HSC - MUSIC EXTENSION

MUSICOLOGY ELECTIVE.

 ${\mathcal B}$ lack Notes on White Pages:

The influence of Aboriginal Culture on the works of contemporary

Australian Composers.



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September 2002

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.

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:

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. I

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.

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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]

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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:

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.

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



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.

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



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.

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.

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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:





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



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.

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.

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:

CD Excerpt 5



⁸ Atherton, M. email, 6 March 2002

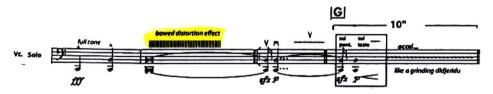
⁹ Bright, C. 1989, 'An Australian Sound' Sounds Australian, Spring 1989, p 14

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' 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.

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CD Excerpt 7



In this example, the expressive markings of sul ponticello¹¹, and sul tasto¹² vary the 'cello tone colour so as to render its timbre reminiscent of that of the Didgeridu and

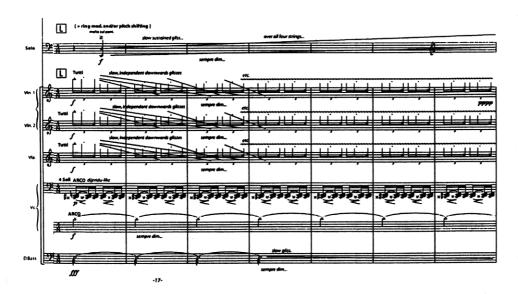
¹⁰ Hindson, M. 2000 In Memoriam, Australian Music Centre, New South Wales, p.19

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.

¹²Translation: 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



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.

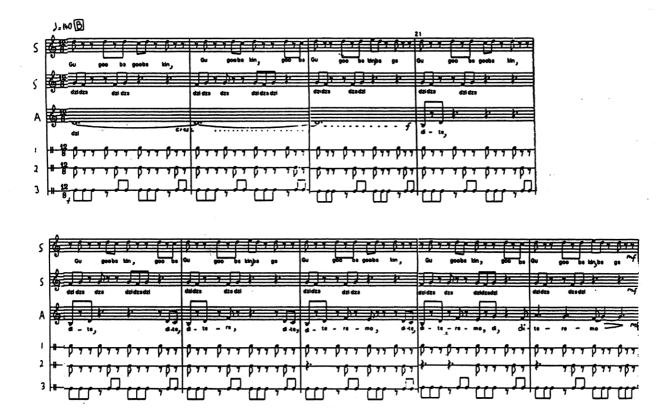
Michael Atherton takes a different approach to generating Didgeridu sounds in *Songs* for Imberombera. Atherton makes use of mnemonics for Didgeridu sounds in the lyrics accompanying several of the songs in order to incorporate this Aboriginal tone colour into his piece. In the forward to the score, 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:

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:

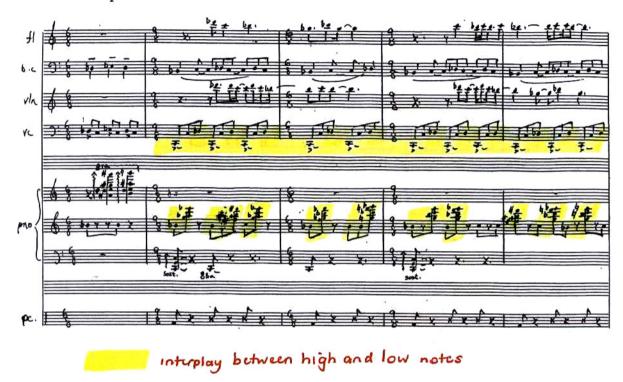
CD Excerpt 9



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.

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 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

