

HSC - MUSIC EXTENSION

MUSICOLOGY ELECTIVE.

*B*lack Notes on White Pages:

*The influence of Aboriginal Culture on the works of contemporary
Australian Composers.*



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INTRODUCTION

Australian composition since the 1930s has been marked by a noticeable departure from Western tonal traditions and an exploration of diverse cultural influences. As Australia became more independent from Britain, a growing feeling of nationalism developed and it was a natural progression for Australian composers, artists and writers to look towards Aboriginal and other cultures for inspiration.

Following World War II, several Australian composers attempted to imitate or recreate Aboriginal melodies, rhythms and tone colours as well as portray the landscape and sounds of the Australian bush. Works such as *Corroboree (1946 – 1950)* by John Antill, *Haunted Hills (1950)* and *The Young Kabbarli (1965)* by Margaret Sutherland, and *Kadjani and Julunggal (1957)* by James Penberthy are all examples of this movement. Not all of these attempts were musically successful and often they were characterised by token emulations of Aboriginal melodies or inclusions of Aboriginal performing media.

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Recent Australian composers have made more successful attempts at merging Western and Aboriginal music as well as portraying the Australian landscape. Aboriginal culture has served as inspiration for contemporary Australian composers in a variety of ways. One profound influence has been Aboriginal history, in particular, accounts of the impacts of early European colonisation on the Aboriginal population of the time. Ross Edwards writes of his recent work, *White Ghost Dancing*:

200

There are recorded instances of Aboriginal people mistaking early Europeans in Australia for the ghosts of their ancestors, since ghosts were believed to be white – and as I composed, the concept of a white ghost came to symbolise non-indigenous Australia's innate Aboriginality – its capacity to transform and heal itself through spiritual connectedness with the earth.¹

Aboriginal mythology has also served as inspiration for several compositional works such as *Songs for Imberombera* by Michael Atherton, whereby the legend of the arrival of the Aboriginal Earth Mother, Imberombera, is incorporated into the lyrics of the first two songs in the series of four.

¹ Edwards, R. 1999, *Address to the Conference on Belonging*[Online] Available: <http://members.ozemail.com.au/~mhindson/ross/resources/BelongingConference.html> [2002, July 20]

The climate of reconciliation in Australian politics has had a further philosophical influence on the musical thinking of Australian composers. The references to Aboriginal culture in contemporary composition are often intended gestures of reconciliation:

I believe that Australia has a great deal to learn from the profound wisdom of the Aboriginal people it has dispossessed, and that the time has come to seek reconciliation for the misunderstanding and consequent mistreatment they have suffered as a result of European colonisation...²

The origins of my interest in Australian Aboriginal music stem from a social awareness that Australian Aborigines had little to say in controlling their destinies (too many decisions made by whites), and that black culture and attitudes had not impinged greatly on white thinking even after two hundred years...³

Another manifestation of the influence of Aboriginal culture on Australian composers involves the celebration of the Australian landscape. Colin Bright recognises the impact of the Australian landscape on his music, and the way in which Aboriginal culture has served as his modus operandi for its exploration:

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In the same way that Classical music reflected aspects of the elegant or refined culture of the courts of Europe, could not the flatness of the didgeridoo [sic], the nasal vocal styles, the repetitive phrases and the 'perceived' stasis of Australian Aboriginal music similarly reflect aspects of culture and landscape in Australia? Whether such a subliminal relationship exists or whether it is merely a coincidence, it was enough to inspire a personal enquiry and, for me, a point of departure for musical exploration.⁴

This essay will examine the different ways in which Aboriginal culture has influenced contemporary Australian composition. I have chosen to discuss a number of works by six Australian composers that are representative of these influences: *Red Earth* by Colin Bright; *Port Essington* and *Kakadu* by Peter Sculthorpe; *In Memoriam*, by Matthew Hindson; *White Ghost Dancing* and *Dawn Mantras* by Ross Edwards; *Songs for Imberombera* by Michael Atherton; and *Reclaiming the Spirit* by Sarah Hopkins.

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² Ross Edwards from original program note to *White Ghost Dancing*. These words were omitted from the printed program note, per Ross Edwards, email 5 September 2002

³ Bright, C. 1989, 'An Australian Sound' *Sounds Australian*, Spring 1989, pp 14-16.

⁴ Bright, C. [Date Unknown] *Red Earth*, [Online] Available: <http://people.smartchat.net.au/~colbright/redearth.html> [2002, February 24]

BODY

SPECIFIC CHANTS

The influence of Aboriginal culture on the music of Australian composers is most clearly seen in the direct appropriation of Aboriginal chants into contemporary composition. Peter Sculthorpe's incorporation of the Djilile theme (derived from an Arnhem-land chant) into a variety of compositions, including *Port Essington*, *Djilile* and *Kakadu* exemplifies this usage. Sculthorpe first used the Djilile chant in his 1980 composition, *Port Essington*.

