The concept is of the essence. To play with imagination implies the presence of an image. Particularly for pianists, there are obvious problems in that individual sounds
will always fade. There is, for example, no way that a crescendo on any single note can be achieved. Such a limitation obliges the player first to have an exact mental image of the ideal sounds he has to convey, and then to provide the actual sounds which most closely match the image.

Earlier, (see p.88) we discussed such aspects of ‘inner listening’, describing how, in presenting a melodic phrase legato and crescendo, the performer will play the successive melodic notes with a precisely increasing intensity which follows the inner conception of a sung phrase. The rhythm will flow forward. The treatment of accompaniments will further promote the sensation that the melody is flowering. The touch that the pianist will apply to the keys will be as smooth as possible between adjacent notes and the sustaining aspect of each sound must be apparent, with a minimum of initial percussive impact. Pedaling may enhance both melody and texture. Stein (1962) is surely correct in stating that the “good performer imparts to the note that degree of intensity which makes one feel, directly he strikes the note, how long it is going to last”. (p.41). One might add that such a performer is always aware of the relationships and proportions between the treatments of melody, harmony and rhythm which provide the listener with sufficient material such that his imagination will supply the ‘missing’ information which will render the illusion palpable.

Melodic lines are not always articulated as an unbroken legato. The performer will require a wide range of response in non legato and staccato. In Mozart’s keyboard writing, greater intensity can be conveyed through a more detached articulation. The pianist can learn a good deal from the wind-player’s range of tonguing. In example 3, from the first movement of Mozart’s Sonata in a minor, K.310, the melodic line is
expressed well as a near-\textit{legato} at the start, then as a true \textit{legato} as Mozart directs at bars 28 and 29. There is no dynamic marking. However, the music appears to increase in intensity as it approaches cadential trill at the start of bar 35, without the texture changing. An apt response may well be to play with an increasing alert detached touch from bar 32.

Tonal aspects in melodic playing will be influenced by the prevailing moods and need to be clearly characterized. For example, in the Liszt \textit{Sonata} we find successively, \textit{dolce con grazia} (bar 125), \textit{cantando espressivo}(153), \textit{ritenuto ed appassionato} for the \textit{Recitativo} at 297, and \textit{dolcissimo con intimo sentimento} (349). The performer will do well to work on finding and pinning down the exact tones of voice for these moments, considering also the associated treatments of rhythm, texture and dynamics. Such associations contribute both to the range of expression which it is possible to convey, and to establishing parameters within which the presentation of the work may be organised.

Dynamics levels are to be clearly understood and calibrated. Stein (1962) tells us that the performer must

be capable of the widest dynamic range that his instrument or voice permits, and be well aware of his own individual dynamic scale from the softest to the loudest notes. A wide range is needed both for the graded contrasts of the architecture and the subtle points of phrasing. (p.60).

The development of character of sound at all dynamic levels is of great importance. In \textit{piano}, the very words ‘quiet’ or ‘soft’ carry an unfortunate connotation of passivity. Yet excitement, menace and mystery are often conveyed in hushed tones.
The tendency to conceive *piano* and *dolce* as synonymous in slow music is particularly limiting. For example, in the slow movement of his *Sonata in d minor, Op. 31 No. 2*, Beethoven’s prevailing dynamic mark throughout is *piano*. Yet it is not until the second subject at bar 30 that we find *dolce*. It is clear that earlier the voice must be *piano non dolce*, and that the performer needs to consider what that might mean. Later still, from bar 80, we find the only *pp* marking in the movement, at a point where the harmony takes an unexpected and mysterious turn. Again, this tells us something not only about the moment itself, but how it must be differentiated from what surrounds it.

Brahms is apt to employ *rf* as an indication to reinforce the sound and expression. Yet this is not always to be equated with a particularly big sound. Thus, in the *Rhapsody in b minor, Op 79 No 1*, the *rf* marking at bar 53, can be well interpreted as a dropping in volume while altering the sound and accentuation to convey the intensification; a pouncing, springy tension from which to launch the exciting seven-bar *crescendo* from a low dynamic level.

In strong playing, as in quiet, there needs to be differentiation. *Mezzo forte, forte, fortissimo*, have distinct levels, character and proportions according to their musical and structural context. The performer must also master a full range of response regarding the degree of percussiveness he must impart. At the start of his creative life, Prokofiev, wishing to show his individuality and disdaining romantic expressiveness, made much of writing music with clean, clear lines and a modernistic objectivity. A work like the *Toccata, Op. 11* does benefit from a dry directness of touch which stresses immediacy with a hammered directness. Also percussive are aspects of Messiaen’s writing for piano, but his is more colourful, featuring released,
vibrating pulses of sound which derive from the Javanese gamelan. Throughout the repertoire, the alert interpreter will find allusions to possible orchestral, chamber music or vocal colours and textures. The piano has the property of realising a distinctive concept when it is fully imagined, and if the performer has the ability to stand back enough to accurately calculate the effect of how he is playing. The point here is not to set out to imitate certain tone and sound-combinations, but rather that such images will provide distinctive stimuli to the performer. For example, at the start of Liszt's Waldesrauschen etude, there may be a different rendering of the left-hand theme if the pianist conceives it as lying in the middle register of a solo viola or high up on the cello's A string. Brendel has written (2002:95) of how the finale of Mozart's Sonata in a minor, K. 310 is, for him, evocative of the sound of a wind divertimento.

The pianist will learn from others, especially singers, how to cultivate a sensation for the width of intervals. The piano can produce all intervals with equal ease. The sensation of reaching or stretching is absent and there are no intonation problems (or, more exactly, they are the province of the tuner). Yet expressive depth will be restricted if contouring is insufficiently overt. Sensitivity to the degree of expressive tension inherent in different intervals is an essential element in melodic presentation.

The melodic line is always influenced by the underlying harmony. If this is more complex, it will alter the impulse. In ex.4, we see the first phrase of Mozart's Variations on "Unser dummer Pöbel meint," K.455 followed by the equivalent passage in Variation 7. Whereas the theme moves briskly and regularly, the richer harmony and imitative counterpoint of the variation, modifies the rhythmic impulse, although the fundamental tempo has not changed. In all situations, the relationship of
harmony and melody needs to be fully considered. Harmony may be likened to the bone structure beneath the face which although unseen will determine how the face appears to the viewer.

Although harmony and counterpoint may be considered as distinct ways of organisation, they have complementary aspects. A contrapuntal texture will be heard also in terms of its harmonic structure, and in well-written harmony the performer will need to balance the component voices, being aware of the internal movement. In ex. 5, from Beethoven’s Sonata in e minor, Op. 111, we observe a six-voice texture, from bar 6. The paths of these voices, as they fall and rise by step, are not so much to be projected, as duly noted by the performer. The chords have a minimal verticality and will be conceived as conjoined lines of sound. In counterpoint, and particularly fugal writing, attention must also be given to the entire texture. It is tiresome to hear playing which highlights entries of the fugue subject at the expense of the whole. In the fugues of Bach in particular, as Rosen (2002) comments, “the principal interest lies not in the main theme but in the way the theme combines with the interesting motifs of the other voices, themselves often derived from the theme itself”. 6(p.197).

Harmony often provides the performer with an indication of the particular pulse within a given tempo. In quick movements, a slow rate of change in the harmony can

6 Rosen goes on to recall a Bach performance he heard by the English pianist Solomon in the 1950s:

“The tone quality was the simple, unified cantabile considered appropriate for Bach at the time, the tempo a calm, reflective movement, and the balance of the sonorities was so exquisite that the performance, stylistically correct or not, was deeply moving. I have always had a deep admiration for an artist who appears to do nothing while achieving everything”.

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create an underlying feeling of breadth. For example, the first movement of
Beethoven's 'Waldstein' Sonata, Op. 53 is clearly fast, with its allegro con brio
marking. Yet the rate of harmonic change in its first 27 bars is one or two harmonies
per bar. It is revealing to perceive the opening as if in a very slow, one beat per bar
impulse. The result is swift, light yet spacious, conveying the unbroken sweep of this
opening. If the lyrical second subject (from bar 35) is felt in 4, it will convey a
contrasting stability in music that moves in slower time values, yet changes harmony
on every melody note. There is a similar relationship between the start and the A flat
middle section of the final movement of Beethoven's Sonata in f minor, Op. 2 No. 1.
A fast two beats in a bar is succeeded by a pulse which expresses lyrical space by
changing to beats of one bar in length arranged in perceived 'bars' according to the
phrase lengths.

Every work will have a distinctive range of harmony. In the classical style, the use of
chromatic harmony and secondary sevenths is more limited than in later music. Such
complex harmony tends to intensify expression in such music. The performer would
do well to recognise that their use will signify points of higher intensity, and this will
contribute to planning the path of the work. Context is always of the essence.

Chopin's Berceuse, Op. 57 is most unusual in its unchanging oscillation of only two
harmonies throughout its first 54 bars. The tranquility of the piece remains unbroken
regardless of the speeds of the figurations, (between one and six notes per quaver) in
the right-hand variations. In this context, the introduction of the flattened seventh and
its maintenance for 4 bars before resolving on the subdominant for two bars is a
moment of rapt magic in an already enchanting piece. The language of the
Schoenberg Three Pieces, Op. 11 by contrast, with its unrelieved use of discords
making for constant flux in its lack of harmonic resolution, creates a restless and
unresolved world perfectly matched by his use of fractured musical forms, particularly in the third piece.

Both the above examples are at exceptional extremes. Commonly, use of a full range of harmonic movement not only provides constantly changing sounds but, because of the varied degrees of tension and resolution inherent in their relationships, impart energy and interest to the musical narrative. Melody and harmony are integrated. Together, even without a strong rhythmic component, they create the possibility for directional movement. (See for example, the *Arietta* of Beethoven’s *Op. 111*).