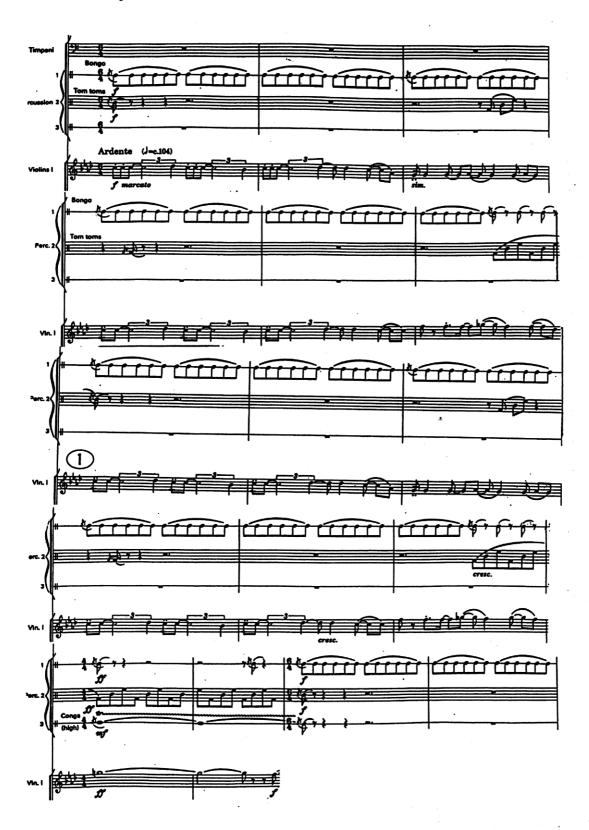
CHARACTERISTICS OF ABORIGINAL RHYTHMS

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

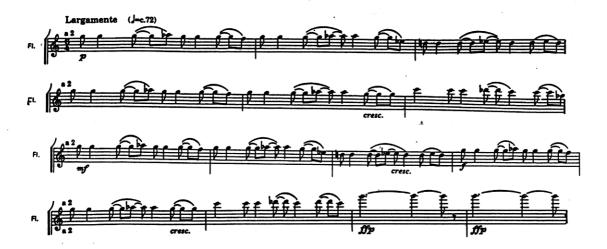


In the example above, the juxtaposition of syncopated rhythms in the violin part against the straight and driving pulse provided by the Bongo is reminiscent of the intricate polyrhythmic texture created by the independence between the song man and the Didgeridu player in Aboriginal music¹⁵. Note the 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



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.

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



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.

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

CD Excerpt 14



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



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 rhythmicsised by the inbuilt rhythm of words. 16

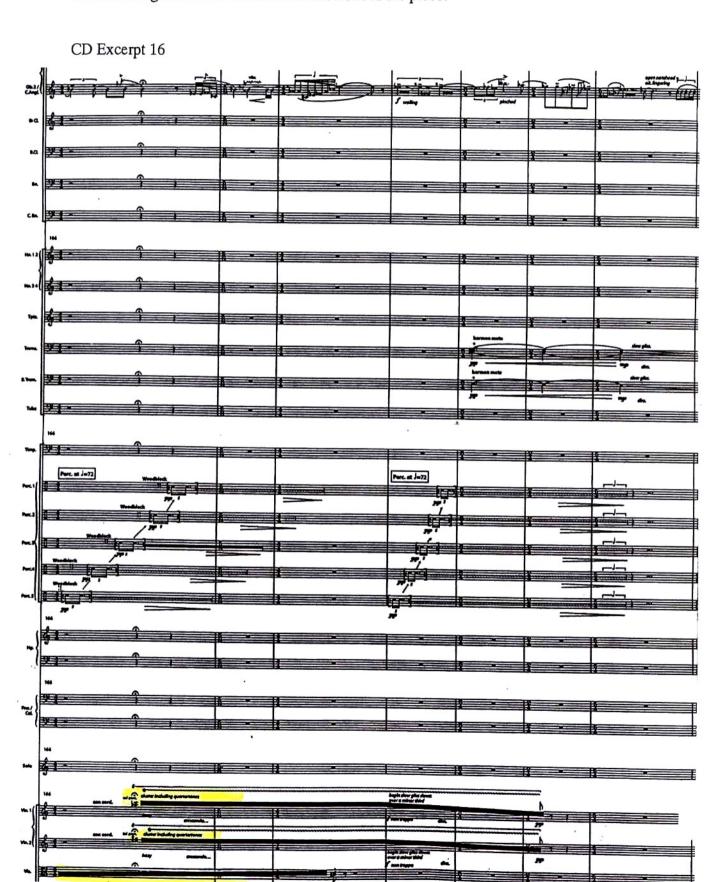
Indeed, the composer's use of triplets and sextuplets throughout the course of this work creates likeness to the insistent rhythms of Aboriginal lexis in song.

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.

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:



2100

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 third¹⁷, 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



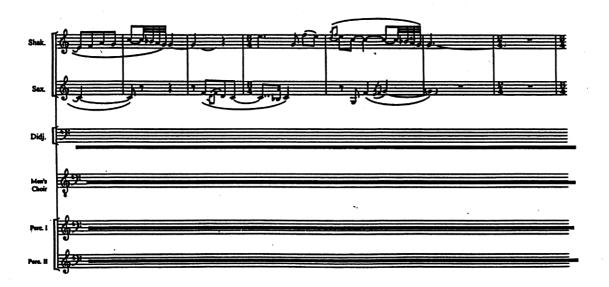
¹⁷ Hindson, M. 2000 In Memoriam, Australian Music Centre, New South Wales, p 19.

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

2200

CD Excerpt 18





Above is an example of Edwards' use of drones, which provides a distinctive connection between this work and Aboriginal song. Furthermore, the Didgeridu plays the drone throughout the course of the work (at times joined by other instruments as above, where the Didgeridu 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

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



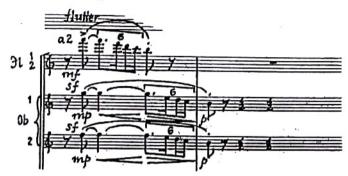
Birdcalls are further represented by specific imitative fragments in the Oboe and Clarinet parts:

CD Excerpt 22



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

CD Excerpt 23

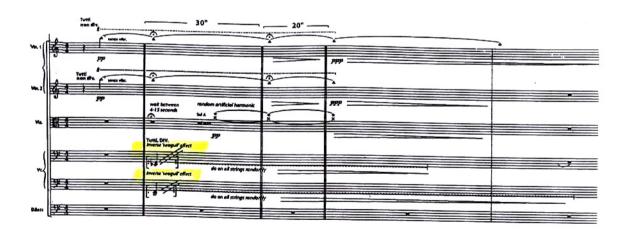


This is reminiscent of the fleeting and erratic exclamations of schools of birds in mid flight, and is varied and repeated throughout the piece.

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



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



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



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.

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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 tope 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.