CD Excerpt 1

Con ferocità (♩. c. 112)

The image shows a musical score for three violin parts (Violins I, Violin II, and Violin III). The tempo is marked 'Con ferocità' with a metronome marking of quarter note = c. 112. The music is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The Violins I part starts with a forte dynamic (f) and features a complex, syncopated rhythmic pattern with many beamed eighth and sixteenth notes. The Violin II and Violin III parts follow a similar but slightly different rhythmic pattern, creating a layered, drone-like effect. The overall texture is dense and rhythmic, reflecting the 'random rhythmical nature' mentioned in the text.

The Djilile chant, above, is characterised by predominantly stepwise movement and replicated drone-like tones, however there is less reliance on the interval of a semitone than is featured in other Aboriginal melodies. The Djilile theme is continually stated throughout the section, thereby exemplifying the cyclical quality of Aboriginal mantra. Furthermore, the use of a mixed metre, as well as syncopation is faithful to the random rhythmical nature of the original chant.

500

In the mid 1980s, Sculthorpe used the Djilile chant in several different arrangements for piano, cello, and piano and percussion ensemble bearing the 'Djilile' title.⁵

⁵ It is important to note the significance of the dates of these works. They were written against a heated political climate in which awareness of Aboriginal issues was mounting. In 1979 the Aboriginal Treaty Committee was formed and the National Aboriginal conference called for a treaty between the Commonwealth and Aboriginal people. In the early 1980s, the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP) was established, recognising the rights and needs of indigenous populations. The following year, five Aboriginal people were invited to attend a United Nations conference at Geneva.

Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, 1996, *TIMELINE (OF LITTLE – and not so little-KNOWN FACTS)*, [Online] Available:

<http://www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/displ.pl/au/special/rsjproject/car/Timeline.html> [2002, September 3]

In 1988, Sculthorpe again utilised the chant in the orchestral composition *Kakadu*:

CD Excerpt 2

The image shows a musical score for 'Serenio (J.=c.48)' by Sculthorpe. It consists of five staves of Violin I (Vin. I). The music is written in a complex, irregular rhythm. The first staff has a tempo marking of 'ppp' and an accent. The second staff has a 'ppp' dynamic. The third staff has a 'div.' (divisi) marking. The fourth and fifth staves have 'unis.' (unison) and 'div.' markings, along with 'mp' dynamics and doublet markings (2). The score is highly rhythmic and fragmented, with many rests and frequent metrical changes.

Note that although the chant is presented at the same pitch (albeit an octave lower, thereby creating a more authentic sound), Sculthorpe has further manipulated the rhythmic randomness of the chant by fragmenting it with rests as well as increasing the frequency of metrical changes.

600

CHARACTERISTICS OF ABORIGINAL CHANT

Although Sculthorpe has incorporated specific Aboriginal chants into his music, other Australian composers have been inspired in a more holistic way and have manipulated the general elements of Aboriginal chant into their own compositions. The use of melodic lines which feature major and minor second intervals, descending contours, narrow pitch ranges and stagnant and cyclic melodies creates a patent connection between contemporary Australian composition and Aboriginal chant.

700

In *White Ghost Dancing*, Ross Edward's uses the historical significance of the Dies Irae plainchant to symbolise the extermination of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people by White Europeans in the 19th century.⁶ The plainchant is not used in its original form,

⁶ The Dies Irae plainchant is one of the five sequences still surviving in the Roman liturgy, being sung in the Requiem Mass. Consequently, throughout the ages, this plainsong has perpetuated connotations appropriate to the themes of death and damnation. It has thus been incorporated into works based around these themes. Examples include: Berlioz' *Symphonie Fantastique* (5th Movement - 'Dream of a Witches Sabbath'), Liszt's *Totentanz*, and Saint-Saens' *Danse Macabre*.

but is transformed using characteristics of Aboriginal chant. Below is a transcription of the original *Dies Irae*, followed by an excerpt from *White Ghost Dancing* which uses this plainchant:

Di - es i - rae, di - es il - la. Sol - vet saec - lum
in fa - vil - la, Tes - te Da - vid cum si - bil - la.

CD Excerpt 3

fragments of the *Dies Irae* plainchant

VI
VII
Vle
Vlc
Db

VI
VII
Vle
Vlc
Db

VI
VII
Vle
Vlc
Db

In the above example Edwards has selected a descending fragment of the chant reminiscent of the Aboriginal 'tumbling strain' and has repeated it throughout the section. Note the narrow pitch range and the predominance of the major and minor 2nd interval movement.

800

In *Red Earth*, although we see a departure from the symbolic use of existing ecclesiastical music, Colin Bright makes abundant use of characteristics of Aboriginal chant in order to add a reconciliatory subtext to his work. Although he does not use specific imitations of Aboriginal melodies, a marked likeness to Aboriginal circular song lines is established.

