

Articulation

*Newsletter of the Sydney Chapter of the
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CONVENOR'S REPORT

The Graduate Music Symposium on 2 September presented many interesting themes. One that was quite pervasive, if unstated, was the idea of the musicologist as participant-observer. The inclusion of Popular Music themes, chaired by Shane Homan, was represented with three papers in the field and one paper exploring communication in jazz improvisation. Peter Doyle discussed virtual space in recorded popular music of 1925-55 through his demonstration of effects in recorded sound. Caleb.k took us into the world of laptop performance in his research on an underground electronic music scene. Corrina Bonshek explored the construction and maintenance of pop star status, using the success of Britney Spears as launching point for research on the conflicting discourses around female pop performers. Emmanuel Schmidt is researching the nature of the relationship of performer and audience and some of his presentation involved the playing of video footage of an audience at a jazz performance as a marker of audience members' interpretation of the performance and performers' evaluation of their success in non-verbal musical communication.

Two papers researched eighteenth century vocal music in a session chaired by Richard Toop. Alan Maddox's paper explored ideas relating to contemporary theory of musical rhetoric. Libby Brookes' paper presented two musical examples as research into the idea of perspective created by the Baroque castrato voice. Three papers researched aspects of twentieth century musics, chaired by Peter McCallum. Matthew Bieniek's examination of the role of clusters in Henry Cowell's piano music once again was a practitioner's enquiry. Rachel Campbell's paper on extra-musical influences in the work of Richard Bennett is intended to lead to a larger study involving several of the New Complexist composers. Anton Luiten drew some thought-provoking relationships between Bartók's last quartets and the music of Beethoven, Wagner and Berg. We were also able to hear some of the research that Margaret Sharpe is developing with Ngadiji, a Yanuwa song series. Again videoed performances enriched the detail of the paper.

It is to be hoped that the Study Weekend that is about to take place will be similarly productive.

Best wishes

Anne Power

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PROFESSOR PETER PLATT AM (1924–2000)

Allan Maret

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As a scholar, composer and performer Emeritus Professor Peter Platt had a unique understanding of the various branches of music and their interrelationships which he imparted to several generations of students in both Australia and New Zealand. He was Blair Professor of Music at the University of Otago from 1957 to 1975 and Professor of Music at the University of Sydney from 1975 to 1989. Known almost universally as 'Prof' to students and colleagues alike, he eschewed the title 'Sir' inherited from his father, fearing that it would create a barrier between him and his students. He was far prouder of his own honour, an AM for services to music, which he received in 1999.

Peter Platt was born in Sheffield on 6 July 1924. His father, Sir Robert Platt, was the first Professor of Medicine at Manchester University and later President of the Royal College of Physicians, for which he received a baronetcy in 1959. He was a keen amateur musician who is well remembered for his habit of practicing the cello in railway compartments. His mother Margaret practised as psychiatrist for much of her professional life.

Upon leaving school Platt gained a scholarship in composition at the Royal College of Music where he studied under R. O. Morris. Following the war, during which he served in the Royal Navy, he went up to Oxford. Here he completed a B.Litt, for which he submitted a thesis on the important, but formerly little-known seventeenth century composer Richard Dering. His edition of Dering's work in the series *Musica Britannica* has been described as 'a model of its kind', and Platt remains to this day the foremost world authority on Dering. Following an appointment as Lecturer (later Senior Lecturer) in the newly founded Department of Music at the University of Sydney in 1952, he became Professor of Music at Otago University. As a young child growing up in Dunedin, I vividly remember his contribution to the musical life of that city, particularly as a conductor and mentor of local musicians. He returned to Sydney

as Professor of Music in 1975 where he continued and expanded the ideals of his predecessor Donald Peart, fostering a department which, although small, encompassed an astounding range of interests and which, under his leadership, established a formidable academic reputation.

Platt always insisted that the well-rounded musician in any branch of music must have an understanding of the others. He would expect, for example, that a performer should not only master his or her chosen instrument, but should also acquire an understanding of the historical and social contexts in which the repertoire was created, of the scholarly processes by which musical editions were produced, of contemporary musical composition and, particularly for someone living in this region, some understanding of indigenous music and the musical traditions of Asia. His musical life was one of deep enquiry and innovation whether in the field of composition, performance or scholarship. He was a fierce

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Contributions from all sources are welcome, from short articles to information on upcoming events that may be of interest to MSA members.

For ease of handling, the best way to submit material is via email to either Terry Clinton or Caitlin Rowley. Telephone enquiries may be made to Terry Clinton or Adrian Renzo.

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advocate of new music—his particular love was Stravinsky—and he established the contemporary music ensemble The Seymour Group in the early 1980s. He performed on a number of instruments including the Indian sitar. Indeed, he had a deep and abiding interest in Indian music which was connected to a broader enquiry into modality. Like Indra, the original world-creator of Indian mythology, he spent his life forging a net of connections between people and music, and at every intersection was a jewel. His last public lecture ‘Only Connect’ (to be published shortly in the journal *Musicology Australia*, the journal of the Australian Musicological Society, of which he was formerly the editor) emphasised not only the connections between different types of music, but the way that music connects people, and this is perhaps the key to understanding his contribution. It was his deep and abiding interest not just in music, but in musical lives and the aspirations of his students and colleagues that made him such a great teacher and mentor.

