

5. Retrospective Composers

Miriam Hyde (1913–2005)

Miriam Hyde passed away between my last book on Australian piano music and the writing of this one. She remained active to the very end, keeping up a lively correspondence as well as playing the piano in public and composing. When I last wrote about her, it was in some senses easier, as I was describing her own instrument and the various works she composed for it, both on a concert level and many pieces used for teaching. In chamber music, her output is smaller and the role of the piano is quite different. She still produced voluminously, but it was for other musicians; she seemed very fond of wind instruments, and much of the chamber music involves flute and clarinet. But, because she was also a poet on the side, she wrote many song settings using her own and other poets' words. Miriam reacted strongly to the written word, and reading her introductions concerning her own music, one senses a sort of infatuation with the English language. In recent years, Hyde had a number of pieces published. For many years, everything was in manuscript, and, prior to photocopying, getting a Hyde score was a real difficulty. She had amazing patience and stamina, and would often make handwritten copies of complete works for colleagues. But it was with the advent of computer typesetting that she finally found it possible to get some of her instrumental and vocal pieces into print. The Keys Press and Wirripang have been major initiators in this welcome direction.

The problem of Miriam Hyde is twofold. Her style of composition was already outmoded when she began her career; she seemed incapable of shifting, or even wanting to shift, direction, and stuck to her personal aesthetic all her life. For a long while she must have felt the forgotten woman of Australian music, as a few generations of composers regarded her as a total anachronism. The other problem is that, writing about her, one is aware that everything is of one kind, and one would only seriously repeat oneself. The issue of style is probably less important now, and if we pretend that she was born earlier and is simply a prolific composer in the nineteenth-century way, perhaps we can view her in a more positive light. After all, content is no doubt more important than style. What is harder to deal with, though, is the fact that the style itself became an immovable object, and the date of composition does not seem to matter, as development or change of direction just did not happen.

We gathered a large representation of her output. The songs—whether settings of her own words or taken from English literature—are almost without exception quasi-pastoral in character, and deal with descriptions of nature and moods

provoked by nature. Hyde's music is generally melody and accompaniment—counterpoint is rarely encountered in her output. When writing for solo piano, this was a very convenient formula, and one could show considerable ingenuity weaving the two elements together and shifting them between the hands. When setting words, the melodic element was shifted to the voice, and this left the piano part purely as accompanying the voice, supporting it harmonically. There is of course the introductory gesture from the keyboard and the link between verses, but the piano does not go beyond that. It is as though what was originally in the left hand now becomes material for both hands. For a virtuoso pianist, Hyde's song accompaniments are surprisingly reticent. I found it odd, given Hyde's oft-proclaimed admiration of Rachmaninoff, that she apparently chose not to emulate the master, who wrote elaborate and demanding piano parts in his songs. Hyde takes much of the Russian's harmonic language and key shifts, but the melodic writing in the songs is more often English, tending to the modal. The choice of words is lyrical rather than dramatic.

The works for solo wind and piano are of much the same cast, although, taking the words away, the composer is sometimes forced into some contrapuntal movement. In fact, there is a *Canon and Rhapsody for Clarinet and Piano*, in which, obviously, the first movement depends on polyphony; but even the second still has vestiges of this approach, as the raw material for both movements is closely related.

Allegro con brio

The image shows a musical score for two instruments: B♭ Clarinet (B♭ Cl.) and Piano (Pno.). The tempo is marked 'Allegro con brio'. The key signature has one flat (B♭ major), and the time signature is common time (C). The B♭ Clarinet part starts with a whole rest, then enters with a melodic line of eighth notes, marked *mf* and then *f*. The Piano part starts with a chordal accompaniment, marked *mf*, and provides harmonic support for the clarinet's melody.

Example 5.1 M. Hyde, 'Rhapsody', from *Canon and Rhapsody*, bars 1–4

What occurs on this first line is symptomatic of the whole piece: when not imitating the clarinet, the piano becomes a purely accompanying instrument. So, in the *Cradle Song*, for oboe and piano, the composer's approach is typically pure melody and pure accompaniment.

Allegretto grazioso

Example 5.2 M. Hyde, *Cradle Song*, bars 1–6

There is much in this vein, such as pieces for flute and piano, or viola and piano; although *Legend*, for clarinet and piano, does allow the piano a more extrovert role, but only in flashes: there is a cadenza for clarinet, but not for the piano; it is as though the virtuoso performer has discreetly retired into the background. *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano* has similarity of treatment. I feel that Hyde regarded the flute as a much more gentle instrument than the clarinet, so did not allow herself to push matters. The oboe lay somewhere in between in her mind, judging by the treatment of this instrument.

There are sonatas for many other instruments, such as the fine flute sonata and the early viola sonata. The forays into trios and quartets are less frequent, and are probably related to performance opportunities, so it is interesting to observe what happens when Hyde is faced with more than one linear instrument. A look at the opening of the *Trio for Flute, Clarinet and Piano* provides an instant reply.

Allegro giocoso ♩ = 96-100

Example 5.3 M. Hyde, *Trio for Flute, Clarinet and Piano*, bars 1–4

The result is a sizeable and significant work of some 30 pages. There is a shorter trio for the same combination, consisting of a 'Prelude' and 'Scherzo' (the composer here explored the whole-tone scale in an unusual departure); in a lighter trio for violin, viola and piano—in actuality a *Fantasia on Waltzing Matilda*—the string instruments quite often move in parallel rhythmic motion, but here the pianist is given a more exuberant role and has to play fast octaves and repeated chords; there are a number of versions of this *Fantasia*. But, in a quartet for winds and piano named *Sailing Boats*, Hyde returns to the familiar, and there is always a solo line and accompaniment provided by piano or by piano and two winds. Old habits die hard.