CD Excerpt 4

Attack with vigour -

♩ = c. 144

The image shows a handwritten musical score for three instruments: piano (pno.), celesta (cl.), and flute (fl.). The score is written on three systems of staves. The piano part is on the top staff, the celesta on the middle, and the flute on the bottom. The tempo is marked as '♩ = c. 144'. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'mf' and 'ped.'. The piano part features a complex, rhythmic pattern with many beamed notes. The celesta and flute parts have a more melodic and harmonic structure, with the flute part showing some grace notes and slurs.

In the above example, the repetition of the static pitch range imparts a cyclical effect on the music, similar to that which fundamentally characterises Aboriginal chant. Furthermore, the reliance on the interval of a minor second (E to F) is reflective not only of the intervallic structure of Aboriginal chant but also of Didgeridu music⁷.

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⁷ Didgeridu music, much like Aboriginal chant comprises a heavy reliance on the interval of a minor second. In the case of the didgeridu, fluctuations between semitones are caused by tightening and loosening the embouchure and increasing and decreasing the speed of air with which the didgeridu is played. The effect is much like a *molto vibrato*, wherein the pitch is often altered by close to a semitone.

DIDGERIDU SOUNDS

A further element of Aboriginal music that pervades Australian composition is the use of the Didgeridu. Whilst some composers (like Ross Edwards in *Dawn Mantras*) utilise the Didgeridu itself in their performing media, others choose to incorporate less explicit references by imitating its tone colour. The inclusion of the Didgeridu in either capacity is an unambiguous endeavour to unite Aboriginal and Australian cultures through their music:

Because I can play the didgeridu, and have learned songs and dances from Aboriginal friends and teachers, I have developed a sensitivity to their cultures... It's not simply appropriation of others' materials. Rather it's about connecting.⁸

Apart from the sound of the instrument itself, using didgeridu does two other things. Societally [sic], it states to a white audience that this is an important instrument which should be taken seriously. The implication being that the culture should be too. Musically, it in itself creates a stasis, or if you like a stasis of this place.⁹

In *Reclaiming The Spirit*, Sarah Hopkins presents the extended technique of 'Didgeridu bowing', an original device which Hopkins first developed in her earlier work, *Past Life Melodies* (1991). This technique involves applying additional pressure to the bow arm in order to create a raw, percussive tone colour, similar to that of the Didgeridu. In the excerpt below, this technique appears in the 'cello part':

1000

CD Excerpt 5

▽ CELLO CUES SLIGHT TEMPO INCREASE TO $\text{♩} = 76$ - in preparation for $\text{♩} = 84$ [B]

(slow didgeridu bowing)
 arch - not aggressive - 3 -
 ff

⁸ Atherton, M. email, 6 March 2002

⁹ Bright, C. 1989, 'An Australian Sound' *Sounds Australian*, Spring 1989, p 14

The similarity between the tone colours produced by ‘Didgeridu bowing’, and traditional Didgeridu playing is reinforced through the repetition of the rhythmic motif presented in the ‘cello in the first bar of the extract, which resembles the repetitious pulsation of Didgeridu music. Furthermore, the use of a drone in the Violin and Viola part resembles the drones that characterise traditional Aboriginal music.

1100

In *In Memoriam*, Matthew Hindson employs a similar bowing technique to that of Hopkins’ as well as sounds reminiscent of Didgeridu choirs, thus providing a further example of the insertion of Aboriginal timbres into Australian ensembles. Instead of utilising an actual Didgeridu, Hindson uses amplified ‘cello with a ‘*bowed distortion effect*’¹⁰ in order to emulate the sound produced by Hopkins’ ‘Didgeridu bowing’:

CD Excerpt 6

Furthermore, through the use of other compositional devices such as accents, syncopation, and specific performance techniques, Hindson attempts to replicate Didgeridu tone colours.

1200

CD Excerpt 7

In this example, the expressive markings of *sul ponticello*¹¹, and *sul tasto*¹² vary the ‘cello tone colour so as to render its timbre reminiscent of that of the Didgeridu and

¹⁰ Hindson, M. 2000 *In Memoriam*, Australian Music Centre, New South Wales, p.19

¹¹ Translation: playing on the bridge. Indicates to string players that they are to play close to the bridge, producing a thin and nasal sound.

¹² Translation: playing on the fingerboard. Indicates to string players that they are to bow near or over the fingerboard producing a dull tone colour.

the dynamic contrast between *sforzando* and *piano*, occurring across a constantly increasing tempo, resembles its distinctive pulsation. In the excerpt below, further techniques have been used for creating the analogous effect:

CD Excerpt 8

The image shows a musical score for an orchestra. The top staff is labeled 'Solo' and contains a single line of music with a box containing the text '(= ring mod. and/or pitch shifting)' and 'make up part.' Below this, the string section is divided into 'Tutti' and '4 Solo ARCO dipridu-like'. The 'Tutti' section includes Violin I, Violin II, and Viola. The '4 Solo ARCO' section includes Violoncello and Double Bass. The score includes various performance instructions such as 'slow sustained gliss...', 'over all four strings...', 'slow, independent downwards glises', 'sempre dim.', 'etc.', and 'pppp'. The page number '-17-' is visible at the bottom.