When we consider the element of rhythm, we must not confuse it with the note-values as written. As Stein (1962) has it, these “are only approximately correct. They provide a scheme from which the rhythm may be inferred. In fact, the rhythm has to be supplied by the performer.” (p.38). This involves the minutest shortening or lengthening of notes which on paper appear identical. (The performer is well used to dealing with perceptible units of sound lasting a fraction of a second. It is not unusual to play around 12 consecutive sounds in one second on the piano. Not only the fingers but the ear must be quick!) Rhythmic projection involves a hierarchy of accentuation ranging from the relatively mild, which will not benotated, to the various written accents which apply to a wide range of situations indicating expressive emphasis, or sharper accents which stand out in context. Rhythm is related to melody in that equal attention needs to be applied to short and long notes within a phrase, so that a sustained thread of sound be maintained. It relates to harmony in that rhythmic character must not take away from the harmonic value of a sound. This applies particularly to *staccato* playing. Notes must never be so short that the implications carried by the dissonances and consonants of harmony are lost through durations.
becoming too clipped. (See for example the ending of Rachmaninoff's *Etude-Tableau in c minor, Op. 39 No. 1*) Rhythm also relates to the structure of a work and how it is presented. The performer must decide how to treat the larger divisions of rhythm in relation to the unfolding of the work, controlling the flexibility of the pulse in a manner best suited to showing expression and direction. Although the solo pianist has no practical requirement to emulate the organised rhythm which is integral to playing ensemble music, he would do well to put his ideas in this area to the test of whether or not it is able to be conducted. Except for some passages in *recitativo* or *cadenza* style, the conductor's solutions, which integrate modifications or changes of tempo within a sure sense of underlying pulse, are a certain and convincing model.

Another area for consideration is that of instrumental colouring. For the pianist, there is one major drawback associated with the modern concert instrument: its relative homogeneity of tone throughout its range. The fortepiano, and the early wood-framed pianos, though weaker in sound, have distinctive colours in their different registers. The pianist needs to be aware of the possibilities for characterizing sound when it is clear that musical material is drawing on such properties of the original instrument. The modern piano does not always have to be played to the fullest extent of its tonal possibilities, but rather to serve the original concept of the composer, although this must be often conveyed in large venues. The performer will with experience learn when to draw his listeners in rather than project more forcefully. We are sometimes aware of such intent from the composer. At the start of both the *Ballade No. 1, Op. 23* and the *Barcarolle, Op. 60*, Chopin, having begun each work with a strong call to attention, makes the sound dissolve as he prepares the listener for the confiding poetry of the principal themes which follow. However intimate the tone of voice may be, the performer must not lose sight of the need to project it to every corner of the
auditorium, even as he draws his audience towards him.

Tone-colours are inherent in harmonic language within music of all eras, ever more so in the Romantic era, but it is with the music of Wagner from the period from *Tristan und Isolde* (begun in 1858) onwards that the evocative power of harmonic relationships begins to acquire a more autonomous function, together with a matching emphasis on instrumental colour. It was Debussy’s achievement to use harmony not to create purposeful movement and underpin deterministic structures in the traditional way, but to replace the old network of concord and discord with chains of unresolved harmony, illustrative of the dreamlike states he creates with such magic. Here, the colouring inherent in the harmonies is fused with the sound of the instrument. For the pianist this promotes a sensation as if savouring the subtle flavours of the sound, which is intimately linked with the equally intoxicating sense of how the keyboard is handled. The approach often becomes more stroked, even caressing. The player has the illusion that the piano’s hammers are dissolving.

Liszt too, invented totally new sounds and timbres for the piano as a result of his experience as an improviser of genius equipped with unsurpassed pianistic technical equipment. As Rosen (1998:493) tells us, when he considers the total reworking Liszt undertook of his boyhood *Studies for the Piano in Twelve Exercises* (1826) into the first version of the *Trancendental Studies* in 1837, his inventiveness was not always in the areas usually regarded as fundamental in composition: melody, harmonic structure, and rhythmic organization. “Liszt was often able to leave these almost untouched and yet transform an uninteresting student's effort into a work of great originality. He reworks what is sometimes considered only the surface of the music: that is, he keeps the earlier structure ...and changes its sonority”. The most original
piano writing of Liszt, (and, following him, of the Ravel of *Gaspard de la Nuit*),
demands from the performer the most exact attention to the potential for tonal colour,
timbre and texture carried through with flair, imagination and daring.\(^7\)

All the attributes discussed must be presented within a sure sense of tempo. This is
indeed fundamental to the success of a performance. The choice of tempo will at one
level render the work intelligible. If events go past too quickly for the ear to make
sense of it, the listener will feel disorientated. Different textures will need certain
speeds for their effects to be made. We may say that the passage of time is also to be
equated with space, in that textures and colours must have enough room to make their
effect. We have earlier pointed out that an accurate perception of tempo is not to be
confused with rigidity. However, the performer must at all times be aware of just
how much he is departing from a *tempo giusto* (exact time). Those works which have
a wide variety of material particularly need this perception. Too often, for example,
one experiences performances of the first movement of Beethoven’s *Appasionata*
*Sonata* which fail to cohere, as the music in longer note-values languishes relative to
more apparently animated areas. As the performer prepares, the ability to tune in with
pinpoint accuracy to one’s chosen *tempi* is extremely valuable. Just before going on
stage, the music should be playing mentally inside the performer. When he appears
and plays, he is making audible a process which has already started.

\(^7\) While Ravel displayed equal skill in both pianistic and orchestral colouring, often producing
compelling versions of his works in both mediums, Liszt’s few orchestrations of characteristic
works, such as the *Mephisto Waltz No. 1*, lack the resourcefulness and excitement of his piano
writing. Liszt’s piano transcriptions of the orchestral works of other composers however are
masterly, particularly those of the Beethoven Symphonies and Berlioz’ *Harold in Italy.*
This is not to imply however that there are not important variables to consider. The most important is that of playing in a certain place to a number of listeners. The quality and characteristics of the instrument, as well as acoustic considerations will cause the performer to modify his tempi. Slow movements, on a weak instrument or in a dry acoustic, will need to move more. Quick pieces will require highly distinct articulation in a resonant acoustic, which may put a curb on the tempo. Pedaling will vary from one acoustic to another. As the performer seeks out his listener through his playing, he may become more demonstrative in presentation. This can lead to moments of intense magic or excitement, or to exaggeration. Even when a performer is running hot, there must be a corner that is ice-cold, controlling objectively what is actually going on.

Although it is possible to play a concert as if there was no audience present, those artists who communicate especially strongly appear to have the ability to make each member of the audience feel that the performance is directed to him only. The audience as a body is then drawn into a shared experience by virtue of the multiplicity of such individual responses. However, there are the occasional personalities so powerful that their very detachment can be compelling. The Italian virtuoso Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli demonstrated this attribute, particularly in his prime up to the early 1960s.

We have pointed out that much of what is heard by the listener is a result of inner images stimulating the process of conception and actualisation of the sound. There are other aspects of illusion which performers draw upon. The most common, and powerful, is that of playing from memory, for a long time past the most usual convention, at least for solo string and piano players. There seems little doubt that
this practice creates the impression for the listener that the music is emerging, as if spontaneously, directly from composer to audience, through the medium of the performer. Because the text is nowhere to be seen, it is as if it had dissolved, or never existed. The result is an increase in immediacy of communication. When such great artists as Clifford Curzon, Myra Hess and Sviatoslav Richter appeared with the score in the latter part of their careers, some part of their charisma disappeared even though their purely musical interest and integrity remained undiminished.

The other way in which a performer may appear to affect sound by illusory means is through body language. We have already drawn attention to the manner in which certain characters of silence may be activated. But sound itself needs augmentation on occasion. In ex.6, from the first movement of Beethoven’s Sonata in D, Op. 10 No. 3, there is, at bar 132, a fermata on a unison A, fortissimo, followed by an abrupt change of key and a changed, orchestral-style texture, at the same level. It is clear that the impression must be given that the sound on the fermata must at least be maintained, even augmented. There will be an inescapable drop in tension if the player does nothing to mask the inconvenient fact that the sound will naturally diminish. He must make a gesture which conveys an increasing intensity in proportion to the actual diminishing of the sound. A similar illusion is described by Barenboim (2003). He recounts the conductor William Steinberg telling of the memorable way that Eugen d’Albert, a leading Beethoven player from the early 20th century, achieved the transition from the end of the slow movement of the Emperor Concerto into its finale. Between the two very quiet, tentative premonitions of the finale’s first theme and its actual appearance, suddenly fortissimo, d’Albert “created the illusion of a huge crescendo on the last [bass] note of the transition, thereby making the explosive nature of the beginning of the last movement appear inevitable”.

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We can see therefore that musical characterisation may be conveyed by means other than the sound. We do not need to rely on memory to recall certain gestures of Alfred Brendel in his prime, since there is the filmed testimony of his playing. His DVD of a 1970 performance of Beethoven's *Hammerklavier Sonata, Op. 106*, (on EMI Classics Archive) has numerous telling moments. See for example, the impact of the huge releases, arms wide, at the fermatas following the $ff$ first motif, at bars 4 and 38 in the first movement, and later the wrenching gestures which powerfully illustrate the off-beat chords at bar 94-5. The visual characterisation of bars 78 and 81 in the slow movement convey so well the laden intensity of the moment.

The attitude and carriage of the body will convey much. In general, all movement should mean something and too much of it means less, since it becomes distracting. A slight turning of the body away from the listeners can be eloquent in heightening a moment of intense inwardness. But turning to any extent toward the audience is problematic and meretricious in nearly every case. Just occasionally, if the audience is in an uncommonly sympathetic state with the artist, the shared acknowledgement of a moment of humour in a pause can be conveyed, but only with great delicacy and tact.

The use of the eyes merits comment. The pianist is unable to direct his gaze toward the audience as performances take place with the performer's face in profile. For string and wind soloists who do perform facing the audience, there is an understanding that eye contact will be avoided. Singers however do employ the eyes to great effect as an intrinsic aspect of their communication. The essential point here
is that singer's music is always married to words. The explicit message carried by the text suggests and requires that it be characterised by extra-musical means of expression. The eyes, and bodily gesture, are used as an actor does. When the content of a work is purely musical, these avenues of expression towards the audience are inappropriate, although communication is assisted when players in small chamber-music groups exchange glances as one takes over a phrase from another.

However, for the solo pianist the eyes can still play a part in musical communication. The current tendency among certain young pianists to gaze heavenwards, is to be avoided as distracting for the concentration of the audience. Conversely, if the head is too much cast down and the eyes commonly directed to the keys, the impression is conveyed of a degree of self-containment. This may contribute to a sensation of distance between player and audience. Certain artists did convey compellingly though. We can call upon filmed performances of Wilhelm Kempff that illustrate his deeply sympathetic gaze into the middle distance. He simultaneously conveys a visionary inwardness and a sensation that the music is moving toward a point to which we are being led in a manner at once authoritative and calm.