Formally, Miriam was content with using existing forms and her larger works go back to the sonata form, garnering rondo form and variations form on the way. Neither was she at all adventurous harmonically, relying on unexpected key shifts to hold the listener's attention. She was a thorough professional and very fine pianist, and I am certain that she will be remembered for these qualities.

Lloyd Vick (1915–)

When I played through Lloyd Vick's piano music some years back, there were some exciting discoveries for me, and I thought that the music had real energy and verve about it. The material on hand for the present book is fairly slight: some solo songs such as *Eggs to Sell* (1995), for soprano and piano, *How Slowly Through the Lilac-Scented Air*, the only survivor of a set of four songs from Longfellow, and a unison choral song with piano titled *Tuesday* (1983). All three are surprisingly tame and English folk-song like, reminding one of the song tradition of figures such as Grainger and lesser figures from that circle and time. I wish I could be more enthusiastic, but I need to call it as I hear it. *The Miller's Daughter*, although coming from the same sonic stable, is a little more interesting because, with the soprano and piano, there is what Lloyd calls an optional 'Shadow Chorus' that 'should be the merest "feather" of sound. It may be hummed, or sung on any suitable soft sound such as "oo" or "ah", or, if preferred, on ad. lib. combinations of soft sounds.' This shadow choir had the potential for an interesting effect, but unfortunately, Vick chose it to sing basically the same chords as played by the piano—a rather staid four-part accompaniment in D major, complete with diatonic passing notes. Regrettably, there is only one instrumental piece, a cello/piano work entitled *Rebecca* (1986), using the musical equivalents of the letters of the name. It is in a similar vein to the songs, with a tinge of Schumanesque texture and melancholy

Eric Gross (1926–2011)

At a distance, Sydney as a city seems to produce so much superficiality and glitter, so much that is politically correct, so much pretty music, that it is always a relief and pleasure to look at products from Eric Gross, who just composes honestly, without pretentious titles or pose. Eric is a prolific composer; the three works we chose to represent him are Opus 216, 268a and 258! Not many of us can match that output. To my ears, there were always two Eric's: one producing masses of light music, including film music, and the other, the more Germanic side of his musical persona, writing the series of piano pieces that I have written about before. The three works in front of me fall somewhere in between these two sides. Both the *Three Interventions for Clarinet and Piano* (1997) and *Clamorosa*, for the same combination, as well as another wind piece, *Euphonics II for Bassoon and Piano*, have a number of common characteristics. The lighter side manifests itself in the texture and predominantly linear writing for the piano, punctuated with the occasional chord. The wind parts are virtuosic, with wide leaps and constant changes of articulation. The language is highly chromatic and rhapsodic; some gestures from the 'lighter' Eric have leaked through into this music, making it more palatable. Gross's sophisticated language does not seem interested in extended techniques, and I suspect that it is part of his work ethic not to be self-consciously avant-garde!

Example 5.4 E. Gross, *Three Interventions for Clarinet and Piano*, No. 1, bars 19–21

Geoffrey Allen (1927–)

The Keys Press is currently the most prolific publisher of Australian music, accumulating a catalogue that now numbers several hundred scores. It is also responsible for the Heritage Series of Australian music, which has produced more than 70 scores as a direct outcome of a research grant from the Australian Research Council, and I happen to be the general editor of that particular

series—the outcome of many years of research into Australian solo piano music and chamber music with piano. This very book is another outcome of the same research process. I thought it best that I declare my association with Geoffrey Allen, who runs the Keys Press, as we have been working together for many years. My exposure to his music has been limited to his solo piano works, and at times I was a little puzzled by the unexpected twists and turns of the music, though there was much that I admired, especially in the sonatas. This book has now given me an opportunity to look at Geof's output from another angle. I began with the songs, because they represent his very first compositions, written in England while he was still a student. Since then, and especially after he retired from his work as librarian in Western Australia, Geof has been very productive. I looked at a good selection of his songs: *Two Chinese Songs* (1948–49, after Li-Po); *Two Browning Songs* ('A Lover's Quarrel' and 'Home Thoughts from Abroad', 1950–51; the second song was written when the composer was already away from England, in New Zealand, probably feeling homesick); and *Nursery Rhymes Nine* (1959–62), also for voice and piano. These are all English nursery rhymes, and gave me a first clue about Geof's compositional approach. Even rhymes that everyone knows, such as 'Wee Willie Winkie', 'Simple Simon' or 'Humpty Dumpty', all begin innocuously enough but then begin to get distorted and asymmetric. I started to follow the thread of how the music moves unexpectedly, helped by the familiar rhymes and melodies; the settings actually aurally demonstrate how the composer's mind works. The songs vary in their strength of tonality and bar regularity; some have key signatures throughout. As I played through *Two Songs for a Wedding* (2008, Walt Whitman's 'Smile O Voluptuous Cool-Breath's Earth' and John Shaw Nielsen's 'Love's Coming'), then *Songs that Mother Never Taught Me* (1993, the often quirky and amusing words by Geof himself: 'Love Letters', 'Heart Attack', 'The Vampire's Lullaby' and 'The Dangers of Love'), my sense of understanding the flow of the music grew. There are four more collections of songs: two books of songs set to poems of Kevin Crossley-Holland, entitled *Speaking of the Snow* and *Stile and Stump* (2007), another book to poetry of Geoffrey Grigson called *Remembered Love* (2005) and the most ambitious of all, *Bredon Hill* (eight songs for tenor and piano; 1995). Grigson and Crossley-Holland were students from Oxford and were resident at St Edmund Hall, where Geof Allen was himself in the late 1940s. The song settings sit well within the English song tradition, and the vocal lines, the piano writing and the choice of words all belong to that group of composers whom we think of as English songwriters.