In this example, dissonance and syncopation mimic the sound quality and rhythmic essence of the Didgeridu, and the repeated *piano-crescendo* figure represents Didgeridu articulations.

Michael Atherton takes a different approach to generating Didgeridu sounds in *Songs for Imberombera*. Atherton makes use of mnemonics for Didgeridu sounds in the lyrics accompanying several of the songs in order to incorporate this Aboriginal tone colour into his piece. In the forward to the score, Atherton attributes this influence to Aboriginal mythology, specifically to the Dreamtime legend of the arrival of the Earth Mother, Imberombera, a symbol of fertility and creation:

1300

Among the Gagadju people of Arnhem Land, her name was Imberombera and she came across the sea arriving on the coast of Arnhem Land with her womb full of children. According to legend, she travelled far and wide, forming hills, creeks, plants and animals and leaving behind many of her spirit children with a different language in each group.¹³

¹³ Burnum, B. 1988, *Aboriginal Australia*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, p. 16

The excerpt below provides an example of the effect of interlocking the *Gu-goo-bakin*, *dzidza* and *di-te-re-mo* lyric structures that provides likeness to certain Aboriginal (Didgeridu) articulations:

CD Excerpt 9

The musical score consists of two systems of staves. The first system is numbered 1-4 and the second system is numbered 5-8. The top staff (S) is the vocal line with lyrics: "Gu goo ba gooba kin, Gu gooba kin, goo ba Gu goo ba kinba ga Gu goo ba gooba kin,". The second staff (S) contains percussive syllables: "dzidza dzidza dzidza dza dzidza dza dzidza dzidza dzidza dzidza". The third staff (A) contains the syllables "di te,". The bottom three staves (1, 2, 3) represent instrumental parts, likely representing the Didgeridu, with rhythmic patterns. The score includes a tempo marking of 120 and a measure number of 21.

Here, the rhythmic and melodic interplay between the lyrical *Gu, goo,* and *mo* syllables and the more percussive syllables such as *dzidza, di* and *te* resembles the contrasting intonations inherent in Didgeridu articulations.

1400

In a further endeavour to integrate Aboriginal tone colours into Australian composition, Colin Bright's *Red Earth* represents the Didgeridu through strategic imitation of harmonic devices derived from Aboriginal music:

CD Excerpt 10

The image shows a musical score for CD Excerpt 10. It consists of six staves: fl (flute), b.c. (bassoon), vln. (violin), vc. (viola), pno. (piano), and pc. (percussion). The score is in 6/8 time and features a rhythmic interplay between high and low notes. The vc. and pno. staves have yellow highlights under the notes, indicating the interplay. The pno. staff also has 'sust.' markings and an '8ba' marking. The pc. staff has 'x' marks indicating rhythmic patterns.

interplay between high and low notes

The example above reflects Didgeridu tone colours through the rhythmic interplay between high and low notes. This refers to a technique of didgeridu playing where the primary harmonic is juxtaposed against the normal (and generally lower) playing note¹⁴. The decisive interaction between high and low registers in the 'cello and Piano lines provide this contrast, thereby mimicking Aboriginal instrumental techniques.

1500

CHARACTERISTICS OF ABORIGINAL RHYTHMS

A fundamental influence of Aboriginal culture on the music of Australian composers is seen in the prominence of characteristic Aboriginal rhythms in Australian composition. Non-symmetrical and non-metrical rhythms, syncopation, persistent and driving pulses, polyrhythm and rhythmic repetition are central characteristics of Aboriginal music that permeate Australian works.

¹⁴ Bright, C. [Date Unknown] *Red Earth*, [Online] Available: <http://people.smartchat.net.au/~colbright/redearth.html> [2002, February 24]

The excerpt from Sculthorpe's *Kakadu*, below, exemplifies this influence:

CD Excerpt 11

The musical score is arranged in systems. The first system includes:

- Timpani**: A single staff with a melodic line.
- Percussion 1**: Labeled "Bongo", featuring a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.
- Percussion 2**: Labeled "Tom toms", featuring a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.
- Percussion 3**: A single staff with rests.
- Violins I**: Labeled "Ardente (♩=c.104)", starting with a *f marcato* dynamic and ending with a *rim.* (ritardando) marking.

The second system includes:

- Percussion 1**: Labeled "Bongo", continuing the rhythmic pattern.
- Percussion 2**: Labeled "Tom toms", continuing the rhythmic pattern.
- Percussion 3**: A single staff with rests.
- Vin. I**: Violin I part, continuing the melodic line.
- Perc. 2**: Labeled "Bongo" and "Tom toms", continuing the rhythmic patterns.

The third system includes:

- Vin. I**: Violin I part, continuing the melodic line.
- Perc. 2**: Labeled "Bongo" and "Tom toms", continuing the rhythmic patterns.
- Perc. 3**: A single staff with rests.

