

Articulation

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CONSERVATORIUM RE-DEVELOPMENT

Adrian Renzo

Renovations at the historic Greenway site of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music are nearing completion. The site will incorporate new facilities such as a music technology space and approximately 70 practice rooms, as well as housing the library and all activities currently located on Pitt Street.

The acoustic architects working on the performance spaces are Kirkegaard and Associates (who are currently also remodelling the Festival Hall of London). They have taken extensive measures to ensure optimum noise levels and acoustic response in the new performance spaces. Assistant Principal Peter McCallum reports that the entire new part of the building has been placed on rubber pads, and the performances halls have been set on an additional set of metal springs. The Verbrugghen Hall has had a second concrete roof installed, and the original stain glass windows have been restored with double glazing. A significant hurdle for the developers was the discovery of historical artifacts during the excavation process. Several of these (for example, a convict road, drains, and an old well) have been incorporated into the design of the new building. The project has had its share of controversy, but as McCallum points out, the site 'has been a Conservatorium for more of its history (1917–present) than it has been a stables (1825–1900) [and] we feel that music is strongly part of its heritage.' He also observes that 'many significant events in Sydney's musical life (such as the first concert of Musica Viva, which took place in 1948 in a blackout with lighting from car headlights) took place there. What has been built here is the most major investment in the Conservatorium since its inception and I am sure it will provide a major resource for Sydney and NSW. I am also confident that when people see the care that has been taken in restoring the Greenway building to its original shape and format (the 1960s additions at the side and back have been removed), it will be seen as a significant heritage restoration.' The new facilities will open on 1 July 2001.

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REVIEW: *MEMOIRS MOSTLY MUSICAL* BY CEDRIC ASHTON

Anne Power

Ashton, Cedric. *Memoirs Mostly Musical*. Sydney: Cedric Ashton, 2000. ISBN 0 646 40488 1. 277 pp, pb.

Cedric Ashton (1911–) is a cellist, teacher and conductor of a variety of Sydney performing ensembles. His performing experience encompassed the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Sydney String Quartet (of which he was a founding member in 1931) and, during the second World War, the band of the R. A. N. Ashton's teaching years were spent as musical director of The King's School Parramatta (1952-67) and thereafter contributing to a variety of school instrumental teaching programmes and Music Clubs, disseminating the insights of a productive performing life. His conducting experience led him to co-found the Rockdale Opera Company and to foster and develop a thriving local orchestral scene with such ensembles as the Sutherland Shire Symphony Orchestra.

The memoirs are divided into chapters which focus on such milestones as Ashton's musical education at the Conservatorium, the Sydney String Quartet, Navy years, Sydney Symphony Orchestra conductors, the Rockdale Opera, the King's School years and Music Clubs. The writing is anecdotal but with great detail, which establishes each of the working periods of the author's life. Ashton writes with respect of composer Alfred Hill, Senior Lecturer in Harmony and Counterpoint and conductor of the Advanced Orchestra at the Conservatorium in those years of study in the late 1920s. The centrality of the ABC to a national musical life is also highlighted. The Sydney String Quartet broadcast and toured the eastern states for the ABC. In 1936, General Manager of the ABC Charles Moses wrote to the Quartet suggesting a series of chamber music recitals with Artur Schnabel during his Australian tour. The experience is etched in detail on Ashton's memory. He recalls musical suggestions that Schnabel made to members of the quartet and his process in phrasing the piano part.

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This issue was prepared by David Cashman, Terry Clinton, Adrian Renzo and Caitlin Rowley. Design and layout are by Caitlin Rowley.

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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Upon the declaration of war, Cedric Ashton enlisted in the navy in 1939. Like other professional musicians whom he encountered, he was encouraged to join the band where he would be under direct orders from the Gunnery Officer and man the Transmitting Station when at sea. He saw active service, fighting in the Coral Sea Battle on *HMAS Australia*. When the *HMAS Canberra* was sunk in that battle, Ashton was one of the personnel drafted to England to become the initial crew of *HMAS Shropshire*. Thereafter he was part of an operation to isolate Japanese-occupied villages along the northern coastline of Papua. In the closing months of the war, the band was less occupied in the Transmitting Station and was rehearsing more frequently for on-board social functions and wardroom play-

ing. In the tradition of his grandfather Julian, Ashton would sketch life at sea. Many of these sketches were featured in Sydney newspapers.