The instrumental pieces with piano are of a number of types. *The Watercolors Suite* (1989), for instance, is a set of pieces for flute and piano, with interludes for solo flute and for solo piano, making up a set of nine pieces in all. They are all short, linked by the motif of water, and written for a conference on water resources. Geof's music for wind instruments and piano has a distinctly French

approach, with finely etched lines and restrained piano part. Other pieces for wind include *Pastoral for Bassoon and Piano* (1999), *Outback Impressions* (2005), pieces for clarinet and piano, and *Contain for Bassoon and Piano* (1999). Mixed with the Gallic lightness, the pieces are also in the English pastoral tradition, and Geof seems happy enough to stay within these confines. All the works with piano, whether vocal or instrumental, give the piano important material, creating an ever-unfolding contrapuntal interplay between the solo instrument and the keyboard. Allen is a composer who works thematically, and motivic coherence is the glue that holds much of his music together, given its waywardness in matters of key centres. There are three small works for strings: *A Little Suite for Double Bass and Piano* (1999), *Soliloquy for Violin and Piano*, and *Cantilena for Violoncello and Piano*—the last being the slow movement for an intended, but never completed sonata. A *Sonata for Flute and Piano* (2004), however, does exist; in four movements, it brings to mind Geof's admiration for Poulenc.

The image shows a musical score for the first six bars of the first movement of the Sonata for Flute and Piano by Allen. The score is in 3/8 time and features a Flute part and a Piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked 'Allegro moderato' with a quarter note equal to 120 beats per minute. The piano part is marked 'p' and 'leger. e ritmico'. The flute part consists of a series of eighth notes, some with slurs, and the piano part consists of a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

Example 5.5 G. Allen, *Sonata for Flute and Piano*, Op. 56, mvt 1, bars 1–6

Finally, there are two larger-scale works: *Trio for Violin, Violoncello and Piano* (2006), and *Fantasy Trio for Flute, Clarinet and Piano* (2009). These four-movement works contain piano parts that are bolder, less reticent than in the solo wind/string works, and seem to contain more quasi-improvisatory gestures, especially in the *Fantasy Trio*.

George Dreyfus (1928–)

We collected a number of scores by George Dreyfus. They included the *Seven Songs for Bruce Knapped* (1987), for voice and piano, *Carboni* (1979), for a show based on Raffaello Carbone's *The Eureka Stockade*, followed by *Ein KaffeeKonzert*, for piano trio and voice. This last is a set of fixed-form pieces such as a 'March', 'Waltz' and 'Gavotte'; the settings are in German and no doubt are meant to be humorous or even a send-up. I missed the point because of the language. The

musical language, however, is consistent with the other pieces that we looked at. Thus, *Grand Aurora Australis*, for oboe, piano and optional percussion; *Songs for Manning Clark's History of Australia, The Musical*; *Tender Mercies*, for French horn and piano; and *Larino, Safe Haven*, for trumpet and piano, are all essentially miniatures that join the previously listed works in that the atmosphere pervading all the music is essentially music hall, from the end of the nineteenth century, with a smattering of a kind of manufactured Australian folk music. Even in *In Memoriam, Raoul Wallenberg*, for clarinet and piano, written for a documentary film on Wallenberg and therefore dealing with a very tragic incident from World War II, George cannot seem to shake the shackles of this style. I have no idea whether Dreyfus is seeking to challenge the definitions of what constitutes 'serious' or 'concert' music. I am certainly not entering the debate, and can only say that these scores do not fit the overall picture of what we are looking at in this book. As is well known, George is a fine bassoon player, so the piano parts are almost inevitably of the 'vamping' variety. Amusingly, George was a postmodernist years before the term was even invented!

May Howlett (1931–)

May Howlett's output includes many short works for wind and piano, as well as vocal settings, often to her own words. The music has a gentle, lyrical exterior, but sometimes things are not quite what they seem, and lurking behind the lilting, almost cabaret exterior of some of the work there is a sting in the tail, an unexpected turn of phrase. So, in *Exhibits*, a suite for flute and piano (I. 'Mobiles', II. 'Veil VII', III. 'Electric Mouse', and IV. 'Streton's Noon'), we find in the first movement a static harmony within a Debussy-ish framework, whilst in the third there is an explosion of cluster-related chords. Even in the last movement, the essentially pentatonic piece takes unexpected rhapsodic byways. This is probably typical of May's output as a whole. She is not interested in barnstorming, so everything is held in check. The feminine dream world appears mostly in the shorter pieces such as *Lahara's Stream*, for clarinet and piano, *Nocturne*, for horn and piano, or *Sacred Grove*, for bassoon and piano. Howlett's sense of humour is ever present, however, as in a sudden breakout of a vamping bass in a march section in an asymmetric 9/8 rhythm; it is especially evident in *Secrets*, a kind of song cycle dedicated to Marilyn Richardson, that extraordinary soprano for whom much Australian music has been composed. In *Secrets*, we begin with the line: 'Juliet, Juliet! Have you found your Romeo yet?' This is answered in the next song by a rag-doll Romeo, who 'woos (how he laughs and jokes and woozy, woozy woozy)', with the piano thumping away

in quite virtuoso fashion in rag tempo. A short song entitled *The Rose Mystery*, set for voice and oboe, reveals May Howlett's melodic gift. 'The Cat' shifts into a more hypnotic world, with strange colouration.

The musical score for 'The Cat' from *Secrets*, bars 9–11, is presented for voice, oboe, clarinet, piano, and percussion. The voice part begins with a circled '9' and the lyrics 'sas - - ta - di - fi - ous, All - - per - fid - ious paw!'. It includes markings for 'a tempo', 'brillante', and 'sfz'. The oboe part is marked 'leggiere' and 'a tempo'. The clarinet part features dynamic markings of 'f', 'p', 'p', and 'pp'. The piano part has 'ff' and 'f' markings. The percussion part is mostly silent.