The fourth system includes:

- Vin. I**: Violin I part, starting with a circled "1" above the staff.
- Perc. 2**: Labeled "Bongo" and "Tom toms", continuing the rhythmic patterns.
- Perc. 3**: A single staff with rests.

The fifth system includes:

- Vin. I**: Violin I part, continuing the melodic line with a *cresc.* marking.
- Perc. 2**: Labeled "Bongo" and "Tom toms", continuing the rhythmic patterns.
- Perc. 3**: A single staff with rests.

The sixth system includes:

- Vin. I**: Violin I part, continuing the melodic line with a *cresc.* marking.
- Perc. 2**: Labeled "Bongo" and "Tom toms", continuing the rhythmic patterns.
- Perc. 3**: Labeled "Conga (high)", featuring a rhythmic pattern.

The seventh system includes:

- Vin. I**: Violin I part, continuing the melodic line with a *ff* dynamic.

In the example above, the juxtaposition of syncopated rhythms in the violin part against the straight and driving pulse provided by the Bongo is reminiscent of the intricate polyrhythmic texture created by the independence between the song man and the Didgeridu player in Aboriginal music¹⁵. Note the repetition and lack of accents within the percussion part, which enhances the cyclic quality of the music, a further Aboriginal influence.

1600

Furthermore, Sculthorpe represents the rhythmic randomness of Aboriginal music in *Kakadu*. Whilst the original statement of the opening chant (above) is characterised by polyrhythm and driving pulses, the recapitulation differs, as seen in the Flute part below:

CD Excerpt 12

Largamente (J=c.72)

In the example above, the melodic material derived from the opening chant is restated but is treated with abbreviated rhythmic material. On this repetition, there is a marked absence of the triplet rhythms and the absence of the Bongo part eliminates the polyrhythmic texture of the opening statement. This contrast creates a sense of rhythmic randomness, similar to that which characterises Aboriginal chant.

1700

¹⁵ Aboriginal chant from northern and central Australia is generally performed by a didgeridu and male voice, sometimes joined by different percussive instruments, such as clap sticks etc. In Aboriginal chant, these performing media are often rhythmically independent of one another, resulting in polyrhythm, and sometimes even polymetre.

In *White Ghost Dancing*, Edwards also manipulates features of Aboriginal rhythms and incorporates them into his own composition. A clear example is seen in the rhythmic treatment of the Dies Irae plainchant:

CD Excerpt 13

The image shows a musical score for five instruments: Violin I (VI), Violin II (VII), Violin (Vlc), Violin (Vlc), and Double Bass (Db). The score is written in a key with one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The music features a driving, repetitive rhythm of quaver notes, with some semiquaver patterns. The notation includes various articulations such as accents and slurs, and dynamic markings like 'arco' for the double bass.

In this appropriation, the chant is not only presented with a descending contour but also with the driving and repetitious rhythm of Aboriginal song perpetuated by the reliance on quaver note lengths punctuated by the fourth bar, which comprises of more varied note lengths (acciaccaturas, quavers, semiquavers). Furthermore, the fluctuating metre creates rhythmic displacement appropriate to the inconsistent, extemporised rhythms of Aboriginal mantra.

1800

Matthew Hindson's *In Memoriam* uses syncopation and unrelenting rhythms in order to mimic the rhythmic characteristics of Aboriginal music.

CD Excerpt 14

The image shows a musical score for a single instrument, Violin (vc). The tempo is marked as $f = 146-160$. The music features a syncopated rhythm with a strong pulse, achieved through regular accents and the repetition of a quaver-semi quaver pattern. There are also dynamic markings like 'f' and 'p' throughout the piece.

In the example above, the syncopated rhythm bears close resemblance to Didgeridu rhythms achieved through the insistent pulse provided by regular accents and the repetition of the syncopated quaver-semi quaver pattern.

Similarly, Bright's *Red Earth* makes use of a persistent and driving pulse, and elements of polyrhythm creating a resemblance between Aboriginal and contemporary Australian music:

1900

CD Excerpt 15

The image shows a musical score for an excerpt from a CD. It consists of six staves: Flute (fl), Clarinet (b.c.), Violin (vln), Viola (vcl), Piano (pno), and Trombone (tb.). The score is written in a complex rhythmic style, featuring many sextuplets and triplets. Dynamic markings like *mf*, *sf*, and *f* are used throughout. The notation is dense, with many beamed notes and rests, creating a driving, polyrhythmic texture.

Here, the unrelenting pulse provided by the sextuplets in the Piano and the Vibraphone creates polyrhythm when pitted against the semiquavers in the string and wind parts. Note also the predominance of triplet rhythms in this excerpt. Bright comments that this use of triplet and sextuplet rhythms is a deliberate attempt to create a connection with Aboriginal mantra:

*The melody is rhythmicised by the inbuilt rhythm of words.*¹⁶

Indeed, the composer's use of triplets and sextuplets throughout the course of this work creates likeness to the insistent rhythms of Aboriginal lexis in song.