The performer will be fashioned by many factors, some conscious, others beyond his influence. The shape and scope of the hands and fingers will be crucial in making certain pianistic and tonal aspects more or less likely. Early training will be essential not only in building good physical structure to the playing, but also in establishing the tonal environment within which he experiences music in the act of making it sound, and by extension, imagining it. Unless the individual is exceptionally talented in having the natural ability to essentially find his own path, the quality of this training is crucial. A gifted youngster must be guided towards full autonomy through the
assistance of wise teaching which though it may challenge, must always cherish, support and guide the talent as a manifestation of the unique individual. For some, the instrumental development may run ahead of imagination and artistry. For others, understanding and imaginative insight into the music will provide more stimulus, and aspects of sheer virtuosity may be of lesser interest. We are all ultimately as strong as our weakest link, and the developing performer will do well to cultivate areas to which he is not primarily drawn, as he builds his technical equipment and musical persona. Yet ultimately each has to find and cultivate a unique voice. Repertoire of an unrivaled richness and variety provides pianists in particular with the musical material on which to feed and promote growth toward maturity.

A developed moral sense is needed to arbitrate between different needs. A strong ego must be balanced by both a practicality and resilience, and by a more innocent idealism and sense of exploration, wonder and openness. Always, these personal attributes must work together to maintain good psychological health in what is a tough profession.

For the individual musician, long-term planning is desirable in determining how he wishes to be regarded. If he has the ambition to mould the taste of his audience rather than follow it, he may well find that his individuality will develop. The followers of trends, or dedicated career-makers, more often trade on their personalities instead. If they possess an attractive and alluring one, they may have the capacity to charm or thrill an audience. They may excel particularly in works that demand a vivid and immediate characterisation to be established. However, problems can emerge rather later in the career. When a personality-based approach persists, it can lead to self-caricature. A measure of maturity in an artist however, is that more will be found in
music which has the property of revealing its full content as he continues to live with it. In Artur Schnabel's dictum that he was only interested in performing music which was always better than it could be played, we learn that certain music will not exhaust our capacity to understand it more fully.

Artists may change. There may be no absolute division between one approach and its counterpart. Tendencies and priorities may alter with time and age. We can say however that personality and individuality are distinctively different in their purest manifestations. The British pianist, Susan Tomes, gives an account of the insights of the great theatre director, Peter Brook. She describes (2005) him speaking to her of the stillness which every performer needs...that there are two 'bad' ways conventionally accepted. In one, the performer 'squashes' the dimensions of the role into the confined space of his personality... in another, the 'classical' approach is adopted to distance the performer artificially from his role, and this results in a process of which the best result can only be intelligent sophistication. There is one good way, Brook thought: ...somehow to allow the role to impregnate one, and thereafter to give it back to the listener. He tries to make clear this distinction between 'being' the role; keeping deliberately distant from the role, and this third way of taking on willingly the lineaments of the role without surrendering the lineaments of the psyche. He repeated, that there is a difference between personality and individuality; the latter being many-layered, the deeps mysterious because they are not of our own devising”. (p.41).

This view has parallels with the performer's relationship with his 'role' as presented in the musical text. Like the actor, he too will need to absorb its content, to take it into himself. As Barenboim has it (2003) "Immersion, complete concentration, is a
condition *sine qua non* for the interpreter and performer because the conscious projection of the music for the pleasure of the listener instantly changes the character of a performance. We must not permit our thoughts to wander: the best way to communicate with the listener is to communicate with ourselves, and with the music we are performing.” (p.54).

All the aspects we have considered will be utilised by the performer in a way which is integrated as well as coherent and eloquent for the listener. Achieving the right ‘mix’ of the sound is essential. This means that the presentation of all sound takes place in the proper proportion. The pianist, like the conductor, has the control of and responsibility for an entire musical fabric. Its content must be realised in a manner at once accurate, and compelling. We have already referred to the aspect of narrative in a work which draws performer and listener into its unfolding. It is in the treatment of texture we have the potential to create perspective to the sound so that its presence has depth as well as line. The performer needs to be aware of the components of musical texture which may convey this. Bass lines, which carry a sense of connection, provide a resonant basis for building the melodic structure and a supportive harmony which is often elaborated with detailed figurations providing animation and colour. As light is refracted through stained glass, so sound is passed through the prism of pedal, allied to precisely calibrated touch, articulation and dynamic layering between and within all the component strands.

I liken the passage of a work of music to an arrow shot into the air, which on reaching its end target, has its energy absorbed. The entire arc of its delivery must be seen as fully as a rainbow or a mountain range, whether the piece is on the largest
scale, or a miniature, whether it travels in a straight line or through apparent
diversions from its main path. Having been launched and propelled across its
trajectory, a work must arrive at its end, not merely stop. Within sections and phrases
too, concepts of movement and distance covered can provide vivid images for the
performer and will assist him in seizing and holding the attention of his listeners. The
nature of movement in relation to such ‘targeting’ is significant. If we walk towards
an object some distance away from us, we will move as if drawn to it as our final
focus point. It is impossible to maintain a metronomic regularity. If we did, it would
actually appear as if we were slowing down. There may be a correlation between our
human experience of such movement and the way we interpret music, whether as
performers or listeners. This goes beyond the relationship between music and human
movement discussed elsewhere. It seems to deal with our appreciation of existence in
our environment, with its particular degree of gravitational pull against which we
simultaneously strive and to which we succumb. Great music provides us with the
inner manifestations of this tension, whether comprehended as physical or spiritual.
In speaking to our human condition, it provides images of narrative and travel,
through the nature of its movement and structures. If the performer can access this
network of time, space and movement in his imagination, he will find powerful
images through which to convey musical sound. Ultimately, this is a life story:
coming from nothingness, being brought into a life which runs its course in ways rich
and various, and returning to whence it came.
In Conclusion

When I set out on these writings, I knew something of what I wished to accomplish, but little idea of how I would articulate the aspects of my working attitudes and beliefs that I wanted to express. As a practical musician, my previous reading and thinking had proceeded relatively piecemeal. My knowledge was acquired by the need for certain information or driven by curiosity. However, the current endeavour demanded that I investigate and process material in a more systematic way as I sought to clarify my ideas and values, and, as an inexperienced writer, come to grips with the techniques of expressing my thoughts and building structure.

Work on these writings has provided me with the opportunity to study and reflect on my central preoccupation: the nature of music and the interactions between its creators, performers and receivers. I had anticipated that I would investigate the relationship between composer and performer, and I was happy to have the opportunity to record the insights I have gained into the creative processes of both composing and performing, not least through significant encounters with new music and its creators. I was less prepared to find myself drawn to consider the function of the listener as an active participant in the communication of music. The performer feeds off the extent and quality of the imaginative receptivity, knowledge and experience that a listener brings to his offering. When even a few such individuals gather together for the express purpose of receiving the music, their contributions can meld in the sharing to create a powerful atmosphere which can provide both an unusual stimulus to the performer and a profound communion between them.
It is regrettable that since most music is now experienced through recordings, which are commonly edited into a ‘perfect’ product, free of blemishes, the performer too often faces the audience with the priority of achieving such a performance in the concert hall. This can all too often result in performances which may be near-impeccable but where the preoccupation of the performer with his own playing can place him in a relatively sealed compartment in relation to his listeners. This characteristic is encouraged early in the careers of many aspiring musicians by the demands of instrumental competitions.

Embarking on a career used to be commonly assisted through success in competitions. Paradoxically however, the huge growth in these contests has led to a larger number of laureates chasing ever fewer concert opportunities. While it can be a valuable experience for the young performer to have the opportunity to prepare a big repertoire for such an occasion, all too often contestants may be tracked as they travel between competitions with a limited ‘fail-safe’ programme of works with which they hope to make their mark.

In this situation we see a further manifestation of music as a commodity or product. I have drawn attention to this phenomenon, which has been in evidence to some extent particularly since the rise of public concerts in the newly constructed auditoria of leading cities, from the second half of the 19th century. However, the impetus for this development has been the rise of passive reception of music of all kinds, through broadcast and recorded material. Stravinsky’s earlier quoted 1940 warning of music becoming “a sort of drug, which, far from stimulating the mind, paralyzes and stultifies it” (see p.155) has proved all too prescient. Performance competitions have attracted support and finance because they provide the attention and excitement of a
contest that equates them to sporting events, with winners, and by implication, losers. (This applies also to the leading manufactures of pianos that vie with one another for exposure.) Piano competitions have seen a particularly large growth. With a very few honourable exceptions they do not concern themselves with the development of artists fitted for today's professional conditions, and they do not often expose an artist who goes on to make a sustained performance career. Indeed, competitions often seem to promote a restricted outlook among their participants, featuring performances that too often have the whiff of the examination studio rather than the creativity of a communication offered and shared.

Music today is a big business, where major artists of the stature of Wilhelm Kempff and Annie Fischer, whom I experienced as a child in an audience of no more than 250 in a small provincial English town, will now only be heard in prominent venues, for proportionately far greater fees. More people stay at home to consume their CDs and DVDs, and commune with the computer. But there are signs that they may wish to re-engage with the community, and that musicians are responding to this need.

Artists such as myself are now increasingly able to successfully organise concerts and festivals, often in the small venues that are the meeting point for a local community to gather and experience fine music. Many such ventures have achieved viability when they have been able to attract visitors to their events and draw in community businesses in the local hospitality and restaurant industries. Musicians will do well to generate work for themselves and their colleagues, while contributing to the community. Through initiating special projects, we are able to act to some extent as leaders, and to mould public taste, rather than just following it. There is then more possibility for long-term personal development and fulfillment. The building of a
career is best done when the musician acts with the perception that he has a part to play in his society.

I drew attention to the disturbing development that has become evident in recent years in the shape of what Edward Said has referred to as a "baseless eclecticism" (see p.158) that is apparent not only in the attitudes and training of musicians. Today, we have never had more data and information available to us, deliverable wherever there is a computer and keyboard. The user is in danger of an increasingly passive relationship with this material, akin to Stravinsky's remark about music as a paralyzing agent. Real knowledge derives from searching, choosing and making the personal connections with what we see and hear, which transform all this data into real experience. As in music, so much availability, unless filtered with discrimination, becomes undifferentiated. A loose eclecticism gains hold and value judgements are suspended or even derided. The unique qualities of the truly remarkable become undervalued or ignored. Music becomes simply another range of products in the market place. Developing musicians can be in danger of reacting in terms of simplistic clichés. The ability to understand the unique attributes of every musical masterpiece becomes desensitised, or even fails to develop.