Example 5.6 M. Howlett, 'The Cat', from *Secrets*, bars 9–11

The cycle ends, unexpectedly, with solo voice singing 'The Chataka Bird'.

There are more settings to her own words, such as *Songs of a Watchful Man* (1986–89), comprising 'Horatio' (whose bridge has become an overpass), 'Angothra' and 'Seagulls'. A separate song, *To Beauty*, has an almost Rachmaninovian feel to the lush harmony and vocal line.

Finally, I looked at *Wings of the Wind*, for flute and piano ('Thermals', 'Mistral' and 'Ah! Sirocco'). Here, modern playing techniques for the piano are grafted onto an essentially conservative, though volatile, temperament. One last comment: May Howlett's music is strong on thematic unity and control.

Ralph Middenway (1932–)

Having never seen Ralph Middenway's *The Letters of Amalie Dietrich, Opera in One Act for Vocal Soloists and Piano* (libretto by Andrew Taylor), I had to imagine it all unfolding as I played through the score. First, I wondered whether the piano score was a reduction, but apparently it is not; everything that is written can be done on the keyboard, although just very occasionally, the music seems

to beg for orchestration. Given the almost impossible task of getting a new opera staged, it is little wonder that composers, even accomplished and experienced composers such as Middenway, turn to the easier expedient of using the piano in this fashion. It is, then, regrettable that the sound of the piano lasting through a whole opera, even a shortish one, does become wearying. Staging, singing and lighting would no doubt enhance everything and disguise the use of a single instrument. The piano writing is secure, though not extravagant; for my taste, too often it merely comments on what is going on and what is being said or sung, and I waited in vain for the piano to leap up, come to life, and overwhelm everything, but that does not happen in this piece. The second problem is the idea itself: making an opera out of reading letters. Very little actually happens, and the drama is further weakened by repeating what the composer sees as important lines, sometimes over and over. His setting of the text tends to be glued to the actual speech rhythms, and this restricts the musical flow to an extent. I thought that the words themselves—whether in the letters or in actual conversation—are too prosaic and deal with very mundane matters; this would hardly inspire the composer to push his music towards some kind of acoustic explosion. Middenway certainly knows what he is up to, and his control over thematic material and cross-referencing in the music is exemplary, but perhaps he needed to be more ruthless with the words instead of being governed by them. The music itself is a rich palette of chromatic writing, often ending or skirting round tonal centres, such as the long E pedal in the opening music. Superimposed triads are another feature of the palette. Naturally, this is all subjective reaction to playing through the score, and it would be good to see an actual production!

We also looked at *The Stream of Time, Songs of Acura, for Soprano, Bass Clarinet and Piano* (1984). This is another instance of Middenway's interest in Japanese culture, like his piano sonata of 1990. Here the text (in translation) comes from Yamanoue Okura, the famous poet: 'one of the three greatest poets of his time, much of his work was included in the Man'yōshū, the Collection of a Myriad Leaves, dating from 794 A.D., the first great Japanese anthology' (composer's program note). The settings are both refined and restrained, befitting the poetry. Middenway's score is made much more readable by including the actual (concert) sound of the clarinet, as well as the part in B-flat.

David Morgan (1932–)

David Morgan has lived in South Australia for many years now, and produced much music. I am a little mystified as to why he is not better known, and would hazard a guess that as a composer he lies in that middle ground between modernity and light music. In some ways that is the most difficult place to be,

for the followers of either ‘side’ find you a problem. I could be quite wrong about this, of course. We accumulated a good sampling of his works, favouring more recent times.

So, a piano quartet from 1999: marking the death from cancer of someone obviously close to David in 1996. I have already commented before on Morgan’s propensity to constantly interrupt the flow of the music by a cadential gesture; it is here as well, and is just something that is native to the composer. He favours parallel fourths and fifths in the two hands of the pianist, moving in conjunct or disjunctive motion, forcing the arrival point of the cadence. This creates a kind of bitonality, but it is rarely over-harsh because of the open intervals used. Morgan’s chamber works use titles that are descriptive, and contain obvious clues as to what is driving the music. Here, we have the following movements: 1) ‘Apprehension’; 2) ‘Crossroads’; 3) ‘Toll’; and 4) ‘Vale’. The last is very tonal, whilst the second movement, following the clue of the titles, plays with the interaction of 2/4 and 6/8. There is kind of ‘death-chord’ that appears:

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Vln *p* *p sempre* *dimin.* *pp*

Vla *p* *p sempre* *dimin.* *pp*

Vcl. *p* *p sempre* *dimin.* *pp*

Pno. *mf* *p* *pp sotto voce*

Example 5.7 D. Morgan, *Piano Quartet*, mvt 2, bars 199–206

The *Piano Quintet* (2000) (also commemorating, sadly, more deaths caused by cancer) is not dissimilar in style. The fourths and fifths tend towards a Hindemith-ish sound, here and in other pieces. The titles in the quintet are: 1) ‘Slow March’; 2) ‘Sunshine and Shadow’; and 3) ‘Unmasking’. The second movement perhaps owes something to Bartók in its asymmetric rhythms. The first movement is strongly tonal—something we find in some of David’s works—and contains an almost banal trumpet-like call. The *Suite for Horn & Piano* (1998) is a lighter, more playful work written for his daughter. Again, the movement titles tell us something of the compositional approach: 1) ‘Ditty’s Dump and Dash’ (this opens with a 12-tone row, which provides the raw material

for what follows); 2) 'Groundlet'; 3) 'Scherzo'; 4) 'Pastorella'; 5) 'Capriccio'; 6) 'Post-Haste'. The last movement juggles different tempi in a structural manner, whilst the first movement is full of time changes.