DRONES

The drone of the Didgeridu is a principal characteristic of Aboriginal music, which originated in northern and central parts of Australia. Therefore, the use of drones, (reminiscent of those in Didgeridu music) in contemporary compositions is evidence of a further cross-cultural influence on the music of Australian composers.

2000

¹⁶ Bright, C. 1989, 'An Australian Sound' *Sounds Australian*, Spring 1989, p 14

Matthew Hindson's *In Memoriam* explicitly uses Aboriginal drones, particularly alongside his Didgeridu imitations. This is a central feature to the establishment of an innate Aboriginal sound within the framework of the piece:

CD Excerpt 16

The musical score for CD Excerpt 16 is arranged in a multi-stem format. The instruments and parts shown are:

- Chamber Ensemble:** Flute 1 (Fl. 1), Flute 2 (Fl. 2), Oboe (Ob.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Clarinet in Bb (Cl. Bb), and Bassoon in C (Bsn. C).
- Woodwinds:** Saxophone 1 (Sax. 1), Saxophone 2 (Sax. 2), and Trombone (Tbn.).
- Percussion:** Percussion 1 (Perc. 1), Percussion 2 (Perc. 2), Percussion 3 (Perc. 3), Percussion 4 (Perc. 4), and Percussion 5 (Perc. 5).
- Other Instruments:** Timpani (Timp.), Snare Drum (Sn.), and Cymbal (Cym.).
- Vocalists:** Soprano (Sop.), Alto (Alto), Tenor (Ten.), and Bass (Bass).
- Strings:** Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), and Viola (Vla.).

Key annotations and markings in the score include:

- 164**: A measure number indicating the start of a section.
- perc. at J=72**: A tempo marking for the percussion parts.
- Woodblock**: A specific instrument used in the percussion parts.
- harmoni melle**: A marking for the strings, indicating a melodic or harmonic texture.
- slow gliss.**: A marking for the strings, indicating a slow glissando.
- one seed, of earth**: A vocal line annotation.
- cluster including quartertones**: A marking for the strings, indicating a specific cluster of notes.
- light slow gliss down over a minor third**: A marking for the strings, indicating a specific glissando technique.
- non troppo**: A tempo marking for the strings.

In this excerpt, Hindson's use of a drone is most clear. In this case, the drone comprises a Violin (I + II) and Viola cluster chord sustained beneath the Cor Anglais solo. The inherent dissonance of the cluster chord lends a further 'Aboriginality' to the drone, and the '*slow glissando over a minor third*¹⁷' at the termination of the drone is reminiscent of the 'tumbling strain' of Aboriginal music. This effect is enhanced by the extensive rhythmic variety of the Cor Anglais part which provides a sense of rhythmic randomness.

In Peter Sculthorpe's *Kakadu*, drones are a central contributing feature to the establishment of an Aboriginal sound. The Cor Anglais solo, below, is played against a perfect fifth in the Violins I and II. The use of this interval alludes to the traditional structure of the drone:

CD Excerpt 17

The musical score is for a CD excerpt titled "CD Excerpt 17". It features a Cor Anglais solo and a drone in Violins I and II. The tempo is marked "Lontano (♩=c.56)". The Cor Anglais part is marked "mp" and "p espressivo". The Violins I and II parts are marked "mp" and "p", with a "perfect 5th" interval indicated. The Viola part is marked "div. pizz." and "p". The Violoncello part is marked "div. arco" and "p". The Percussion part includes a Tam tam marked "p". The score is numbered 9 in a circle.

¹⁷ Hindson, M. 2000 *In Memoriam*, Australian Music Centre, New South Wales, p 19.

A further example of the use of Aboriginal drones in contemporary Australian composition is found in Ross Edwards' *Dawn Mantras*:

2200

CD Excerpt 18

The first system of the musical score includes staves for Shak. (Shakuhachi), Sax. (Saxophone), Didj. (Didgeridoo), Men's Choir, Perc. I (Percussion I), and Perc. II (Percussion II). The Shakuhachi and Saxophone parts feature melodic lines with some grace notes and slurs. The Didgeridoo part consists of a continuous, low-frequency drone. The Men's Choir, Percussion I, and Percussion II parts are currently silent in this system.

The second system of the musical score continues the notation for the same instruments. In this system, the Men's Choir and Percussion I parts begin to play, joining the Didgeridoo drone. The Shakuhachi and Saxophone parts continue with their melodic lines. The Percussion II part remains silent.

Above is an example of Edwards' use of drones, which provides a distinctive connection between this work and Aboriginal song. Furthermore, the Didgeridoo plays the drone throughout the course of the work (at times joined by other instruments as above, where the Didgeridoo is joined by the Men's Choir and Percussion). This enhances the Aboriginal quality of the piece through explicit reference to Aboriginal tone colours.