The musician deals with sound and time. Every work demands attention throughout its temporal span. It is not susceptible to the compression and distortion of the sound-bite. Accordingly, our spans of attention must be maintained at extended levels, and in an environment that relentlessly feeds us visual images, we must reinforce our connections with the ear and the imagination. A telling indication is the now common colloquial reference to concerts being 'seen' and not 'heard.'
Television, the media and the Net have indeed constructed a global village.
Environmental issues draw compelling attention to our interdependence and reliance on each other. Yet differences are everywhere apparent. In the West, we are disconcerted and fearful at the rise of militancy deriving from strongly held beliefs, yet seemingly unsure of our own tradition and culture as we make our responses. This issue is attracting increasing attention. In their 2006 book, *Suicide of the West*, Richard Koch and Chris Smith argue that all the key elements of Western civilization, which they identify as Christianity, optimism, science, economic growth, liberalism and individualism, have come under attack internally. May it be that in any future re-engagement with the fundamentals of our intrinsic culture we will connect again with the essence of the art that derived from it? This is speculation. More certain is the realisation that I am a representative of my time, and that each generation is a link in the chain of tradition, innovation, memory and knowledge. My account has sought to describe my background and beliefs, how I developed, and something of what I have provided. It is on the sum total of such continuities of experience that the survival of art, culture, and ultimately civilisation, depends.
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**Audio-Visual Material**

Behind the Text, Beyond the Sound:

Investigations into processes of creative musical interpretation

Stephen Leon Savage
L.R.A.M., A.R.C.M.

Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by Publication.

October 2008
Appendix A

Programmes of the Commonwealth Bank Tippett Festival, March 24th - 31st 1990

Saturday 24th March 7.30 pm
Tippett: *Concerto for Double String Orchestra*

*The Heart's Assurance*

*Ritual Dances (from “The Midsummer Marriage”)*

QCM Symphony Orchestra John Curro/conductor
Claire Gormley (*soprano*) Valerie Dickson (*piano*)

Sunday 25th March 10.00 am
Workshop with Sir Michael Tippett

Sunday 25th March 7.30 pm
Beethoven  *Sonata in E flat, Op 81a (Les Adieux)*
Tippett  *Sonata No 1*
Ives  *The Alcotts (from the Concord Sonata)*
Tippett  *Sonata No 3*
Stephen Savage (*piano*) Introduced by Sir Michael Tippett

Monday, 26th March 2.00 pm
Discussion *The Great Operas*
Tippett talks with Michael Harrison

(for ABC- FM)
Tuesday 27th March  1.00pm

Tippett  *Sonata No 2*

  *Songs for Achilles*

  *Sonata No 4* (first Australian performance)

Dean Wilmington (*piano*)

Gregory Massingham (*tenor*)  Tony Vandermeer (*guitar*)

Colin Spiers (*piano*)

Tuesday 27th March  7.30pm

Mozart  *Quartet in C major, K157*

Bartok  *Quartet No 5*

Tippett  *Quartet No 4*

The Australian String Quartet

Wednesday 28th March  10.00am

Workshop with Tippett and the Australian String Quartet

Wednesday 28th March  1.00pm

Vocal works by Morley, de Rore, Certon

Tippett  *Boyhood's End*

  *Fantasia Concertante on a Theme of Corelli*

Conservatorium Chamber Singers

Gregory Massingham (*tenor*)  Fiona Harris (*piano*)

Camerata of St John's
Thursday 29th March 1.30pm
Bartok *Quartet No 4*
Tippett *Quartet No 2*
Australian String Quartet

Friday 30th March 10.00am
Workshop with Tippett

Friday 30th March 7.30pm
Beethoven *Kennst du das Land*
Wolf *Kennst du das land*
Mahler/Schoenberg *Songs of a Wayfarer*
Gershwin *From the "Gershwin Song Book"
Tippett *Songs for Ariel*

*Songs for Dov*
Gerald English (*tenor*)    Valerie Dickson (*piano*)
Margreta Elkins (*mezzo-soprano*)
Clive Moorhead (*piano*)
QCM Sinfonietta    Stephen Savage (*conductor*)

Saturday 31st March 8.00pm
Bach *Magnificat*
Tippett *Symphony No. 3* (first Australian performance)
QCM Chamber Orchestra    Brisbane Chorale    Peter Roennfeldt (*chorus master*)
Queensland Symphony Orchestra    Richard Mills (*conductor*)
Merlyn Quaife (*soprano*)
Appendix B

Press reviews

Collected here are the uncut press reviews of concerts and recordings that are quoted selectively in the text. Some additional relevant material is also included.

Each review is captioned with information identifying the writer, the name of the publication and the date it appeared.
Echoes of Scriabin, a yearning explored

MUSIC

PETER MCCALLUM

20th CENTURY ORCHESTRA SERIES
Sydney Symphony Orchestra
Conductor: Ronald Zollman
Piano: Stephen Savage

Music by:
20th CENTURY ORCHESTRA

Music

Sydney Symphony Orchestra
Conducted by Ronald Zollman

Laurie Strachan / The Australian / 26 June, 1989

First Australian Performance of Lutoslawski: Piano Concerto

This ABC's Twentieth Century Orchestra series is a good way of coming to terms with the perennial headache music promoters face - running a series of genuinely contemporary concert.

Knowing that a new piano solo will be as scarce as Liberal Party policies on apologies from Paul Keating, Aunie's boys and girls have opted to turn each occasion into a kind of mini-festival.

Thus the orchestra is placed in the body of the hall rather than on the stage, and the audience takes whatever shade it wants or can get into in time.

For the sake of balance, I opted for the stools and a perfect view of nothing much more than Ronald Zollman's economical but admirably spare signals to a very large Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

Zollman, a Belgian, persona! that much-put-upon nation's chief victim, programme, there is nothing flabby or shrewy about his work but it is always thorough and well-grounded, which makes him an ideal interpreter of contemporary scores, with their highly complex writing, some of it including elements of improvisation by the players.

The final work on Saturday night's bill, the Piano Concerto by Hans Werner Henze, was just such a piece.

Though Henze has been at pains to point out that he wrote every note, there are episodes when the players are free, within strict limits, to make their own decisions on the time-frame in which they play them.

None of this is noticeable to the listener — certainly not as first hearing anyway. In fact a sympathy of this kind, complexly and sheer force is difficul enough to take in at one sitting without worrying about such technicalities.

Peter McCallum / Sydney Morning Herald / 26 June, 1989

First, impressions, though, are of a work of almost un-tiered genius. Though there are quiet passages of some delicacy, the music always seems to move inexorably on to contemplation of some kind of horror, with the orchestra shrieking like some ghostly beast in agony.

More balanced in this suite was Witold Lutoslawski's Piano Concerto which, as was pointed out in an introductory note by soloist Stephen Savage, seems to take up the torch laid down by Bartok in his three make-believe concertos: there is the same rhythmic elusiveness, the same harmonic pungency, through the musical language used, naturally quite different.

Certainly Savage's clearly articulated performance made a good case for his argument.

The concert opened with Barry Conyngham's Recurrence, a richly scored piece in which it is simple to see the influence of the American minimalists, though I'm sure Conyngham would argue that what we are talking about is simply the recurrence of the title.

There is a peculiarly striking chord progression towards the end of this piece that seems to be lifting the music to some kind of emotionally positive statement, but, in the end, it simply dies away — disappointing, to my mind.

Laurie Strachan / The Australian / 26 June, 1989
An old man speaks from the soul, not a dead ledger

MUSIC
FRED BLANKS

TIPPETT FESTIVAL
Queensland Conservatorium of Music, Brisbane
From March 24

OVE ever cities of the south! This week the Australian centre of musical gravity is Brisbane. Here is the Tippett Festival of eight concerts and various related activities, including a foyer exhibition, and it is being held, mostly at the Queensland Conservatorium, in the presence of the composer, who carries his 85 years with a quite astonishing physical vitality and verbal luminosity.

To hear his music in bulk, so to speak, is to be impressed, sometimes even confounded, by the development of a purposeful complexity. Sir Michael Tippett is in no danger of retreating like some other veteran composers, into an established shell of idiomatic security or, like the minimalists, becoming a kind of dry musical actuary.

He is, in fact, more than a mere composer. Few of his colleagues have been as explicit as he in putting their beliefs into their music, either in notes or in opera librettos written by themselves. Tippett's music must be seen in the light of motivating forces which are metaphysical, ethical, humanist ("we surmise a deeper mercy than no God has shown") and psychoanalytical rather than psychological. Many of his works, from the oratorio A Child Of Our Time to The Mask of Time (1982) have the disturbing potency of humanitarian manifestos.

The complexity of Tippett's later music is in the message rather than the medium, in thought rather than technique.

For instance, the peremptory avalanche of emotional energy which propels the outer movements of the Piano Sonata No 3 (1973), played with brilliant dexterity by Stephen Savage, who has long been associated with Tippett's music and who is this festival's artistic director, leave an impact of seething, ultimately optimistic, involvement in the celebration of life. Those qualities are prophesised in the Piano Sonata No 1 (1938), heard in the same recital, which also remembers the madrigalists and — as the composer told the audience — the sonatas of Beethoven whose Les Adieux began the program.

Tippett's first major success was the Concerto for Double String Orchestra (1939) performed at the opening festival concert with great intensity and only marginally less precision by the Queensland Conservatorium Symphony Orchestra under John Curro. Already it contains the clashing rhythms syncopation, passages of lament with hints of light at the end of the tunnel, later to become characteristic but more complex.

The same concert contained a splendid performance of The Heart's Assurance with soprano Claire Gormley (winner of the 1989 Australian Singing Competition) and pianist Valerie Dickson — music which treats five Housmanesque poems by Allin Keyes and Sidney Keyes in an English spirit that puts melody through tortuous and purifying trials.

Much the same is true of the superbly orchestrated Ritual Dances from Tippett's opera The Midsummer Marriage (1952) which ended this program.

There is still much to come this week from a composer who, in his own words, sings the uncertainties and seeks images of reconciliation.

Fred Blanks / Sydney Morning Herald / 28 March 1990
Talent shines through rain

THE Queensland Conservatorium of Music's seven-day Tippett Festival, a landmark in Australia's musical development, continues to draw large crowds and defy the downpours.

Tuesday's program offered works from Sir Michael Tippett's keyboard and chamber repertoire.

There is no gentle lyricism in the Piano Sonata No 2 — here the composer communicates in aggressive, percussive harmonies and tersely interwoven melodies. Dean Wilmingston, winner of the QCM's Tippett prize, negotiated the technical and rhythmic complexities in polished, assured playing.