David Morgan's *Violin Sonata No. 4* is a work that dates from 1959, but was completed in 2005! This is a feat in itself, which I personally cannot imagine even attempting. Is this because Morgan's style has not changed much over all these years? Is the phenomenon uncovering a drying-up occurring in the composer's life? Certainly, the landmark fourths and fifths are here, as well as a reliance on old forms: 1) 'Toccata'; 2) 'Sarabande'; 3) 'Ground'; 4) 'Wild Waltz and Melancholy March'; and 5) 'The Lonely Art' (perhaps the composer musing in an autobiographical manner). The writing is fluent and contrapuntal. David has always known his instruments.

The *3 Cabaret Songs* (1999) are scored for soprano, clarinet, cello, piano and percussion. The songs are: 1) 'A Welsh Wife'; 2) 'The Scorpion and The Bull'; and 3) 'Saint Peter and the Pope'. The settings are folk song-like in style and the whole is obviously light, but colourfully set in a most attractive frame.

And so, we are now left with a collection of trios. The *Trio for Violin, Clarinet & Piano* is a recent work (2005). The first movement is a 'Rondo on the Name Charles Edward Ives', containing some of the most grinding chords I have ever seen in David's music, partly the result of deriving note equivalents from Ives' name. These are mostly three-note adjacent notes, widely spread out. The second movement, 'Tranquillity and Frenzy', has some adroit tempo shifting, with a wry, Shostakovich-like humour. This is followed by a 'Mad March', which begs the question: is Morgan more at home, more natural, in lighter, more miniature forms of expression? The last movement is called 'Magpie Rondo, Groundlet and Coda'. The magpie appellation must refer to a high bird-like call that is important in the rondo.

We are left with some piano trios. The first trio was composed in 1952 and revised in 1997. A very tonal, early work, with a 'Theme' and 'Variations' to begin with—the variations most skillfully handled—a 'Pastorale' and a 'Scherzo'. Perhaps there is an over-reliance on sequence, but the appearance of different tempi is another by-now familiar trait. These tempo changes are closer to Tippett than Carter, and are used more structurally, to create blocks. The second trio (1999) is yet again in memory of a cancer victim, which accounts once more for the sequence of movements: 1) 'Elegy'; 2) 'Days of Wrath, and Remembrance of Innocent Happiness' (again smacking of Shostakovich at his most ironic and angry); and 3) 'Simple Song'. The third trio (2005) opens with 'The Naming'. Here again, I felt that the more compressed form resulted in a more successful composition. The remaining movements all deal with other composers: 2) 'Variations on a Theme by Mozart'. Here, the wilder the departures

from the theme, the more interesting is the music. The key of A major dominates the movement, and one has the impression that the composer became enslaved by the theme. The remaining two movements are: 3) 'A Walk in the Woods (whilst thinking of Bruckner)'; and 4) 'The Woods So Wilde (*Divisions on an Air* after William Byrd, 1590) and Orlando Gibbons'. There are 18 divisions (a free variant of the theme) and a coda.

The last and most recent piano trio—the fourth—is probably my favourite from the selection. It, too, has quasi-programmatic titles: 1) 'Sound'; 2) 'City: Heinrich Schutz, Dresden and Coventry'; and 3) 'Silence'. The second movement has, as part of the score: 'Don't mention the war! (Basil Fawlty)'. The trio is deft and colourful, with the first movement's strong superimpositions of triads, and the last movement's very static E-major tonality showing effective contrast.

Colin Brumby (1933–)

Looking back to what I wrote about Colin Brumby in the last book, I felt both vindicated and puzzled. What motivates a composer—with a firm hold of the postwar avant-garde language, who took his place in Australia as one of the generation that broke with tradition—to change gear and go into reverse, and drive in reverse for quite a long way? Of course, I do not know the answer, neither do I condemn the composer who did this; I just wish that the mental processes were a little clearer to me! Brumby, from the mid-1980s, not only returned to a soft-edged romanticism, but, not content with that, also went even further back, so that much of the music sounds like a late nineteenth-century exercise in style. My impression is that Colin became weary of the constant battle with critics and audience alike—especially in Queensland, which at that time was conservative—and chose the easier path. If I am wrong about this, I am happy to apologise to the composer; the decision might also have been related to an aesthetic disenchantment with what the avant-garde of the day stood for, and how it eventually itself became dogmatic and intolerant of anyone not toeing the party line. Most of the pieces we gathered are miniatures, in which the piano has some form of arpeggiated accompaniment, and the solo instrument or voice carries the 'tune', largely diatonic, in four-square rhythm and overarchingly diatonic. I list here the pieces that I played through: *Aria*, for solo violin and piano; *A Little Romance*, for alto saxophone and piano; *A Little Waltz*, solo for violin and piano; *Mudoolun*, for cor anglais and piano; *Menteith*, for flute and piano; *Sospiri*, for clarinet and piano; and some vocal music—a solo song, *Malinconia*, *Ninfa Gentile*, with words by I. Pindemonte, set in Italian, and sounding like a popular Italian tenor number; a *Serenade* (words by Aubrey de Vere); and finally *A Poor Young Shepherd* (words by Verlaine), set in French.

Playing through all of these, the thought crossed my mind: did the composer finish up in the wrong place in the profession? Should he have begun in the light-music sphere? Did all that ‘classical’ training actually get in his way?

Of more substance is the *Bassoon Sonata*, with touches that hark back to figures such as Schumann and Brahms, in the richer piano sonorities and the structure with its climaxes. The second movement might be slight, but the last has interesting cross-rhythms between the solo instrument and the piano. Yet another Germanic work is the *Piano Quartet*, written between December 1983 and January 1984. I liked it less than the *Bassoon Sonata* because of the unremittingly thick texture, but there is certainly a sense of the big romantic sweep in the music.