Ashton's memories of conductors during his years with the Sydney Symphony are vivid. He describes Klemperer's concerts as receiving standing ovations and the conductor himself as having a wonderful rapport with the orchestra. Economical in movement, he was capable of acknowledging his own rare mistakes and specific in his directions to achieve the effects he desired. Ashton writes of Hamilton Harty as 'the most lovable, inspiring and poetic' of all the conductors with whom he worked. His recall of the imagery with which the orchestra were inspired to new heights in the Brahms First Symphony is detailed; and he follows this with Harty's comment in a press interview: 'In the Brahms we made wonderful music.'

Ashton recalls the amazing theft of orchestral parts which made for an hour's delay to the first concert to be conducted by Barbirolli. The rescue of the concert was effected by a deft break-and-enter into the Conservatorium, with Ashton climbing over the iron railing fence of the tradesman's entrance and Eugene Goossens unlocking the library to find replacement scores! The period of Eugene Goossens as permanent conductor saw an enlarging of the numbers of personnel and some replacing of principal positions. Ashton remembers the rehearsals for the first Australian performances of *Rite of Spring* as relentless and exhausting. He describes Goossens as a generous promoter of young aspiring composers. Malcolm Williamson and John Antill are two of the 'young' of that time who benefitted from his support. Ashton reminds us that it was Goossens who recommended that the SSO commence recording first performances of Australian compositions.

For many professional singers, Rockdale Opera was a stepping stone to working with companies such as Opera Australia. Geoffrey Chard, Robert Gard, Rosalind Keene and Deborah Riedel are a representative sample of such singers. Having co-founded the Rockdale Opera, Ashton conducted there for more than 30 years, giving at least one opera per year and orchestral concerts.

With the appointment of Ashton to The King's School, there was a conscious attempt to broaden the image of the school from being a sporting and football school. Ashton's program of instrumental tuition, term concerts, Gilbert and Sullivan operas and a carol service was devised to meet the Headmaster's brief of providing opportunities for musical instruction for as many boys as possible. Among the students at King's during Ashton's time was composer John Terry, whose emerging talent Ashton fostered.

The Music Clubs in the Sydney suburbs have served to assist young promising performers; and Ashton has been musical director of several of them, engaging the young artists. Ashton has also been patron and life member of the Amateur Chamber Music Society, tutoring at its summer camp. His musical life has been rich and enriching. His memoirs are a testament to that and to the times in which he has worked professionally.

FEMALE CANONS: THE NATIONAL FESTIVAL OF WOMEN'S MUSIC

Gabriel Griffiths

The Canberra School of Music has been busy over the past months preparing for the upcoming National Festival of Women's Music. Described as 'a cornucopia of music, art, film, dance and fine food', the festival promises a broad approach whatever your preferred musical instrument, style or interest might be. It will be held from late August to early September this year, and has primarily come about from the efforts of Artistic Director Carolyn Kidd, one of Australia's most innovative classical guitarists. The festival will take advantage of the cultural institutions Canberra has to offer, including the National Gallery, Screensound and the National Library of Australia, and festival patron is Senator Natasha Stott-Despoja.

A 'Composing Women' festival has been held sporadically over the last decade, in 1991 (Adelaide), '94 (Melbourne) and '97 (Sydney, organised by Bernadette Balkus and Sally Macarthur), and each of them have included a musicology conference as a part of the activities. The National Festival has continued this, with the 2001 festival kicking off with a one-day conference on Thursday 30 August. Titled 'Loose Canons', the keynote speaker will be Professor Marcia Citron, author of the ground-breaking book *Gender and the Musical Canon*. The conference will also conduct two forums in the days following. On Friday 31 August there will be a musicology panel discussion on 'Multiple Canons for a Postmodern World?', followed by a pre-concert talk from American scholar Dr. Shirley Bean on the music of Austrian composer Marianne Martines. Then on Saturday 1 September there will be a composer's forum on the subject 'Old or New Directions in the New Millennium?' The topics for the conference and forums promises some provocative discussion.