The Fourth Piano Sonata was given an auspicious Australian premiere by Colin Spiers, whose formidable technique and artistry allowed him to scale the poetic and dramatic heights in this demanding work.

Gregory Massingham's beautifully controlled tenor combined with Tony Vandermeer's clearly articulated guitar perfectly generated Tippett's intended emotions of despair, hope and vengeance in Songs for Achilles.

Music


By BARBARA HEBDEN

The immaculate ensemble of the Australian String Quartet — violinists William Hennessy and Douglas Weiland, violist Keith Crellin and cellist Janis Laurs — translated the elegant singing tones in Mozart's Quartet K157, the pulsating Bulgarian rhythms and astringent harmonies in Bartok's Fifth Quartet and the intense spiritual path to profound rhetoric in Tippett's Quartet No 4.

In each of these vastly different works, the players' fusion of re-creative powers and technical accomplishment produced the most rewarding artistic experience.

Barbara Hebden / Courier Mail (Brisbane) / 28 March, 1990

Con pays tribute to Tippett

THE heart of Brisbane's music-making this week is the Queensland Conservatorium of Music.

The Con is paying tribute to Britain's foremost living composer, Sir Michael Tippett.

The Tippett Festival, involving some of Australia's finest musicians, opened on Saturday night, with a capacity audience warmly welcoming the youthful 85-year-old composer, whose presence and participation add lustre to this prestigious event which celebrates his creative achievements over more than 50 years.

The all-Tippett program began with the Concerto for Double String Orchestra, nicely shaped by the strings of the Conservatorium Symphony Orchestra conducted by John Curro. The syncopated rhythms had a lovely lift and the serene slow movement was built in beautiful layers of sound.

Tippett commemorates a close friend in his songcycle The Heart's Assurance. The complex piano score, played brilliantly by Valerie Dickson, provided a perfect foil for Clare Gormley's warmly projected soprano.

This singer found the emotional core of the work and gave the songs real vitality and strength.

The intensity in Remember Your Lovers was most moving.

Tippett's inventive mind found expression in his first opera The Midsummer Marriage, given its premiere at London's Royal Opera House in 1955.

The richly symbological Ritual Dancers of acts two and three came alive in the dynamically exciting playing of the QCM Symphony Orchestra and John Curro.

Music

CLASSICAL: Tippett Festival Opening Concert. QCM Symphony Orchestra. Conductor: John Curro.

By BARBARA HEBDEN

Barbara Hebden / Courier Mail (Brisbane) / 28 March, 1990
Adventures into the unequivocal

Musical appreciation

Tippett Festivals

Final Concert

Brisbane Concert Hall

PATRICIA KELLY

The performances of Tippett's music in Melbourne and Sydney have been universally acknowledged for their innovative and exciting nature. The Tippett Festivals, held in Melbourne and Brisbane, have provided a platform for the exploration of Tippett's unique musical language and his ability to create a world of sounds that are both challenging and inspiring.

Pianist highlights affinity for work

THE Tippett Festival concluded its third series with a gala concert at the Queen's Theatre, Brisbane. The concert featured a selection of Tippett's music, including his Piano Sonata No. 3, which received a standing ovation from the audience.

John Noble / Courier Mail (Brisbane)

27 March, 1990

Patricia Kelly / The Australian

2 April, 1990
A composer of our time

Fred Blanks

DURING autumn of 1990, in Paris, a Jewish boy from Poland, HTheodor Grynszpan, was on spot when he heard that the Nazis had taken his mother away that he died and killed a German diplomatic officer. Then act was the signal for the Nazis in Germany to commit that ghastly crime known as Kristallnacht, in which synagogues were burned, shops looted, Jews humiliated and carried off. Had Grynszpan not been the German, the Nazis would have found some other trigger for their vandalism, but history was forced to ask itself a complex question: should Grynszpan have acted as he did, whether he knew what consequences might result or not.

This episode gave rise to a smiling response by the English composer Michael Tippett, aged 83, called A Child of Our Time. It made him world famous and, incidentally, made many people aware of Nazi atrocities. The music was contemporary, yet deeply touching, and used religious chords where others might have used religious cliches. Tippett was a pacifist and indeed most of the war he spent in prison for his attitude to the ‘war of attrition'. He feared for his future and in the words of his oratorio questioned the whole concept of guilt, revenge and violence. How pacifism is a wonderful idea in theory, but it is absolutely useless when manned by contradiction and truculence and here was a paradox which Tippett never entirely resolved.

And now Sir Michael Tippett (brought up in 1915) is 83 years old. Last week he was in Brisbane for a glorious Tippett Festival, arranged by the Queensland Conservatorium of Music with sponsorship by the Commonwealth Bank. His work of more than half-a-century has included four symphonies, four string quartets, various orchestral works and, in particular, five operas which have been staged around the world — The Midsummer Marriage, King Priam, The Knot Garden, Thecrooked Stair and the recently premiered New Year.

At the Brisbane Festival, mainly centered on the Brisbane Theatre of the modern Conservatorium, we heard selections from all these categories: indeed, there were eight concerts with 15 Tippett works, including the Australian premiere of the Symphony No 2 and the Piano Sonata No 4 and several workshops with the composer, still astonishingly vital and verbally illuminating, guiding the performers. These included pianist Stephen Savage, Drene Wimington, Colin Spors and Valerie Dickson.

Tippett spoke movingly of that heart-wrenching atrocity, now more than 50 years old, the story of HTedward Grynszpan and his repercussions still means attack to him — he called it an blot on his, this commonwealth, as significant in 20th century history as soldiers dancing on the collapsing Berlin Wall and the side student cheering in face of the tanks in Belgrade. He also spoke of the moral, ethical, psychoanalytical undertowings of his music, more than most pretentious deep components. He spoke with urgency.

Purely from a musical aspect, there were dimensions of great beauty in some early works as the Concerto for Double String Orchestra and the song cycle The Night's Apanvance and there were developing complexities in later works, even those with reduced forces like the string quartet and piano sonatas. However, not all the performances were pure gold, but the verdict was high and the fact that the composer attended them all, applauding the performers, gracefully acknowledging his own applause, gave this non-hidden fact (what happened to warrant Queensland) a rare and repressible aura of dedication.

Fred Blanks / Australian Jewish Times / 6 April, 1990

Fred R. Blanks / The Musical Times (U.K.) vol. cxxxi no. 1768 / June 1990

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TIPPETT FESTIVAL: Recital, Basil Jones Theatre
Finale, Concert Hall, Performing Arts Complex
By JOHN NOBLE

A tough, tender idealist

SATURDAY night saw the finale of a week-long celebration of the music of one of this century's most significant composers, Sir Michael Tippett.

Sir Michael, described as "a tough yet tender idealist" has become something of a musical guru figure, but he remains a man not only of his time but for his time.

His music challenges, confronts and inspires — it can't be ignored. Whether or not we like it, there is no doubting the man's integrity and vision. It speaks with keen prophetic insight of the human condition — of its greatness and its essentially flawed nature.

The Third Symphony climaxes with the bitter realisation that "We fractured men/Surface a deeper mercy/ That no god has shown."

And although the text later seems to point to reconciliation, the harsh jarring chords which end the work suggest that Beethoven and Schillers' "brotherhood of man" is finally unattainable.

In the Songs for Dow, excellently sung by Tippett exponent and tenor Gerald English on Friday night, the sexually ambivalent protagonist bitterly wails and even howls his anguish, expressing the misery of the human condition. He sings with ironic understatement that "to live your life is not as easy as to cross a field."

The Third Symphony introduced by the composer was given its Australian premiere on Saturday night with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra conducted by Richard Mills and soprano soloist Merlyn Quaife.

Tippett's soaring, swooping vocal line is very demanding and Miss Quaife needed her hand-held microphone to bring out the words over the often heavy orchestra. Even so, I had difficulty hearing the words, although Quaife was just the sort of special voice needed to do the work justice.

Described by Tippett as an adventure, the symphony was sometimes stark and space, often complex, convoluted and angular, but interspersed with cooler, calmer worlds of meditative reflection and tinkling percussion.

Richard Mills had the task of pulling this massive edifice together, which he did with great distinction.

John Noble / Courier Mail (Brisbane) / 2 April, 1990

Tippett tips his topper

MUSIC

FRED BLANKS

SMH 5.0.3.90
TIPPETT FESTIVAL
Basil Jones Theatre, Queensland
Conservatorium of Music, Brisbane
March 27, 28

SMH THE INTRICACIES of thought and emotion perceived in the music of Sir Michael Tippett have tied some program-note writers into knots. That we were informed that the Piano Sonata No 4 (1962) which is also related to King Priam and moves forward with the same strong emphasis on potent, isolated chords and succinct, harsh phrases.

That same knotty program note about accepting mortality (is there an alternative?) was aimed at the most recent of Tippett's string quartets, No 4 (1978). It was played by the Australian String Quartet from Adelaide (William Henry, Douglas Welland, Keith Crellin, Janis Lear) with a dedicated concentration that honoured a difficult, even obscure and obdurate work which starts with a death-rattle, ends with a whimper (Tippett and T. S. Eliot ran parallel for a while) but has a pretty high and varied time between.

Still to come are the Corelli Fantasia, the Dow and Ariel songs, Boyhood's End, and more.

The Tippett Festival will have paid generous homage to a great contemporary thinker in notes. Brisbane must feel proud of it.

Fred Blanks / Sydney Morning Herald / 30 March, 1990
Adventures into the unequivocal

FOR one week, students of the Queensland Conservatorium of Music in Brisbane have been exposed to, and immersed in, the music of Britain's foremost contemporary composer, Sir Michael Tippett, with the bonus of having the man himself looking on, advising and commenting.

The conservatorium's director, Anthony Cameden, and the Tippett Festival sponsors, the Commonwealth Bank, must be pleased with this venture, which culminated in the first Australian performance of Tippett's Symphony No. 3, written in the early 1970s.

It was probably one of the most difficult and demanding scores the Queensland Symphony Orchestra has tackled, but under the direction of Richard Mills it cut a monumental swathe through the symphonic complexities. Which is not to say it was a popular winner.

Many in the audience were taken aback at the sheer audacity of the writing, its lack of lyrical appeal and the familiar comforts of accepted forms.

Tippett has created his own musical milieu and has established his own ground rules - you either abide by them or you don't join the game. His appropriation is as unequivocal as Tippett's uncompromising world view.