REPLICATING SOUNDS FROM THE NATURAL WORLD

The replication of sounds from the natural world is a central element of Aboriginal music, which has inspired contemporary Australian composers. The imitation of animal sounds is a pervading theme in traditional Didgeridu music:

2300

CD Excerpt 19 – Seagull

CD Excerpt 20 – Kangaroo

These excerpts are extracts from traditional Didgeridu pieces that emulate the sounds produced by Seagulls and Kangaroos in the wild. In the same way that Aboriginal music includes reference to Australia's natural landscape, contemporary Australian composers have been heavily influenced by the Australian outback, and the sounds produced by the flora and fauna that reside within:

I was entranced by the insect chorus because it seemed to be on the verge of conveying some profound message which was ultimately elusive. All the temporal relationships in my music – the relative lengths of phrases and sections – are influenced by these ancient voices, whose near symmetries and inconsistently varied repetitions often seem close to our inherited musical syntax.¹⁸

As a musician, it seemed to me that there were aspects of Aboriginal music that intrinsically reflected something of the larger environment, and, as a consequence, Australian Aboriginal music has come to have a profound impact on my musical thinking.¹⁹

In order to successfully emulate sounds from the natural world, contemporary Australian composers use extended instrumental techniques as well as imitative notation of animal calls, thus creating a clear connection between Australian and Aboriginal composition.

In *White Ghost Dancing*, Ross Edwards has imitated a wealth of sounds from the natural environment. In the evocative opening, this work consists of a series of

2400

¹⁸ Edwards, R. 1999, *Address to the Conference on Belonging*[Online] Available: <http://members.ozemail.com.au/~mhindson/ross/resources/BelongingConference.html> [2002, July 20]

¹⁹ Bright, C. [Date Unknown] *Red Earth*, [Online] Available: <http://people.smartchat.net.au/~colbright/redearth.html> [2002, February 24]

punctuating chords decorated by acciaccatura in the Flutes, Oboes and Clarinets designed to represent the joyous shriek of birds:

CD Excerpt 21

Musical score for CD Excerpt 21, featuring woodwinds and strings. The score is in 3/4 time and consists of nine staves. The woodwind parts are Flute I (Fl. I), Oboe (Ob.), and Clarinet in B-flat (Cl. Bb.). The string parts are Violin I (VI I), Violin II (VI II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vlc.), and Double Bass (Db.). The woodwinds play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with acciaccatura (short grace notes) that punctuate the chords. The strings play a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The score is divided into three measures, each with a different time signature: 5/8, 7/8, and 5/8.

Birdcalls are further represented by specific imitative fragments in the Oboe and Clarinet parts:

CD Excerpt 22

Musical score for CD Excerpt 22, focusing on the Oboe (Ob.) and Clarinet in B-flat (Cl. Bb.) parts. The score is in 3/4 time and consists of three staves. The Oboe and Clarinet parts play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with acciaccatura (short grace notes) that punctuate the chords. The Oboe part is marked with a '1' and the Clarinet part is marked with a 'Cl. 1'. The score is divided into three measures, each with a different time signature: 5/8, 7/8, and 5/8.

In the excerpt below, a series of descending runs are treated canonically:

CD Excerpt 23

The musical score for CD Excerpt 23 shows three staves for Oboes 1, 2, and 3. The music consists of descending runs. The top staff (Oboe 3) is marked 'Flutter' and 'a2'. The middle staff (Oboe 1) has dynamic markings 'mf' and 'sf'. The bottom staff (Oboe 2) has dynamic markings 'mp' and 'sf'. The runs are staggered between staves, creating a canonical effect.

This is reminiscent of the fleeting and erratic exclamations of schools of birds in mid flight, and is varied and repeated throughout the piece.

2500

While Edwards' uses traditionally notated references to birdsong in *White Ghost Dancing*, Peter Sculthorpe and Matthew Hindson take a different approach to the replication of sounds from nature in their use of instrumental performance techniques for the imitation of birdcalls. Below is an excerpt from *In Memoriam* in which Hindson replicates birdcalls:

CD Excerpt 24

The musical score for CD Excerpt 24 is for a string ensemble. It includes staves for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello, and Double Bass. The score is annotated with performance instructions: 'Tutti non dir.' with a 'senza vibr.' marking, 'wait between 4-15 seconds', 'random artificial harmonic', 'Tutti DEV. inverted 'leopold' effect', and 'do on all strings randomly'. Timing markings of 30" and 20" are shown above the staves. Dynamic markings include 'ppp' and 'pp'.

In the example above, the use of random rhythms and approximate pitch is appropriate to the irregularity of birdcalls in nature.

Similarly, in the excerpt from *Kakadu*, below, Peter Sculthorpe mimics birdcalls:

2600

CD Excerpt 25

The musical score for CD Excerpt 25 features several staves. At the top, a measure is marked with a downward-pointing triangle and the number '72'. The woodwind parts include two Oboes (Ob. 1 and 2) and three Violins (Vn. I, Vn. II, and Vla.), all playing a melodic line with a glissando effect. The string parts include Violins I and II, Viola, Violoncello (Vc. div.), and Contrabass (C.B.), all playing a rhythmic accompaniment. The score is marked with a forte dynamic (*ff*) and includes the instruction 'unis.' (unison) for the string parts.