The work that appealed to me the most was *Chiaroscuro*, for clarinet, cello and piano, where tritonal tensions, such as E-flat minor against A minor, lend spice to the language. There is a more vital rhythmic drive in this three-movement work—with its Satie-esque waltz as the second movement—than in any of the other works that I looked at. The three instruments have an equally colouristic and even combative role in this fairly short and terse composition.

Allegro Moderato

Clarinet in B \flat *non legato*
f *ff cresc.* *f sempre*

Cello *non legato*
f *ff cresc.* *f* *pizz.*

Piano *sfz* *sim* *f sempre*

Example 5.8 C. Brumby, *Chiaroscuro*, mvt 1, bars 1–4

Mary Mageau (1934–)

Mary Mageau embodies an elegant, spare style, whether she writes for the keyboard or for instruments or voice. The music relies on its building blocks based on folk-like turns of phrase and exotic scales, whether constructed or taken from some ethnic source. Parallel with that, she likes to explore popular music of the past, as we will see. Her violin and piano piece *Calls from the Heartland* (1995) is in five short movements, alternating tempi and moods. The raw thematic material is often pentatonic and is obviously founded in an affinity with folk music. She does not write technical difficulties into her scores, and

performers no doubt find it graceful to perform. Even when Mary writes for a professional ensemble such as the Darling Downs Trio, the texture remains clean and lucid. This particular trio is named *Concert Pieces for Piano Trio*, with named movements—that is: 1) ‘Il Penseroso’; 2) ‘L’Allegro’. The music itself in the first movement even looks ‘white’, as few accidentals appear, resulting in a piece that is centred on the note A. The second movement is longer and more virtuosic; it also has a return to the first-movement tempo close to the end, giving some sense of reprise. But even the second movement, with constantly running semiquavers, is still marked on the metronome with a modest $q = 112$; so it is more playful than driven, cooler than passionate.

Mageau likes to add subtitles at times, and, in *Dialogues* (1992), for clarinet, viola, cello and piano, we get: 1) ‘Hot Gossip’; 2) ‘Whispered Secrets’; and 3) ‘Affirmative Replies’. The titles no doubt give both performers and audience some clues to the work’s ‘meaning’, or at least inspiration. *Dialogues* is a highly energetic, colourful piece. The piano scampers in similar motion scales, treated as a single line. Chordal passages are few and far between.

There is another reference point in Mageau’s music, which is rag music from her native America. And so, in *Ragtime Remembered* (for oboe, clarinet, horn, bassoon and piano), we have three movements based on ragtime and tango. This is an obviously light piece, and the piano part now acquires the texture and feel of the original dances of this genre. Mageau has a real feel for this kind of music, and the work, using the piano as a kind of continuo and the instruments sharpening and spicing up the sound, really works and cannot fail to get the audience involved. There is a related work, named *Suite with A Beat*, in a similar vein. Here the piano can be substituted with harpsichord, as the other instruments are three recorders, playing three movements titled: I) ‘Ragtime’, II) ‘Blues’, and III) ‘Quick Step’—all originating from Mageau’s country of birth.

We also uncovered two songs: *She is a Cat* (1998, words by Mocco Wollert), a joyful and exuberant vocal number, and a more serious setting: *Son of Mine* (for soprano and piano, 1992, words by Oodgeroo Noonuccal), with some dark moments, the piano quite often playing in the bass register.

5 *mp*

Sop. My son, My son, your trou- led eyes search mine,

Pno.

Example 5.9 M. Mageau, *Son of Mine*, bars 5–8

Michael Bertram (1935–)

It was a great pleasure for me as a pianist to discover Michael Bertram's music in my last book. I found it free, rhapsodic, with often-extravagant gestures and a very rich palette that was not frightened to revert to tonality when so desired. Here, the scope of the music is smaller, and we have three works to look at. First, *I Will Write to You, Three Love Songs for Soprano* (Op. 11, 1992), with piano accompaniment. The songs are introduced by a piano slowly building towards a cluster with wide cross-hand leaps for the melodic line, finishing with a quiet, rolled A-minor arpeggio. Generally, Bertram, in his music, has the feel of a melody with accompaniment—a typically pianistic way of viewing the act of composition—and, given the task of writing a set of songs, this is very much to the fore here as well. The words come from Rupert Brooke (song 1: 'Oh Lovers Parted') and Robert Graves (2. 'I Will Write', and 3. 'Bird of Paradise'). The composer avoids time signatures as much as possible, evidently trying for an improvised effect rather than a metric feel. This is not always possible, of course, but even when forced to bar, the free effect continues since the bars are rarely of the same duration. The end of the first song illustrates how Bertram achieves the rhapsody that he desires.

The musical score shows the ending of the first song. The Voice part is in treble clef, and the Piano part is in grand staff. The music is in 4/4 time. The Voice part starts with 'for love' and ends with 'and af-ter sleep.' followed by a long line. The Piano part starts with a cluster of notes and ends with a rolled A-minor arpeggio. Dynamics include *mf*, *f*, *p*, *mp*, and *p*. Tempo markings include 'a tempo' and 'rall.'

Example 5.10 M. Bertram, 'Oh Lovers Parted', from *I Will Write to You*, ending

Note the ambiguous A-minor, A-major ending. Enriched traditional harmony is certainly a feature of this composer's work, but, interestingly, here he is more reluctant to do what he did in the solo piano works. Perhaps matters of balance had something to do with such compositional decisions. The second and third songs approach text setting in a similar way. The climax of the third song is not given to the voice, but to a passionate outburst from the solo piano, with proportions such as 10 against nine, and such others, enhancing the climactic point, and the piano ending the set, as it did at the very opening, with an A-minor rolled chord.