Throughout the festival, Tippett's music has been presented in opposition to other works by composers who have had a special meaning for him or represent American idioms that have stimulated his own style: Beethoven, Bartok, Mahler, Ives, Gershwin.

However, the choice of Bach's Magnificat to accompany the third symphony in the final concert was slightly mystifying. Certainly it represents the contrapuntal medium that was part of Tippett's development, and its performance by the Brisbane Chorale and the QCM Chamber Orchestra was enjoyable for its warmth if not its depth.

But if it was meant to express the religious convictions that seem to have been overturned in a machine age torn by horrendous warfare (a guiding theme of Tippett's art), this performance did not quite manage to do so.

Introducing his symphony, Tippett explained its structure, inviting the audience to enter it as an adventure. Good advice. If taken, it transports the listener to the inner, world of the mind from which its sprang, to become a partner in this ritualistic score and to shed light on its pluralism, on its multiplicity of meaning and significances.

Mills chiselled his way through its unyielding structure full of complex rhythms. It seemed as much as he could do to hold the forces together with the security of a constant beat. Yet out of the hard work emerged a gigantic creation: a new organism emanating from its own polarity, light and dark, tough and tender, melanchoic and joyous, emotions unbridled and restrained in turn.

It was a sound pageant, various elements working together against each other, then moving towards union, a reconciliation, to state Tippett's constant theme. The composer describes the music as forms of energy, tension mounting, exploding then settling to rest.

Merlyn Quaife took this foursome demand of the symphony's final section scored with solo soprano in her confident stride.

Repeated quotes from Beethoven's Choral Symphony reminded us that truth remains constant through change; Tippett just wants to throw 20th-century light on its essence, human foibles not withstanding. How wise he was to tell us to enter the symphony as an adventure. There is no other way.

Patricia Kelly / The Australian / 2 April, 1990
Inaugural Concert for Griffith Uni

THE most lasting impression of this excellent evening was made by the personality of the music itself; the consistency and continuity of its essential language and repertoire of gestures throughout the composer’s creative evolutions through a variety of styles.

The feeling for line, drama and architecture always expressed through idiomatic and felicitous instrumentation are the hallmarks of the masterful musical intelligence which has produced one great opera *Voss*, one remarkable opera *Mer de Glace* and probably the most significant orchestral music written by an Australian (including Grainger).

The performances of the four pieces, which charted Meale’s creative development were all of special significance.

The composer himself gave a fluent and forceful reading of his early piano piece *Orenda*, with an aristocratic command of the keyboard and instincts for sonority and line which somehow echoed the same instincts discernible in every bar of his music throughout the evening.

Richard Meale: 60th Birthday Concert, Griffith University Ensemble,

Sonia Croucher (flute) and Mark Kruger (piano) followed with an equally fluent and quite brilliant reading of the early *Sonata For Flute and Piano*.

The newly formed Griffith Ensemble under the distinguished direction of Stephen Savage made their impressive debut with a performance of *Incredible Floridsas*.

The foundation of this ensemble is an important initiative for Australian music and their meticulous negotiation of this difficult and unforgiving score was an object lesson in the performance of contemporary music.

If this standard is maintained, the group will become an indispensable resource for both the Australian composer and new music generally.

The university is to be congratulated for taking the bold artistic decision to establish this fine ensemble in these sombre economic times.

Richard Mills / The Brisbane Review / 21 May, 1992
A meeting of musical minds

NO sooner had Brisbane's Griffith University taken Queensland Conservatorium of Music under its analagating wing than the pianist and lecturer Stephen Savage formed Griffith University Ensemble, not so much as an end in itself, but to provide a medium for the work of Australian composers.

The intimate Basil Jones Theatre was ideal for the inaugural program, a journey through the creative mind of Richard Meale, with the composer present, performing and on hand earlier to help prepare the work. (Peter Sculthorpe is patron of the ensemble and will appear later in the series.)

Serious music lovers should not miss this project, a rare opportunity to make close contact with some of Australia's major musical voices, to see them in action and hear them speak about their music, as Meale did at the first concert, in his frank, unassuming way.

Informal as a Don Burrows jazz session, it became the manifestation of one of the country's most mystical musical minds, an impact that could not have been achieved simply by performing Meale's music.

His presence, like the alchemy in his Incredibile Floridas, transformed the black and white of printed notes to the gold of realization. Hearing him play Orenda, one experienced the force working from within, the controlled energy that made powerful statements on the piano's full range as the music orbited around, always returning to central repeated chords.

It was a rhapsody inspired, Meale said, by ancient African village belief in the sounds inherent in every substance, written when he was 29 and 30. He smiled as he would low like it to be, he confessed.

Sonja Croucher (flute) and Mark Kruger (piano) then showed how Meale in the following year (1960) transformed this central motif into the Sonata for flute and piano. It was a fine performance but they could not extract its essence with the same might as the composer did with the raw material of the earlier rhapsody, particularly in the return of that mesmerising chordal figure in the sonata's final movement.

Conductor Savage led the ensemble - Gerhard Mallon (flute), Floyd Williams (clarinet), Michele Walsh (violin/viola), David Lale (cello), Kevin Power (piano), Alan Cumberland (vibraphone) and Stephen Falk (percussion) - where lesser musicians would have faltered.

There was a studied journey through Incredible Floridas (1971), a very cerebral, abstract sample of Meale's avant-garde style, but more than that, an insight into the mind and vision of French poet Rimbaud on which the six movements are based and from which they take their poetic compositional cue.

To complete the rich fare, the Australian String Quartet brought its unfailing and extraordinary musicianship and close sense of ensemble to Meale's more lyrical piece of 1980, String Quartet No 2. The music and the musicians seemed made for each other, and a composer could not ask for more faithful, committed interpreters of every image, but especially of Cantellina Pacifica. What an incantation for peace! And Meale doesn't see himself as a particularly religious man?

Patricia Kelly / The Australian / 19 May, 1992
Ensembles tell complementary musical stories

Queensland's Brisbane's University Ensemble, linked music and June subscription weekend, enlivening performance experience, chosen, and a guest composer, occasionally (clarinet), Roberts (piano), previously mentioned. Griffith Perihelion features guest EmMie), organ, Patricia Kelly / The Australian / June, 1992

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Brisbane's second Biennial Festival of International Music should have dispelled any doubts of the value and validity of such an event, particularly where lots of public money is involved.

More than just an assortment of musical offerings, the 12-day program (there are still three days to go) has been a stunning and stimulating celebration of and focus on the holistic art form music, theatre and dance are becoming in late 20th century society.

With a few exceptions, Biennial events have highlighted the element of theatre inherent in every performance. Both Biennial programs have given priority to international performance, although there are many Queensland performers too. Festival director Anthony Steele has set out to give something out of the ordinary, and found something for almost everyone, from brass bands to jazz, to a contemporary "punk"-style concert with a rich diversity of music-theatre pieces, full-scale opera, and music, songs of the deep south of the United States and Balkan music.

For the connoisseur there was the entire Tchaikovsky symphonic cycle played by the Moscow State Symphony Orchestra and Russian pianist Tatiana Nikolayeva last night. Played half the Shostakovich 24 Preludes and Fugues for which she is noted - the other half the third of three days' concert virtuoso violinist Ivry Gitlis added charm, wit and the joy of making and hearing music as he chatted and joked with the audience and joined an exhilarating display of great music from Rimsky-Soukhovtizov (violin), Konstantin Bilykin (ascrodes) and Stepan Duro (tuba).

Among the local contributions was a short but fascinating program of four works, If You Are Not One of the Dead, by Sydney's Patrol with Michael Smestain's world premiere contribution, . . . if you're not afraid.

It was performed with engaging intensity by the Griffith Ensemble, players of the Queensland Philharmonic Orchestra, guest singers Meryn Quafe (soprano) and Lydon Terracini (baritone), directed by British conductor Euan Moorwood.

God knows what they were singing - or screaming about - in Smestain's work. It was too dark to read the program and words were indistinguishable from the sound, but it created such a technical effect it almost didn't matter. The program also included a one-off Prokofiev Piano Concerto, in which players and Terracini explored the composer's own distortions of a Monteverdi theme.

But it was in Peter Maxwell Davies's Eight Songs for a Mad King that players and performers seemed to work out a little too much. Davies's four songs were strongly of a piece, and put a bold stamp on the Biennial program.

Accompanied by the visiting Danish Chamber Players (of which his brother Paul is trumpeter), he wrote, shocked and stunned to draw out the full madness, and madness, of the unfortunate British monarch George III portrayed in the cycle.

Such performances make the Biennial really worth its ticketed weight. Audiences cannot receive such pieces in their day-to-day environments. Only festivals dare to extend a people's vision.

Patricia Kelly / The Australian / 4 June, 1993
Dirt, fire, water, air

East meets West and most of the elements via Sculthorpe

Creating a dance work to a musical set-piece can sometimes result in choreographic cold feet - a "loose fit" between score and step. The ABC potentially gave Brisbane's Maggi Sietsma this problem in asking her to create for two Peter Sculthorpe pieces (Djidi and Landscapes I) for its Sound in Movement Festival at the Queensland University of Technology. In Sietsma's Landscapes, the Expressions Dance Company is clad in each musical phrase - the dancers are also dressed deliciously by designer Greg Clarke, in graded shades of grey; they wend through a landscape dotted with wigwam constructions of branch and white skins; worship, flickering candles and scatter ritualistic trails of sand. Against the grain of Sietsma's past five years' sardonic dance/theatre works, the surprising thing about the pure dance Landscapes is its mildness - and, not a character in sight.

Sietsma's opening gambit is a five-and-a-half minute solo by the gifted Sonja Preedo (to Djidi) who is, kinetically, everywoman in a blanked desert. She establishes a tone of soft, Eastern formality but Western personality emerges in her open, risk-taking dynamic. Preedo is the most technically exciting, emotionally spontaneous contemporary dancer I've seen this year in 20 Australian companies. Sietsma's choreography allows her to steer between Eastern stylisation and Western identity, suiting the meditative flow of Sculthorpe's score - which was written in a Japanese monastery.

Also memorable are the majestic Simone Atthow's delicate but powerful solo and Tracey Carruthers' trio with Nik Hills and Ross Hoareau. There, Sietsma's catholic sources draw even on a classical one-handed sit-lift, before entering a modern, heart-in-the-mouth sequence of ruthlessly turning lifts. Accompanied tightly by Griffith University Ensemble, led by Stephen Savage - complete with plucked notes, straight out of the body of the piano - Landscapes is the best Australian-made "non-narrative" I've seen this year.