In this excerpt, the high register of the string and woodwind parts, the use of indefinite pitch, glissandi and trills create likeness to birdsong. In both excerpts, the absence of a specified metre, and the substituted use of approximate time creates a sense of rhythmic randomness appropriate to sounds from the natural world.

While birdsong is one of the most prevalent influences of the natural world on contemporary works, other programmatic representations of native fauna have also provided inspiration to Australian composers. Ross Edwards' *White Ghost Dancing* contains several examples of this influence:

CD Excerpt 26

The musical score for CD Excerpt 26 shows a woodwind part (Tr.) with two staves. The first staff is marked with a piano dynamic (*p*) and the second staff is marked with a *con sord.* (con sordina) dynamic. The score includes a 5/8 time signature and a 7/8 time signature. The music features a melodic line with a glissando effect and a rhythmic accompaniment.

In this excerpt, the antiphonal repetition of the acciaccatura-quaver pattern between Trumpets 1 and 2 creates a hocketing effect, reminiscent of that which characterises dialogue between frogs in the wild. Below is a further representation of Australian fauna: 2700

CD Excerpt 27

The repeated dissonant quavers played by the French Horns, treated with random starts and stops are representative of cicada song in the wild. Furthermore, Edwards uses drones in order to represent sounds from the Australian outback:

CD Excerpt 28

Here, the Bassoon drones represent the timeless droning of insects in the bush. Note the irregular lengths of the drone patterns, which is also representative of the random starts and stops of cicada drones.

CONCLUSION

Since the early 1900s, the musical vocabulary of Australia's indigenous population has provided a fertile source of inspiration for Australian composers. This influence is exhibited in a variety of ways, from the appropriation of specific musical chants and programmatic ideas to more general influences on compositional style. 2800

While Peter Sculthorpe has directly appropriated the Aboriginal Arnhem-land 'Djilile' chant into a number of works, the central characteristics of Aboriginal mantra are more extensively incorporated into contemporary Australian compositions. The prominence of major and minor second intervals, narrow pitch ranges, descending contours and static and cyclical melodies are evidence of the integration of features of Aboriginal chant into Australian compositions. Furthermore, the incorporation of the Dies Irae plainchant, which is treated with stylistic features derived from Aboriginal song is a symbolic gesture, attaching the affliction implied by the Dies Irae to the Aboriginal experience in early Australia. 2900

Several Australian composers have also incorporated the tone colour of the Didgeridu into their compositions. This influence has been approached in a variety of ways. While Ross Edwards incorporates the Didgeridu itself into his piece *Dawn Mantras*, other composers have endeavoured to mimic its tone colour and harmonic system through various techniques. This is seen in the use of 'Didgeridu Bowing' in Sarah Hopkins' *Reclaiming the Spirit* and Matthew Hindson's *In Memoriam*, in the contrast between percussive and more lyrical mnemonics in Michael Atherton's *Songs for Imberombera* as well as in Colin Bright's strategic imitation of the juxtaposition of the primary harmonic against the normal playing note of Didgeridu music in *Red Earth*. 3000

Many Australian composers have manipulated the rhythmic qualities of Aboriginal music in their recent compositions. The use of syncopation, rhythmic repetition, polyrhythm, persistent and driving pulses, and random non-metrical rhythms resemble the irregular and erratic rhythms that characterise traditional Aboriginal song.

Further, the drone of Didgeridu music is featured in a plethora of Australian works, consolidating the influence of Aboriginal music on Australian composers. For example, in Ross Edwards' *Dawn Mantras*, the Didgeridu itself plays a drone that lasts throughout the piece, joined at times by other performing media, whilst in other works the drone provides a more subtle allusion to an Aboriginal sound.

3100

Finally, Australian composers have been widely influenced by Australia's natural landscape. In the same way that traditional Aboriginal music celebrates and replicates the sounds produced by Australian native fauna, both traditional and extended performance techniques are used by Australian composers to imitate sounds from the natural world. While birdsong is the most prevalent influence on Australian works, as is seen in its widespread imitation in works such as *White Ghost Dancing*, *Kakadu*, and *In Memoriam*, techniques such as antiphony, hocketing, repetition and drones are used to mimic the distinctive sounds of frog, cicada and insect dialogues in the Australian outback.

3200

Certainly, analysis of these works has shown that Aboriginal music has been catalytic in assisting contemporary Australian composers develop new attitudes towards the treatment and function of musical sounds.

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MUSIC EXTENSION — Musicology Elective

Exemplar

**Title: Black Notes on White Pages: The influence of
Aboriginal culture on the works of contemporary
Australian composers**

An outstanding essay that demonstrates perceptive analysis and extensive discussion of a wide variety of music. The candidate's insightful comments are accompanied by pertinent score excerpts and taped examples. The writing is highly personalised in style, adding to the success of a very well organised and lucid essay. Through evidence of extensive research, reading and listening, the candidate produces a sustained and perceptive argument following all observations to their logical conclusion.