The second song cycle that we found is *The Green Castle, Five Songs for Soprano* (1994). These use variable settings, thus: 1) 'Not To Sleep' (Robert Graves), with piano; 2) 'Justus Quidem tu es' (Gerard Manley Hopkins), with string quartet and piano; 3) 'Silence of the Night' (Christina Rossetti), with piano; 4) 'Up-Hill' (Christina Rossetti), with string quartet; and finally 5) 'The Green Castle' (Robert Graves), with string quartet and piano. In this way, Bertram squeezes the maximum contrast out of the combination. The quartet is never broken up as an entity. The approach of melody and accompaniment is here taken to a kind of maximum, as the background comprises a consistently saturated palette upon which the composer superimposes the voice. The sound is reminiscent of songs by Rachmaninoff and the ecstatic moments of Scriabin. I suspect that this is what I found attractive about Bertram's music in the first place! But the chromaticism is under constraint here, perhaps because of pitching considerations for the soprano.

The *Variations for Flute and Piano* (Op. 10, 1991) is a somewhat curious work, in that the composer generally avoids the problem of writing for piano and flute simultaneously, and huge chunks of the work are for one instrument or the other. 'Variation 1' is largely for flute—the piano only interjects, as in an operatic recitative. 'Variation 2' begins with a waltz-like bar set up by the piano and repeated many times; the flute plays over it. 'Variation 3' is for unaccompanied flute. 'Variation 4' again uses the piano for a simple, repetitive 5/8 background, written on one stave, with flute superimposition. 'Variation 5' is for solo piano, in a flashy and showy cadenza. 'Variation 6' has the instruments shadowing each other, with the piano part very restrained, in a single-line, softly pedalled role. 'Variation 7' is again largely flute and 'Variation 8' is another showy cadenza for the piano, featuring double octaves. 'Variation 9' is consequently mostly flute and the final 'Variation 10' uses some prepared piano effects behind the flute. This is a virtuoso work for both players. Bertram milks the rather sparse theme for all its worth, both melodically and harmonically.

Richard Peter Maddox (1936–)

Maddox's vocal settings and instrumental sonatas have confirmed the views I held about his music when I wrote about his piano works. He is obviously very fond of Shakespeare as there are numerous settings: *Beauty Herself is Black*, which consists of Sonnets CXXVII, CXXX, CXXI, CXXII (1998); Sonnet XVIII appears in *Four Songs of the Far Side; The Marriage of True Minds (Shakespeare on Love)*, Op. 103, A Duet song cycle for Soprano and Bass includes Sonnets CXVI, Ferdinand and Miranda from *The Tempest*, Beatrice and Benedick from *Much Ado about Nothing*, Demetrius and Helena from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Sonnet LX. Then there are either settings of real folk songs or Maddox's

own quasi folk songs. We have the *Five Australian Songs* for voice and piano (1. 'Botany Bay', 2. 'Morton Bay', 3. 'Click Go the Shears', 4. 'The Streets of Forbes', and 5. 'Waltzing Matilda') grouped with *Two Songs for Teenagers Op. 105* (2004), consisting of: 1) 'Drama Queen', and the jaunty 2) 'A Sailor's Complaint'. *The Stranger in My Skin* is for voice, oboe and piano, and uses words by Bruce Dawe: 1) 'Stranger', 2) 'Looking Down from Bridges', 3) 'The Swimming Pool', 4) 'Bedroom Conversations', and 5) 'A Peasant Idyll'. *Four Songs of the Far Side* includes settings from Dawe ('Sleight of Hand'), F. T. Macartney ('Bargain Basement') and Dame Mary Gilmore ('The Pear Tree'). There are commonalities in this profusion of songs. Maddox is a composer strongly rooted in tonality, and the many imitations and sequences that make up the music are never far from a tonal centre. Maddox tends to use a more dissonant language when the songs are concerned with humour or the words suggest triteness. To my ears, the music of such settings is more interesting than the usual, more staid settings. Otherwise many of the songs have long pedals recurring, with chords shifting further and further away from home base and then either returning or finally modulating to a new centre. The accompaniments often incorporate imitative figures, thus suggesting a flow of counterpoint, which usually does not last very long. The folk settings have, characteristically, a mild taste of dissonance about them, as the familiar tunes are clothed in a fleeting unfamiliar setting. 'Waltzing Matilda' is a good example of this, and here, as elsewhere in Maddox's output, the piano parts are not easy. The composer says of this setting: 'a commission from Dorothy Williams in (as she put it) "the style of Benjamin Britten" to be sung at a reception at the Australian Ambassador's residence in Brussels.' In the middle of the Macartney song, Maddox suddenly asks for a 30 cm wooden ruler with which to play chords or else tap on the keyboard without sounding notes; this reinforces my impression that the most interesting moments in this composer's music occur when he is less earnest and allows his quirkier side to emerge. *Letters from Armidale* (1997), with words by Mary Hewes Buck (1. 'Lovely Day', 2. 'Figs', 3. 'Letters', 4. 'News Flashes', 5. 'Rain'), lies somewhere between the serious Shakespearean sonnets and the folk settings.

There are three sonatas for oboe and piano, a rondo for the same combination as well as a clarinet sonata. The composer's thought processes can be readily gleaned from the program note for the third sonata (incidentally, the oboe music is linked to the fact that Maddox's brother is an oboist):

The first movement starts with a reference to a well-known tune from Handel's *Judas Maccabaeus*...the piano then embarks on a passage...in the relative major key (C Major). When the oboe joins in, there is a transition to C-Sharp minor, which eventually leads back to the opening march theme. After the rising chord sequence the second main theme is introduced but it is muddled up with references to the opening theme until the theme is restated in C minor. This

leads to a turbulent middle section where the two main ideas seem to buffet each other around until the...passage returns to E-Flat. This modulates back to the original A minor for the re-entry of the oboe.