Robin Rattray-Wood / The Bulletin / 23 November, 1993
Published Recordings

Tippett: Sonatas Nos. 2 and 3

Stephen Savage is a British pianist currently teaching at the Queensland Conservatory of Music in Brisbane, where a Tippett Festival was held in March 1984; this recording was made as a memento of that occasion, and would deserve applause for its enterprise even if the performances were no more than worthy. They are a great deal more than that. Savage's technique and stamina are formidable, he can maintain concentration over long spans (important in the slow movement of the First Sonata, indispensable in that of the Third) and he has substantial reserves of power and dexterity. He has studied these works with the composer, but that does not make his readings carbon copies of Paul Crossley's, who recorded all four of them in Tippett's presence (they are included on the two-LP set listed above).

Savage has evidently thought about the sonatas deeply and has come to his own conclusions: in the first movement of the First Sonata, for example, the foreshadowings of an involvement with Beethoven are even clearer than in Crossley's account, and he occasionally allows time for a point to register where Crossley, more mercurially, bounds ahead to the next event. Crossley has the edge in terms of sheer steely-fingered attack, and there is rather more light and shade to his performances (and a bit more dynamic range to his CRD recording), at times a touch more fantasy and panache. But these sonatas deserve a variety of approaches; one should be able to look at them from different interpretative standpoints, as one can look at a Beethoven sonata from the recorded perspectives of a Brendel and an Arrau, an Ashkenazy and a Gilels, and Savage provides a perfectly valid alternative to Crossley. In the Third Sonata especially his love and admiration for the music are evident not only in his enthusiastic sleeve-note but in the range of sonority and expressive nuance he lavishes upon it.

The recording is very close, making a true pianissimo difficult to render, and there is a faint but persistent background hum (it sounds like air-conditioning; the recording was made at the height of an Australian summer). Well worth hearing, though, and I hope that Savage is now planning to record (in winter, preferably) the Second and Fourth Sonatas.

Michael Oliver / The Gramophone (U.K.) / May, 1986

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This is Michael Tippett's 80th year, and for some reason Australia has been slow to fully recognize the eminent English composer. Tippett may be like Elgar, who was said not to travel well beyond his native England: people outside the country of a composer's origin are often slow to accept or perhaps understand new composers. Stephen Savage has the expertise to guide the uninitiated.

Savage, an Englishman, is no newcomer to the music of Tippett. As he describes on the sleeve note, he was one of the first to take up the second and third piano sonatas and had the privilege of working on them with the composer. Savage performed all three piano sonatas at the Royal College of Music, London in a special concert for Tippett's 75th birthday. His empathy with the music of Tippett is obvious.

Stephen Savage, currently Chairman of the Keyboard Faculty at the Queensland Conservatorium of Music, is both pianist and producer of this recording of Tippett's first and third piano sonatas, which were taped in Brisbane in January 1984 as part of the Conservatorium's Tippett Festival.

The first and third sonatas represent Tippett at very different times of his compositional life. Sonata No.1, written 1936-37 (with revisions in 1942 and 1954), was the first work the composer acknowledged. He was 31 and had only just abandoned primary school teaching as a means of earning his living, having been a late starter with no musical education as a child.

The first piano sonata is at once impressionistic, rhapsodic and virtuosic, using folk and jazz themes, but with an obvious bias for traditional forms. However, to call the style simply eclectic would be to misinterpret Tippett. He is open about his love of Beethoven and admits 'submitting entirely' to his music as a student. Subsequently he listened to everything else.

In Moving into Aquarius, Tippett also describes his role as composer, to create order out of chaos through a series of images: 'Images of the past, shapes of the future. Images of vigour for a decadent period, images of calm for one too violent. Images of reconciliation for worlds torn by division. And in an age of mediocrity and shattered dreams images of abounding, generous, exuberant beauty.' Tippett transforms all the musical images around him into a style uniquely his own.

Tippett is an idealist. Before the second world war, he did what he could to help unemployed musicians by conducting an orchestra made up of them at Morley College. During the war, he registered as a conscientious objector.

When his services as a musician were refused by the authorities, and he in turn refused to work for the air-raid, fire or land services, he was imprisoned, but served only one month of his three months' sentence.

Sonata No. 3, written 1972-3, is fairly recent and from a time when Tippett was well established as a leading composer in Britain. It is much more contemporary sounding that the first, though Tippett calls it his 'late Beethoven sonata'. Its three movements are played continuously, giving the whole a 'seamless quality.'

Savage's playing is excellent throughout this recording, but the piano sound is muddied by over-reverberance.
Beethoven Sonatas Opp. 109, 110, 111

REVIEW

CLASSICAL

Beethoven: Violin Sonatas Opp 47 (Kreutzer) and 96 Kremer/Argerich (DG 447 054-2)
Beethoven: Piano Sonatas Op 31 Kovacevich (EMI CDC 5 5526-2)
Beethoven: Piano Sonatas Opp 109, 110 and 111 Savage (Tall Poppies TP076)
Mozart: Piano Trios (complete) Mozartkod (Tall Poppies TP070)
Mozart: Piano Sonatas KK 283, 330, 331 and 545 Chapman (Tonart Productions TPCD 950531)

Gidon Kremer and Martha Argerich have reached the end of their cycle of Beethoven's violin sonatas with magisterial accounts of the last two in the series. The rapport between the members of this duo is exceptional. In an essentially fairly straight reading of the pieces, the many subtle instances of rubato are handled by the players as one. Kremer's projected tone is constantly fascinating. His bow pressure varies almost from moment to moment, vibrato is employed intelligently, and its frequent absence suggests that the violinist has absorbed all the lessons from the period instrument players, and is able to apply them with great sensitivity. Argerich's piano tone is almost as flexible and the pair are well balanced by the Deutsche Grammophon engineer. The first of these four discs was released 10 years ago, so progress in the cycle has been as slow as it's been thoughtful, but I have no hesitation in judging the discs one of the most sheerly musical achievements of recording in the last decade. If you haven't been collecting the discs as they've appeared in your local store, then DG has made the task simpler and financially more attractive by repackaging the sonatas to fit on to three discs, available as a boxed set. The four original releases will also continue to be separately available.

Stephen Kovacevich's new Beethoven cycle for EMI seems in very good health, judging by the three sonatas Op 31 collected on this disc. He plays them simply enough, echoing in the drama with the minimum of mannerism, and bringing to his performances a sort of quiet confidence born of a now illustrious concert career. As with Richard Goode's Beethoven, there's no sensationalism, the music is merely led out of the score and presented to us; as with Goode, the pianism is first-rate, and as with Goode, Kovacevich leaves the reviewer very little to comment upon, which, it seems to me, is very much in his favour.

Stephen Savage has also recorded three Beethoven sonatas, this time the final three. Belying his name, Savage's readings are frankly lyrical, as befits this music. His legato line is strikingly beautiful, but it never obliterates the detail: Like Kovacevich and Goode, Savage is not one to use a recording session to attempt to say something new about the music (this was Glenn Gould's sole criterion for entering the studio, but I'll come to him later), and yet he, too, is an accomplished and experienced player, so he can't help but reveal things. Moments of phrasing, contrasts of dynamic that one hasn't noticed before, harmonic emphasis: all emerge naturally, spontaneously from Savage's playing. The recorded sound is equally natural.

I don't know why I wasn't expecting the Tall Poppies double CD of Mozart's piano trios to be any good; perhaps it was the ensemble's name. Didn't anyone try to talk them out of Mozart's? Anyway, I was wrong (about the discs themselves, that is: they're very persuasive. The three members of the ensemble are Gerard Wilems, Robert Ingram and Georg Pedersen. Between them they have a good deal of background in this music, and it's evident throughout. There's any amount of stylish playing and the members of the trio are very well balanced in the recording, which was made in the Concert Hall of the Sydney Opera House. It's also extremely revealing to have the seven works presented in chronological order. One probably wouldn't want to listen to them straight through too often, but doing so produces a vivid lesson in the development of Mozart's style and of the early

Andrew Ford / 24 Hours (ABC) / January, 1996
WITH the very best in the world to choose from, with Alfred Brendel, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Svyatoslav Richter and Maurizio Pollini sitting there on the shelves, why would you want to buy a locally produced disc of Beethoven's last three sonatas played by a relative unknown?

That's the $30 question. But you'll never find out if you don't try and I would strongly recommend you try Steven Savage's Tall Poppies disc. You will find that this is playing of the highest class — and needs to be in music that represents some of the high peaks of the piano repertoire.

Savage, an Englishman now living in Australia, delivers three thoroughly thought-out and beautifully played performances. At all times there is a sense that the music is moving purposefully on; the end is clearly in sight and the pleasures of the journey can be enjoyed all the more for that.

It would be possible to go through these performances section by section, dissect them and compare them with their many rivals, but this would really be beside the point. The point is that they are coherent interpretations which give enormous pleasure at every level — and you really can't ask any more than that.

The second Tall Poppies disc had been moldering on my shelves for months before I finally took it down and put it on the turntable (if that's what you call it these days). What a pleasant surprise.

This is a wonderful recital, full of passion, fire and the joy of life. The two major works on the disc, the Grieg and Nielsen sonatas, are performances that jump out and grab your attention with their sheer exultation. Sculthorpe's Irkanda 1 has thoughtfully done and Kreisler's salon piece is played with great skill and affection. Transformation, by the young Sydney composer Christian Hein, is a well-balanced blend of rhythmic aggression and lyricism rather in the Carl Vina manner. Robert Chamberlain's accompaniment is all that could be asked — except that it is occasionally recorded too closely.

Compared with these two local products, the Harmonia Mundi disc is a disappointment. I heard Richard Tognetti and Steven Isserlis give a wonderful performance of the Kodaly duet at the Huntington Festival a couple of years ago and the efforts of Luca and Dietlens are no more than a distant echo of this.

The Veress sonata is more successful than either of the Kodaly pieces, perhaps because Luca seems more in tune with the style of this cheerful, outgoing music.