It was he who in the 1950s started Mervyn McLean, the world authority on Maori music, on his chosen path, and first cultivated Trevor Jones (later Professor of Music at Monash University) in his pioneering work on Aboriginal music. Many others acknowledge deep intellectual and musical debts, including Richard Charteris, now the leading authority on the music of the Gabriellis, and Winsome Evans, whose Renaissance Players makes such a distinctive contribution to the musical life of Sydney. Alan John, the composer of *The Eighth Wonder* (currently being performed at the Sydney Opera House) told me recently that he senses a mysterious connection between his opera and his experience as a student of ‘Prof’ in lectures, sitting shoeless on a desk playing the sitar and demonstrating the overtone series and its relationship to modality.

A colleague writing about him twenty years ago summed up Peter Platt thus: ‘His personality is one of great youthfulness of spirit, energetic initiative, down to earth humanity, exceptional sense of humour and unostentatious wisdom’. These words were as true at the end of his life as they were when they were written. He is survived by his wife Jean, his children Maggie, Martin and Kate and numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

RECOLLECTIONS OF TIME WELL SPENT

Anton D Luiten

Stretching in area to a total of more than 350 acres, I was first struck by the enormity of the main campus at the University of Texas at Austin and not long after began to truly understand that old Texan adage that life in the Lone Star state is, if not better, at least bigger. Some of the country’s finest concert halls and theatres are to be found there while the Department of Musicology headed by the eminent Professor Elliott Antokoletz ranks as one of the most prestigious in the land. Shortly after my arrival, I was to learn that of the fifty-three postgraduate musicology students, approximately half were investigating Bartók-related topics. For a scholar investigating the life and work of the great Hungarian master, I had found paradise.

My responsibility was simple and straightforward—meet with the world’s greatest exponent of analytical Bartók research on a weekly basis. I must admit that I was initially daunted when presented with the task of explaining my topic to a man who is purported to have a photographic memory and acquainted with the 1300 publications that relate to all aspects of the great 20th century composer. Once formalities were dispensed with and after having received positive feedback on the angles that I plan to take and the issues that I intend to address, we promptly got down to business. Historical, musicological and analytical texts were temporarily swept aside for out came the scores as we began to ponder over what

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NEWCASTLE STUDY WEEKEND AND AGM

Newcastle University's Faculty and Conservatorium of Music will host the MSA Study Weekend and AGM 2000 on November 11 and 12 at its campus in central Newcastle.

Titled 'Only Connect' and dedicated to the memory of Emeritus Professor Peter Platt, the programme consists of chaired discussions on music research and the future of musicology teaching, with the society's AGM and a concert of vocal music scheduled for the Sunday.

Topics to be discussed will be:

Saturday: the role of musicology in the training of performers (chair, Rosalind Halton); ethnomusicology viewed from a similar perspective (chair, Allan Marett); the relationship of musicology and music criticism (chair, Peter McCallum); music technology and the music teacher/composer (chair, Nathan Scott, Claudio Pompili).

Sunday (following the AGM): music and text (chair, Michael Ewans).

Sunday afternoon will include a programme of choral music sung by the Hunter Singers (conductor Kim Sutherland, MCA student, and Adam Wills, Hons. student), and includes the premiere of *Glasshouses*, a new work by Stephen Leek.

Rosalind Halton, who is co-convenor of the event with Michael Ewans, said it was hoped 'to have a lively turn-out with plenty of student contribution to these topics, in which we'll try to deal with issues of "applied" musicology, and the various roles it serves beyond the world of pure research.'

'Technology and research is a subject in which it would be good to get a discussion going on new ways to present research findings, and new destinations—such as what people think of an e-journal in musicology.'

The registration fee for the study weekend is \$27.50 for ordinary MSA members or \$12 for students and the unwaged. The Faculty and Conservatorium of Music is located in Auckland St Cooks Hill, close to Newcastle's civic centre. Contact Rosalind Halton on 02 4921 8950 for more information.

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makes the music so unique. Once the focus had shifted from the personal to the specific my apprehensions dissipated and I never looked back.

Professor Antokoletz was always accommodating in his supervision for he never totally rejected any thought that I related to him. Each time he would deepen my understanding by throwing back a more perplexing question to the one I had posed or directing me to a source that I had left untouched. 'It is not enough,' he would say, 'for the musicologist to just possess a great mind, one also needs to be blessed with musicality'.

My time in the Deep South was doubly blessed for the institution was also the setting for the Béla Bartók International Congress and I had the privilege of meeting numerous scholars of both international rank and newly graduated. Performances of Bartók works abounded, highlighted with a staged version in Hungarian of *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*, a rare opportunity that will be savoured for years to come.

These academic experiences have confirmed for me the notion that scholarly research ought not to be treated merely as a personal pursuit. There is a community that one should seek to benefit and once information is passed on the process begins anew again. If my contribution, however minimal, assists the endeavours of others, I have succeeded in the responsibilities that I have set myself.