The quote demonstrates very clearly both the formal and the tonal attitudes of the composer. I should add here that Maddox seems content to establish a time signature and generally stay within it. Resultantly, the rhythmic/metric aspects of his scores lend an additionally conservative air to his output. There is a playful set of *Variations on a Nursery Song*, for cello and piano, based on 'Pat-a-Cake', with affectionate pastiches of composers such as Bach, Beethoven, Schumann, Chopin and Brahms; a short *Viola Sonata* from 2002, and finally, *Wayne's Farewell*, for trumpet and piano (2002).

Ann Carr-Boyd (1938–)

Ann Carr-Boyd's chamber music did not contain any particular surprises, in that, like her music for solo piano, it consists mostly of miniature pieces and songs—strongly tonal, light in style and sometimes verging on cabaret in approach. We looked at a number of pieces for solo instrument with piano accompaniment to begin with: *Ann and Del* and *Ann and Del in Oz* (2004)—two pieces for flute and piano composed for a radio program and deliberately meant to evoke music from the Glenn Miller era. But, Glenn Miller aside, Carr-Boyd's own language is still very much in the same vein, without the big-band beat. Thus, *Beneath the Yellow Moon, a Suite for Violoncello and Piano* in three movements ('Beneath the Yellow Moon', 'Billabong' and 'Dreamtime Haze', 2004)—composed for the noted Australian ethnomusicologist Alice Moyle's ninety-sixth birthday, and inspired by John Moyle's verses—is another work in which the solo line carries the tonal melodic material, whilst the piano part is largely based on arpeggios based on triadic patterns, often with sixth notes added. A slightly earlier piece, from 1996, *On the Shores of Aswan*, for clarinet and piano, allows the keyboard part a little more participation in the thematic unfolding. In *Fabia's Fantasy* (2003, for horn and piano), the instruction on the score asks for the mood of 'gentle rock'—another way of describing her compositional approach.

Carr-Boyd's vocal music is exemplified by the song cycle *Museum Garden*, consisting of five songs for soprano and piano (2002, words by Mark Doty). The vocal line must be gracious to sing, and is mildly sentimental, with some melismatic writing and a long piano introduction in the fourth song. In the last, the composer uses the word 'cabaret' as part of the performing instruction, which corroborates not only what I feel about her music generally, but, more

importantly, what she herself requests from her performers. *Brown Pansies* (1997, words by Corrine Laird), for voice and piano, likewise opens with a lazy drooping figure reminiscent of nightclub song.

There are a number of folk-song settings, such as *Folk Songs '76*, from various countries, set in a variety of languages, for soprano with small ensemble (seven songs in all); *Moreton Bay*, for flute, violin, piano and cello; a traditional *Railroad Gallope* (1971, original composer not given on score, but rearranged from voice and piano); and *Song of the Women of the Menero Tribe*, originally by Isaac Nathan, also for voice and piano, rearranged for flute, piano and cello.

An original trio for flute, clarinet and piano, *Julian Turns Night into Day*, started life as a piano solo named *Blues in Orange*, and once again hints at a lighter origin of the composer's music. We found a tiny piece—possibly meant as an encore—for violin, cello and piano named *Moonscape Remembered* (1991). A *Dance for Strings*, with piano accompaniment (1978), is likewise of a folk character.

A work that did not seem to fit the composer's overall output, and was perhaps tried out as an experiment, is *Combinations*, for violin, cello and piano, with aleatory elements and small clusters, not precisely notated either, in the piano part. The two strings act as a unit pitted against the free-flowing piano part. Even though many of the written patterns do have strong tonal origins, it does seem a one-off in the composer's output—commissioned by the Musical Society of Victoria. I was personally attracted by it and was sorry that Carr-Boyd did not seem inclined to try more in the same vein and beyond!

Philip Bracanin (1942–)

Philip Bracanin's *Eternal Image* (1998), for soprano, clarinet, horn and piano, is his most significant work that we located for this book. It is a setting of a portion of Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and consists of one solid movement, split into sections, as governed by the changing mood of the words. The piano lays the background for the action, by an ostinato moving in quavers in 5/4 and generally consisting of added sixth chords, giving a kind of radiance to the music. Most of the piece is firmly anchored in G major, although the piece ends in A major. On top of the piano harmonies, the voice and instrumental parts move in a constantly unfolding counterpoint, some of it strict and canonic, some rather more rhapsodic. But for a piece that is essentially static harmonically, the movement of the single lines and words maintains the interest.

Another work we found is *Three Bagatelles for 2 Treble Instruments & Piano*. The movements are: 1) 'Canon', 2) 'Slow Waltz', and 3) 'Allegro'. These are essentially easy pieces, meant for teaching, and really outside the scope of this book. More

in keeping with what we were after is *Three Pieces for Violin and Pianoforte* (1976). This is really like a sonatina for the combination, except that it opens with the slow movement, and then, each successive movement becomes faster. The language is freely chromatic but economical and refined. It is a short but most effective work. A more substantial and serious composition is *Of Thoughts Unspoken*, for clarinet, viola, violoncello and keyboard (does this mean piano?). The choice of instruments gives the sound a dark patina. The first movement is essentially slow, but harmonically more conservative than the violin/piano work. The second movement is really a scherzo, with a wistful, melodic and slower tempo trio; the piano here is reduced to sparsely spaced rolled chords. After the scherzo returns, the tempo suddenly drops to an andante, and an emotional summing up of the work occurs here, before we return to the scherzo tempo, this time heading towards a fast coda to end with. The work, though conservative in some ways, has an essential honesty about it, with a refinement that I usually associate with Phil's work and a strong emotional element.