Laurie Strachan / The Australian Weekend Review / 6-7 April, 1996
In many ways Stephen Savage’s recording of Beethoven’s epic piano trilogy reminds me of Youza Guiller’s recordings of Beethoven’s last two sonatas. There is a similar submissiveness, a calmness that seems to radiate strength, a poetic quality that nevertheless doesn’t fall into the trap of self-indulgence. Guiller — for those readers who may be unaware — was a Cortot prodigy and then suddenly, through financial ill luck as well as the political situation during the 1940s slipped into oblivion. The pianist Ronald Smith told me how she was, in her elderly years, a household maid, suddenly ‘rediscovered’, and after making two recordings (a handful of encores and the last two Beethoven sonatas) died. The recordings were made after a period of rehabilitation following the ‘rediscovery’. A tall poppy there, and another, at least as far as this repertory is concerned is surely Australian pianist Stephen Savage. He displays a similar visionary approach to the music making, a simplicity born of strength if you like. Apart from some slight unevenness in the extended semiquaver passage in the first movement, these are, technically speaking, extremely secure performances. Moreover, what struck me time and time again, was Savage’s ability to maintain linearity in such things as the sublime ‘Arietta’ that opens Op 111’s second movement and the hymn-like theme in the third movement of Op 109. At the same time, he remains ever-conscious of the harmonic implications of the theme as his balancing of voices in the texture reveals. And especial mention must be made of Richard Toop’s fascinating and probing liner notes; to already sublime performances they add yet a further level of excellence to the recording. It is also one of the most faithful and beautifully recorded accounts of piano sound.

Cyrus Meher-Homji
Moussorgsky: Pictures at an Exhibition (with works by Liszt and Debussy)

Stephen Savage has obviously given Mussorgsky’s piano suite a great deal of thought, because it isn’t easy to play such familiar music with such a range of new insights and nuances. Right from the moment Mussorgsky’s spectator strides purposefully into the art gallery we are hearing the music with fresh ears. The gnome is even more sinister than usual; the old castle suddenly feels unbearably sad; the children arguing in the Tuileries are oddly sophisticated (of course they are Parisians); the unhatched chicks stagger unsteadily, their shells ruling out anything less ungainly. At every turn there are surprises, and Savage achieves them not with wild exaggeration, but by playing movements just a little faster, slower or straighter than usual, and finding a chord to delay here and a phrase to pull back there. His Liszt is good, too, and his Debussy better still.

Andrew Ford / Limelight / December, 2004

Vincent Plush / Weekend Australian / 9-10 October, 2004
Mussorgsky: Pictures at an Exhibition  
Stephen Savage, piano  
 MOVE MD 3290

Mussorgsky was grieving for the deceased artist Viktor Hartman when he attended a retrospective exhibition of 400 works of his friend’s paintings. He was inspired to compose Pictures at an Exhibition for piano; a set of characterizations of some of these exhibited paintings. Published five years after Mussorgsky’s death; pianists tended to steer clear of the work while numerous composers were inspired to orchestrate it. While many pianists try to make this composition sound like an orchestrated version, Savage’s reading stays true to the original as he revels in Mussorgsky’s idiom and idiosyncratic piano writing. This version is a dignified, often acutely sensitive and psychologically perceptive portrayal. Savage treats carefully between measured control and an illuminating projection of the mercurial shifts in the pictures. Il Vecchio Castello has a compelling mystery, Tarsier bubbles mischievously, the Battle of the Unhatched Chicks has a sprightly, skittish feel, Linnegre is upbeat and cheery and Samuel Goldenberg and Schmyle is vividly characterized. While Baba Yagga seems too restrained; momentum falls and articulation could have been punchier. The Great Gate of Kiev is satisfyingly magisterial and majestic. Liszt’s Two Legends; St Francis of Assisi preaching to the birds and St Francis of Paula walking on the water are both programmatic. Savage’s technical mastery is impressive and the delicacy of the subtle figurative evocations of the gathering of birds and quiet dignity of the saint’s sermon is revealed in a contemplative and hushed tonal frame. Debussy’s Masques, D’un Cahier d’esquisses and L’isle joyeuse are presented as an integrated triptych. Savage outlines the first two pieces with elegant clarity and a sparkling purpose and L’isle joyeuse is eloquently spirited. This creditable presentation reflects Savage’s qualities as pianist, teacher and scholar and the CD has a corresponding interpretative integrity.

Gillian Wills / 2MBS Fine Music / June, 2005

REVIEW

CD: Pictures at an Exhibition  
Stephen Savage  

Reviewed by Rita Crews

While labeled Pictures at an Exhibition, this CD contains not only the Mussorgsky piano collection of that name, but also Liszt’s Two Legends which dramatize well-known stories of St. Francis of Assisi, and three of Debussy’s works: Masques, D’un Cahier d’esquisses and L’isle joyeuse...

Distinguished English-born Australian pianist Stephen Savage brings a world of experience and insight to the performance of these works, described as “expressing the visual in sound,” drawing as they do on images of art, religion and the human senses.

The piquant harmonies, rhythmic excitement, the light and shade that characterise Mussorgsky’s style are brought out in detail by Savage’s sensitive interpretation and expert playing that immises subtle nuances into the narrative pieces that form the Exhibition collection and which must rank amongst the most popular of Mussorgsky’s piano works. Whilst it’s always interesting to compare performances of this work by various pianists (normitz; for example), indeed, Savage brings a wonderful insight into the scores of the dramatic created by the composer’s successful attempt to bring the Hartmann paintings so vividly to musical life.

The two ‘Francis’ Legends are programmatic, written during Liszt’s two year monastic retreat. In the first, Savage brings an eternal quality combined with balance, sensitivity and a sure finger technique to his performance of the various sections such that the listener is in no doubt as to the presence of a chorus of birds or the narration of a sermon. The second work is again pictorial, the thematic material and textures fused together and given a brilliant rendition by the performer. As well, a great deal of stamina is necessary to sustain the broken octave passages, admirably executed by Savage.

The architectural genius of Debussy is evident in the works chosen here and it is a rare treat indeed to hear the first two, the whole being treated as a triptych in the manner suggested by musicologist and Debussy expert Dr Roy Howat. In this manner the tonal, modal and structural ideas between the three works can be clearly discerned. Obvious enjoyment in its rhythmic richness characterizes Savage’s rendition of Masques whilst the orchestral overtones and quiet solitude of the rippling figures of D’un Cahier contrast with the power of L’isle joyeuse, dramatically manifested in the performer’s wonderful rendition of this exciting work, the culmination of Debussy’s piano genre.

The programme notes are well written and informative and this CD is highly recommended as an exciting foray into the world of the sensuous, however one wishes to interpret it.

Released on the MOVE label [MD 3290] and available from good music stockists.

Rita Crews / The Studio / May, 2005
Classical

Stephen Savage, piano

Pictures at an Exhibition
(Move Records) ★★★½

SINCE coming to Australia from his native England, pianist Stephen Savage has established a reputation for quality work as performer and as head of keyboard studies at Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University. He made a formidable recording debut here with Beethoven sonatas and has now made a new disc of music inspired by pictures. It takes in Mussorgsky’s Pictures at an Exhibition inspired by the collection of paintings by his friend Victor Hartmann, plus “picture” music from Debussy, his Masques, Masques of Happiness and From a Sketchbook, and two Liszt legends of St Francis. Savage gives them majestic treatment in his detailed performance, each image etched in sound to convey the images on canvas, and to capture on keyboard the breadth of colours familiar through orchestral arrangements of the work. His playing is crisp, evocative and commanding.

—Patricia Kelly

Patricia Kelly / Courier Mail (Brisbane) / 2 October, 2004
Music Examples

In the text, reference is made to the following music examples.

ex.1 Beethoven: *Sonata in f minor, Op.57, first movement* p.119
ex.2 Brahms: *Intermezzo in a minor, Op.118 No.1* p.120
ex.3 Mozart: *Sonata in a minor, K.310, first movement* p.170
ex.4 Mozart: *Variations on 'Unser dummer Pöbel meint' K.455* p.173

Theme and Variation 7

Ex.5 Beethoven: *Sonata in c minor, Op.111, first movement* p.174
ex. 1 Beethoven: *Sonata in f minor, Op.57, first movement*
Allegro non assai, ma molto appassionato
ex. 2 Brahms: *Intermezzo in a minor, Op. 118 No. 1*
ex. 3  Mozart: *Sonata in a minor, K.310, first movement*
ex.4 Mozart: Variations on 'Unser dummer Pöbel meint' K.455  Theme and Variation 7
ex. 5 Beethoven: Sonata in c minor, Op. 111, first movement
ex.6 Beethoven: *Sonata in D major, Op.10 No.3, first movement*
Contents of CD recordings

The contents of the four Compact Disc recordings attached are as follows. The author is the piano soloist throughout.

CD 1  Tippett  *Sonata No.1*

Track 1  Allegro
  2  Andante tranquillo
  3  Presto
  4  Rondo giocoso con moto
  5  Tippett  *Sonata No.2*

Tippett  *Sonata No.3*

  6  Allegro
  7  Lento
  8  Allegro energico

CD 2  Beethoven  *Sonata No.30 in E major, Op.109*

Track 1  Vivace, ma non troppo; Adagio espressivo
  2  Prestissimo
  3  Gesangvoll, mit innigster Empfindung (Tema: Molto cantabile ed espressivo; Variazioni 1-6)

Beethoven  *Sonata No.31 in A flat, Op.110*

  4  Moderato cantabile, molto espressivo
  5  Allegro molto
  6  Adagio ma non troppo; Arioso dolente; Fuga: Allegro, ma non troppo;
      L’istesso tempo di Arioso; L’inversione della Fuga
Beethoven  *Sonata No.31 in c minor, Op.111*

7  Maestoso; Allegro con brio ed appassionata
8  Arietta: Adagio molto semplice e cantabile

CD 3  Moussorgsky  *Pictures at an Exhibition*

Track 1  Promenade
2  Gnomus
3  Promenade
4  Il vecchio castello
5  Promenade
6  Tuileries (Children’s quarrelling at play)
7  Bydlo
8  Promenade
9  Ballet of the unhatched chicks
10  Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle
11  Promenade
12  Limoges (The market place)
13  Catacombs (A Roman Sepulchre)
14  Con mortuis in lingua mortua
15  The hut on hen’s legs (Baba Yaga)
16  The Great Gate of Kiev

Liszt  *Two Legends*

17  St. Francis of Assisi preaching to the birds
18  St. Francis of Paola walking on the water

Debussy

19  Masques
20 ...d’un cahier d’esquisses...

21 L’isle joyeuse

CD 4 Lutoslawski Piano Concerto

Stephen Savage (piano), Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Ronald Zollman (conductor)

ABC recording of the Australian premiere performance.