Conference director Dr Ruth Lee Martin has extended an invitation for papers on any issues to do with women and music to be presented at the conference. The final date for abstract submission is 8 June, and can be forwarded to Dr Martin at:

PO Box 804

National Institute of the Arts
Australian National University
Canberra ACT 0200

or email: Ruth.Martin@anu.edu.au

For full details on all the activities to be held at the National Festival of Women's Music, check out their website at: <http://www.womens-music.org>, or contact the festival office on Ph./Fax: 02 6125 9777 or email: nfwm@anu.edu.au. And keep your diaries clear for late August in Canberra, for what should be a unique and memorable event.

MODERNISING MEDIEVAL RESEARCH

THE VISIT OF PROFESSOR RUTH STEINER

Gabriel Griffiths

In late March, Sydney University and the Conservatorium were visited by one of today's foremost scholars in the arena of medieval musicology. The arrival of Ruth Steiner, Professor Emeritus at the Catholic University of America, was eagerly awaited by the chant scholars among us and proved an enlivening experience for her audiences, regardless of their area of interest. For amidst her apologies for her American accent (!), the most immediately noticeable thing about Professor Steiner was her boundless enthusiasm—an infectious joy at the wonder of scholarly discovery and the seemingly endless possibilities she sees in the nuances of a medieval source. All great things for a young musicologist to witness!

The main focus of her Conservatorium seminar was the promotion and demonstration of the online database *CANTUS* (<http://publish.uwo.ca/~cantus>). The development of this amazing index of medieval sources has been a passion of Prof. Steiner's over the last two decades, and she continues to promote it today as a relatively unknown but important tool for medieval research. In essence, *CANTUS* is a database which details a large number of different chant sources for the liturgical Office, and enables the user to search these sources using the text incipit of the chant. A search can find different examples of the same chant text, detail the sources where it can be found, and list the variety of a chant's use by mode, liturgical role, genre (e.g. psalm, antiphon, etc.) and function of the Office. As Prof. Steiner demonstrated, such a task was incredibly time consuming for research in the past—the mind boggles now at the manual cutting and pasting of tiny strips of paper from a photocopied chant index! By 1998 *CANTUS* was comprised of almost 195 000 records from some 40 sources, and it has continued to grow. Prof. Steiner encouraged a full viewing of the website and its capabilities, and noted the broadening relevance of such a database to the work of all medieval research, musical or other, and beyond. She also noted that, in her experience, age was no barrier to the wonders of technology!

Discussing more recent research, Prof. Steiner presented a lecture at the University on different chant settings of the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Collating different manuscript sources from the 10–14th century which use this parable (searching with *CANTUS*, of course!) she discussed the musical variations and the textual implications of the different readings. The 101 examples yielded some 14 musical variants, which only detailed source study could possibly ascertain. Of particular interest to her work is the role of this parable in the Lenten Office as a psalm substitute, and also how the text variation ('oportet te' as opposed to 'oportebat') affects the reading and role of the chant in this Office. Presenting to an audience of mostly non-musical scholars, she remained as accessible and enthusiastic as she had been for her undergraduate audience. And as she had done continuously throughout both her presentations, Prof. Steiner paid tribute to the work of her graduate students who assisted her in her research. It was a pleasure to see such detailed work in positive action, and to have medieval musicology 'illuminated' to an extent that everyone should want to see.

Professor Ruth Steiner has been recently honoured by a festschrift: *The Divine Office in the Latin Middle Ages: Methodology and Source Studies, Regional Developments, Hagiography*. Edited by Margot E. Fassler and Rebecca A. Baltzer. Published by Oxford University Press, 2000. Early readings indicate that it will be an important text for research in this field.

